

EDWARD TABORSKY

Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960



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COMMUNISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1948–1960

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in Czechoslovakia
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BY EDWARD TABORSKY

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Edward Taborsky was Secretary to the Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia in 1938. After the Nazi invasion, he joined the government-in-exile in England. As Personal Aide, he accompanied President Beneš to the 1943 conference with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the 1943 and 1945 conferences with Stalin and Molotov. From 1945 to 1948 he was Czechoslovak Envoy to Sweden. Dr. Taborsky is now a Professor of Government at the University of Texas.

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To the Memory of my Father

PREFACE

TWELVE YEARS have passed since the Communists seized power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. In these first twelve years of its rule the communist regime of Czechoslovakia has weathered such fateful events as the death of Joseph Stalin, the man to whom the Czechoslovak Communists owed their allegiance; the dangerous era of the post-Stalin "thaw"; and the Hungarian and Polish political upheavals of 1956. According to the new Constitution of 1960, socialism has won in Czechoslovakia, the exploitation of man by man has been abolished, and the working people are "gathering forces for the transition to communism."

Thus the initial stage of the march toward the ultimate communist millenium in Czechoslovakia has been completed, and it is the purpose of the present study to review and evaluate its political results. How successful have the leaders of Czechoslovak communism been in remolding the body politic of what had once been called a bastion of democracy in Central Europe? What changes have they made in the constitutional, political, and socio-political structure of Czechoslovakia and in the Czechoslovak way of life? To what extent have they implemented their promises of better social justice, more equality, and a genuine "people's democracy"—promises which constitute the most appealing part of the Marxian dogma? How have they fared thus far in their ambitious goal of outproducing capitalism and attaining the highest living standards in the world? What have they done toward the realization of their professed aim of abolishing the exploitation of man by man? What have been the results of their colossal attempt to pattern after the image of the Marxist-Leninist *Weltanschauung* the mind and soul of a nation so thoroughly imbued with the ideas and concepts of Western democracy?

A dozen years is, of course, too short a period in which to answer with finality these and other questions concerning the success or failure of the communist experiment in Czechoslovakia. But it does permit at least an interim evaluation, particularly in view of the fact that

P R E F A C E

Czechoslovak Communists were able to do much spade work in the years 1945–1948 when they and their fellow-travelers held most of the key positions in Fierlinger's and Gottwald's cabinets.

In a way, Czechoslovakia probably constitutes a more rewarding object of study than any other of Moscow's satellites. Before her engulfment into the Soviet orbit she was the most industrialized and the least agrarian, the most urbanized and the least rural of them all. Even prior to the Second World War a number of Czechoslovak enterprises had been publicly owned and operated by central, provincial, and local authorities. The cooperative movement had a long tradition behind it. The public in general showed no marked antipathy toward government intervention in business. Reliance upon state support and subsidy was habitual even among private entrepreneurs. Until after Munich, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia always enjoyed complete freedom to foster the communist cause—a freedom which was usually not accorded to communist parties elsewhere in prewar East-Central Europe. Since its foundation in 1921, the Communist Party has been one of the four largest political parties in the country. By 1945 practically all Czechoslovak workers and a great many intellectuals considered socialism a panacea for most economic problems. Pro-Russianism—in the sense of looking toward Russia as the main protector against any new German aggression—was fairly widespread in all walks of life. Religious belief, if deep enough, customarily imparts a high degree of immunity against communist influence, but in Czechoslovakia it was lax and rather superficial except in rural areas.

Taken together, all these factors tend to suggest that, of all Moscow's satellites, Czechoslovakia would seem to offer the most favorable conditions for the successful establishment and functioning of a Marxian system. In other words, if Marxian socialism could ever assert itself in practice as being superior to Western democracy, Czechoslovakia ought to be the right country in which to prove it. Indeed, as I know from my personal experience, this is precisely why a number of leading Czechoslovak Communists cherished the thought that Czechoslovakia was destined to become a model communist state. Indeed, Soviet leaders in recent years have considered Czechoslovakia a model people's democracy designed to serve as communism's show window.

On the other hand, except for the above-mentioned touch of superficial pro-Russianism, Czechs and Slovaks have always been definitely Western-minded and Western-oriented. Their philosophical, political, and cultural traditions are firmly rooted in Western civiliza-

PREFACE

tion; and their leaders in every field of human endeavor have always looked toward the West rather than toward the East for inspiration and example.

Thus Czechoslovakia's present case illustrates the tragic clash between the enticing promises of a Marxian utopia and the harsh reality of Soviet-guided totalitarianism—a clash which is likely to cause its whole edifice ultimately to crumble. Also, because of her past reputation as the best working democracy of Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia's fate reveals more vividly than that of any other Soviet satellite what happens when a Western-oriented democratic community succumbs to Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism.

This study is divided into four parts. *Part One* deals with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and its satellite “non-communist” parties. After briefly reviewing the highlights of the KSČ's history prior to 1948, it traces the changes which the Party has undergone since its seizure of power and explains and analyzes the Party's organizational and operational pattern, the nature and fiber of its leadership, and the chief problems with which it is confronted. *Part Two* is concerned with the formal government. It explores the unique nature of the Ninth-of-May Constitution, which served as a fundamental law throughout the first stage of the “socialist construction” from 1948 to 1960. It reviews the main changes enacted by the new Soviet-type Constitution of 1960 and examines the elaborate machinery of the communist “transmission belts.” *Part Three* is devoted to an analysis of economic developments, which it seeks to evaluate in terms of production results, people's well-being, and human cost. *Part Four* portrays the communist effort to convert the Czechs and Slovaks to the Marxist-Leninist creed, an effort upon which hinges the ultimate success or failure of the communist experiment in Czechoslovakia as it does elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain. The last chapter is a summary of the main conclusions of the study and a brief estimate of future developments.

Throughout the volume emphasis is placed upon major trends of development and operational patterns. Attention is also paid to concepts advanced by theorists of Czechoslovak communism. However, since in their writings and pronouncements Czechoslovak Communists merely repeat Soviet-made and Soviet-interpreted precepts, I have deemed it unnecessary to clutter the book with too many such ideological derivatives which can contribute little toward a proper understanding of what has been happening in Czechoslovakia. Above all,

PREFACE

Communists everywhere must be judged by what they actually do rather than by what they proclaim they do.

The period under consideration begins with the communist seizure of power in February 1948 and extends to the end of 1960, thus encompassing the first twelve years of the communist rule in Czechoslovakia. However, explanatory references to developments prior to 1948 are made whenever necessary.

The sources used are mainly of two types: first, documents, books, periodicals, and other materials published by, or under the auspices of, the communist regime of Czechoslovakia; second, information obtained from non-communist and anti-communist sources, including interviews with Czechoslovak escapees, as well as reports from underground groups within Czechoslovakia. Naturally enough, these two types of evidence often disagree. The student of Czechoslovak affairs is therefore confronted with the arduous task of sifting truth from thick layers of propaganda. Because of this difficulty and the well-known secretiveness of the present Czechoslovak regime it has occasionally been impossible to find a dependable answer to some of the questions raised in this study. Whenever a query did arise, however, which is of such nature or importance that it should not be left wholly unanswered, at least a conjecture has been advanced on the basis of whatever partial documentation was available.

In concluding this preface, I wish to thank my colleagues from the Departments of Government, History, and Economics of the University of Texas for their valuable linguistic and stylistic suggestions. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Free Europe Committee for allowing me to use materials from the Committee's files and from its highly informative publications and digests, such as *Zpráva o Československu*, *Československý přehled*, *Československý zpravodaj*, and *East Europe* (formerly *News from Behind the Iron Curtain*). I am particularly grateful to Dr. Pavel Korbel of the Free Europe Committee for reading the manuscript and giving me the benefit of his most helpful comments. Finally, I am greatly indebted to the Research Institute of the University of Texas and to the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation for the fellowship which enabled me to complete this study.

Edward Taborsky

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	vii
<i>Part One. The Communist Party and Its National Front Partners</i>	
I. The Communist Party as a Weapon of Revolution	3
II. The Communist Party as an Instrument of Power	22
III. Party Organization	44
IV. The Party's Operational Code in Theory and Practice	68
V. The Ruling Oligarchs	97
VI. Communism's Pernicious Isms	119
VII. The National Front Partners	144
<i>Part Two. The Transmission Belts of Formal Government</i>	
VIII. The Constitutional Framework	165
IX. Executive Transmission Belt: I. Theoretical Basis and Organization	185
X. Executive Transmission Belt: II. Operational Pattern	205
XI. The Legislative Rubber Stamp	230
XII. Socialist Legality	268
XIII. Local Levers	304
XIV. Slovakia—An Odd Unit of Provincial Government	330
<i>Part Three. Outproducing Capitalism</i>	
XV. The Industrial Challenge	349
XVI. The Agricultural Demise	382
XVII. The Human Cost	424

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Part Four. The Making of the New Communitic Man</i>	
xviii. Erecting an Iron Curtain against Western Influences	471
xix. The Educational Weapon	506
xx. The Indoctrination of the Adult Mind	551
xxi. Conclusions and Prospects	595
Bibliography	609
Index	621

PART ONE
THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS
NATIONAL FRONT PARTNERS

CHAPTER I

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

"THE DICTATORSHIP of the proletariat is in essence the 'dictatorship' of its vanguard, the 'dictatorship' of its Party as the force which guides the proletariat."¹ In strict accord with this fundamental maxim of communist totalitarianism, enunciated by Joseph Stalin himself, the Czechoslovak Communists promptly assumed exclusive control and political leadership the moment they vanquished their democratic opponents in the *coup d'état* of February 1948. Although purged remnants of all but one of the pre-coup non-communist parties have been allowed to vegetate, their precarious existence does not in any way detract from the full-fledged single-party dictatorship set up by Klement Gottwald and his aides. Since, therefore, the Communist Party is *the* government of the country, with formal government agencies serving only as obedient executors of Party decisions, it is appropriate to begin this study with an analysis of the KSČ, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

How well or how badly is the KSČ equipped to rule? How does it actually operate as the instrument of proletarian dictatorship? Is it truly the vanguard of the working class? What is the caliber of the Party command and what is its relationship to the rank and file? How strong are the Party's ideology and moral fiber? How has it weathered the shock to which it has been exposed in the post-Stalin era? What are the major strains and problems plaguing it, and what are its main sources of strength and weakness? These are some of the questions which will be considered in the first chapters. But before this task is begun, a brief review will be made of the origins of the Party and the highlights of its developments prior to February 1948.

ORIGINS AND APPRENTICESHIP: 1921-1938²

"The foundation of the KSČ [in 1921] put at the head of the working class a Party which adhered proudly to Marxism-Leninism,

¹ Joseph Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, Moscow, 1940, p. 135.

² For the history of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia prior to February 1948, see *Přehled dějin komunistické strany Československa* (An Outline of the

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

to the legacy of the Great October Socialist Revolution, to the banner of internationalism, and to friendship with the Soviet Union A great help and support for the solution of all the controversial and complex questions which appeared in the Czechoslovak revolutionary workers' movement was given by the Communist International, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and by V. I. Lenin in person at the Third Congress of the Communist International in the summer of 1921."³

These statements, taken from the official outline of the history of the KSČ, a Czechoslovak counterpart of the Soviet *Short Course*, reflect accurately the main characteristic of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, namely, its dependence on, and subservience to, the Kremlin. From its birth in 1921 through all its vicissitudes the KSČ has adhered unflinchingly to Moscow-made precepts, shifting the line whenever signals were changed by the Kremlin. Fully exploiting the broad political freedoms characteristic of T. G. Masaryk's democracy, the Communists laced the country with a network of Party cells and other units and set up their own labor unions, cooperatives, gymnastic groups, and other organizations. Unhampered by any censorship, they developed a massive Party press which became the Comintern's mouthpiece in Czechoslovakia and poured out day after day an incessant stream of vicious attacks on democratic leaders and representative institutions of the newly born Republic. In pursuance of the Leninist-Stalinist strategy of world revolution, political strikes were instigated whenever the cause of Marxism-Leninism could thereby be served. "Against your fascist police terror," said Gottwald speaking in the Czechoslovak Parliament on December 2, 1929, "we shall put up a proletarian de-

History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), a publication of the Institute of the History of the KSČ, Praha, 1957; Jan Křen, *Československo v období dočasné a relativní stabilizace kapitalismu 1924–1929* (Czechoslovakia in the Period of Temporary and Relative Stabilization of Capitalism 1924–1929), Praha, 1957; Václav Kopecký, *30 let KSČ* (Thirty Years of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), Praha, 1951; Pavel Reimann, *Geschichte der Kommunistischen Partei der Tschechoslowakei*, Hamburg-Berlin, 1929. Documents pertaining to the period may be found mainly in two collections published by the Institute of the History of the KSČ: *V bojích se zocelila KSČ* (The KSČ Strengthened in the Struggle), Praha, 1956, and *Za svobodu českého a slovenského národa* (For the Freedom of the Czech and Slovak Nations), Praha, 1956. However, by their own admission, the editors of the documents left out "one-sided materials which might not be correctly understood without fuller commentaries."

³ *Přehled dějin komunistické strany Československa*, pp. 86–87. Hereafter cited as *Přehled dějin KSČ*.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

fense.”⁴ Every ounce of propaganda value was extracted from the few occasions in which bloodshed resulted from communist-incited clashes between workers and police.⁵ Shielded by their parliamentary immunities, the communist deputies did all they could to obstruct and paralyze the work of the National Assembly, resorting upon occasion even to physical violence against their adversaries, while simultaneously using the Parliament as a convenient platform and a sounding board for communist propaganda.⁶

With the Soviet about-face in the middle thirties the KSČ steered obediently into the New Course. The inflammatory revolutionary slogans of yester-years were toned down and the “treacherous reformist leaders,” who had formerly figured so prominently in the communist gallery of rogues, were invited to form a united front. “We offer the socialist parties a common struggle against hunger, fascism, and war,” wrote the Central Committee of the KSČ to the executive committees of the Czechoslovak and Sudeten German Social Democratic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Parties in March 1933.⁷ “The Republic can be protected only by a popular front,” claimed Gottwald in December 1936.⁸

Although the Communist Party never became a member of a government coalition, it did depart from its previous obstructionist tactics and lent support to the government’s efforts to strengthen the country in the face of the growing Nazi threat. For the first time in the young Republic’s history the communist deputies cast their votes in 1935 for the democratic presidential candidate, Eduard Beneš, thus abandoning their hitherto consistent practice of putting up their own candidate, even though he never had any chance of winning over Czechoslovakia’s George Washington, T. G. Masaryk. When the international crisis over Czechoslovakia reached its climax

⁴ *Rudé právo*, April 3 and 6, 1925, June 4, 1931; *V bojích se zocelila KSČ*, pp. 290ff.

⁵ *Rudé právo*, April 6, 1925; *V bojích se zocelila KSČ*, pp. 127, 130; *Rudé právo*, June 4, 1931.

⁶ In particular, they used to introduce interpellations raising such demands as strict punishment of policemen interfering with the “worker’s rights,” requesting that pasture lands be given to small peasants, hours of work be reduced, evening and Sunday classes in apprentice schools abolished, and tariffs lowered. See *V bojích se zocelila KSČ*, pp. 9, 18, 26, 79, 91, 109, and *Přehled dějin KSČ*, p. 134.

⁷ *Rudé právo*, March 16, 1933; *V bojích se zocelila KSČ*, pp. 321ff.

⁸ A speech made in the Chamber of Deputies on December 1, 1936. *V bojích se zocelila KSČ*, pp. 453ff. See also *Rudé právo*, March 31, 1935, urging a joint May Day Parade; a resolution of the Central Committee of the KSČ of December 13, 1936, for a unification of labor unions, *Rudé právo*, December 16, 1936; *Rudé právo*, July 27, 1937; *Přehled dějin KSČ*, pp. 140-141, 150, 155.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

in the summer and fall of 1938, Czechoslovak Communists were among those who stood for war against Hitler rather than surrender to the Anglo-French ultimatum. Though their intransigent attitude had been prompted much more by Moscow's directives and by the Party's ulterior revolutionary designs than by concern for Czechoslovakia's national independence, Gottwald and his associates managed subsequently to draw valuable political dividends from their Munich stance.⁹

All through these years, despite the shifting lines of strategy which revealed its subservience to the Kremlin, the KSČ always ranked among the country's four strongest parties. Its greatest triumph was achieved in 1925, in the first parliamentary election after its secession from the Social Democrats, when it polled 943,000 votes and gained 41 of the 300 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. It thus trailed only 5 seats behind the leading Agrarian Party and outdistanced by 12 seats its main competitor for the workers' votes, the Social Democrats.¹⁰ Four years later its demagoguery and fruitless negativism reduced the Party's following by almost 200,000 votes and cut its representation to 30 deputies, leaving it 9 seats behind its social democratic rivals and a full 16 seats behind the leading Agrarians. The economic depression of the thirties and the Party's switch from rigid obstructionism to greater cooperativeness during the popular-front era of world communism brought it a modest rise in popular vote to 849,000 out of the 8,231,412 votes cast in the last pre-Munich parliamentary election of 1935, i.e., 10.3 percent. The size of its parliamentary delegation, however, remained unchanged because of the over-all increase in the electorate which had occurred since 1929.¹¹

Although in terms of political representation the KSČ of the interwar years ranked among the strongest communist parties outside the Soviet Union, one must not lose sight of the fact that even at the peak of its success its voting strength amounted to only 13 percent of the electorate, while actual Party membership fluctuated

⁹ *Za svobodu českého a slovenského národa*, pp. 58ff., 99, 114. Hereafter cited as *Za svobodu*. See also *Přehled dějin KSČ*, pp. 169, 173; Dana Adams Schmidt, *Anatomy of a Satellite*, Boston, 1952, p. 249; Hubert Ripka, *Le Coup de Prague*, Paris, 1949, p. 4.

¹⁰ A table of electoral results may be found in Eduard Táborský, *Czechoslovak Democracy at Work*, London, 1945, p. 85.

¹¹ Figures from *Statistická ročenka republiky Československé* (Statistical Yearbook of the Czechoslovak Republic), Praha, 1937, p. 279. (Hereafter cited as *Ročenka*.)

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

between a high of 150,000 (in 1928) and a low of 28,000 (in 1930). Furthermore, only a fraction of those who gave their votes to the Party were true Marxist-Leninists. Most of its members supported the Party because they honestly believed that the Party leadership stood for their best economic interests, for higher wages and better conditions of work, for security of employment, and for social elevation of the working man. Of all the tenets of Marxism-Leninism the only one for which they cared was industrial socialization, which they wistfully saw as a panacea for social ills. A great many workers were driven into the Party's fold by little else than the rigid social barrier which traditionally existed between manual laborers and white-collar personnel—a gulf responsible for much of the social estrangement and interclass antagonism that played into the hands of social radicals in many parts of prewar Europe.

Thus the KSČ was first and foremost a Party of those who, to paraphrase Lenin's famous dictum, were not only unwilling to "devote to the revolution . . . the whole of their lives," but were hesitant even to sacrifice for it "their spare evenings." The Party had its quota of professional revolutionaries, and its leadership was composed largely of sycophantic followers of Moscow. But not once throughout the whole existence of the pre-Munich Republic could this leadership induce the rank and file to do anything that could properly be called an attempt at revolution. Except for some brick-throwing in the course of several strikes and street demonstrations which the communist agitators had managed to misuse, Gottwald's proletarian defense consisted mainly of vitriolic verbalism, occasionally buttressed by fist-fights and inkstand-flinging in a few parliamentary sessions.

All through the first twelve years of its existence the Party was plagued by continuous factional strife and personal rivalries.¹² The Party's right wing, which was comparatively moderate, leaned toward limited cooperation with the socialist parties and wished to adapt the Party's strategy to specific conditions in Czechoslovakia. The Party's left wing relentlessly pursued an all-out revolutionary struggle and stood for rigid adherence to the Comintern's directives. Helped by a direct intervention of a Comintern emissary, D. Manuilsky, the leftists secured a majority on the Central Committee elected by the Second Party Congress in 1924. At that time a moderate

¹² A one-sided account of these strifes is given in the official *Přehled dějin KSČ*, *passim*; see also *V bojích se zocelila KSČ*, pp. 140ff.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

group led by Bubník, a communist member of Parliament, split away from the Party and ran an abortive independent ticket in the 1925 parliamentary elections. Having failed to gain any seats, the Bubníkites joined the Social Democrats. Another and more serious clash on Party strategy developed in the years 1925-1928. The reformist group led by Bolen and Jílek advocated a less aggressive course based on the assumption that the stabilization of capitalism would be of a longer duration, that the time was not ripe for attempts at a forcible overthrow of capitalism, and that the masses were not yet ready for decisive action. Their views were hotly opposed by a leftist group which subsequently came under the leadership of Klement Gottwald. The whole issue was taken before the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, which threw its support behind the leftists. A special commission of the Comintern under the chairmanship of I. Gusiev, a Soviet Communist, condemned the Bolen-Jílek group for having "isolated the Party from the masses," and the Comintern's Executive Committee addressed an open letter to all members of the KSČ along these lines. It was mainly owing to this resolute Soviet intervention that the left-wingers won and that Gottwald, who had meanwhile been elected to the Comintern's Executive Committee, became the Party's Secretary General in 1929. A large-scale purge of so-called renegades and liquidators was carried out by the Party's Central Committee in June 1929. It resulted in the expulsion of many prominent Party members who were opposed to the Party's negativist rigidity and its uncritical subservience to the Comintern.

Hardly had the "right-wing liquidators" been separated from the body of the faithful when the Party leadership was confronted with a new challenge, this time from an opposite direction. A group led by Evžen Fried, and motivated by "faulty left-wing opinions regarding the conduct of the economic struggle and some intra-Party matters," accused Party leaders in the latter part of 1929 of allowing the Party line to be distorted by opportunistic tendencies.¹³ While most of these left-wingers bowed to the criticism to which they were subsequently subjected by the Central Committee of the KSČ and the Executive Committee of the Comintern, the opposite was true of J. Guttman's right-wing group which rose against the Party leaders in 1933. Having been accused of misconstruing the Party's popular-front policy as "a compromise between revolutionary and reformist

¹³ *Přehled dějin KSČ*, pp. 122-123.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

attitudes" and thus having "capitulated in a petty-bourgeois fashion to social democracy," Guttman was expelled from the Party.¹⁴

Thus the history of the KSČ throughout the years of the pre-Munich Republic was characterized by an incessant struggle against heretics and by Moscow's interventions in support of those who were ready to follow unquestioningly Moscow's leadership.

The Party's political quandary was further accentuated by several other factors. The well-developed social welfare system of prewar Czechoslovakia weakened the impact of Gottwald's revolutionary tirades even at the peak of the depression. Nor could the Party's stubborn opposition to T. G. Masaryk contribute to its popularity. The short-sighted communist stratagem of opposing the candidacy of a man of such tremendous prestige as Masaryk placed the KSČ in the same camp as the Sudeten German Nationalists, who pursued similar tactics. Furthermore, the bitter hostility between the Communists and the Social Democrats, who had never forgotten nor forgiven the high-handed tactics of their communist comrades, all but killed whatever chance there might have been for a popular front on the French pattern in the late thirties. Hence the Czechoslovak Social Democrats definitely preferred collaboration with the "bourgeois" parties on their right to any partnership with their hammer-and-sickle comrades on the left, who were thus pushed into complete isolation. Nor were the Communists much more successful in their persistent endeavors to break up party coalitions and engineer governmental crises. The high degree of discipline characteristic even of non-socialist parties in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia and the pragmatic approach to politics on the part of most of the leaders of the non-communist parties made such coalitions quite resistant to Gottwald's disruptive efforts. The communist strategy of infiltration fared no better. Though the Party had complete freedom of organization, propaganda, and other political activities, its members were effectively barred from positions in state administration, police, and the officer corps of the Armed Forces.

On the other hand, the freedom with which the Party could develop conferred upon it some important advantages. While their comrades in the rest of Central-Eastern Europe, where communist parties were outlawed, had to spend most of their energies in efforts to evade the police, Czechoslovak Communists were able to operate

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 142.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

literally under the protection of the government. Unlike their less fortunate sister parties, they had unlimited use of the tremendous propaganda facilities of a free press. Most of the KSČ leaders were simultaneously members of the Czechoslovak legislature and were thus actually paid salaries for their subversive work. Without abandoning illegal work in the underground, the KSČ could freely train its cadres, set up its auxiliaries and front organizations, lure youth into its gymnastic clubs, and resort openly to many other deceptive activities denied communist parties elsewhere. Moreover, and most important, its leaders became nationally known. As their names were continually mentioned in the press and radio news bulletins over a long number of years, the public became quite familiar with such leading figures of the communist movement as Gottwald, Zápotocký, and Slánský. This proved to be a significant asset for the communist cause when the Party made its bid for power after World War II. While communist leaders in the other East European countries were obscure figures, virtually unknown beyond the narrow circle of their fellow-conspirators, Gottwald and his colleagues were aided to no small extent by this publicity of the past and by the buildup given them by the Czechoslovak broadcasts from Moscow during the War.

YEARS OF EXILE AND UNDERGROUND: 1939-1945

The KSČ was outlawed in the political readjustment which was forced upon Czechoslovakia after Munich. However, its deputies continued to sit in the post-Munich rump parliament. Thus, as late as December 14, 1938, Zápotocký could use the floor of the Chamber of Deputies to deliver a pro-Soviet speech in a debate on Czechoslovakia's foreign policy.¹⁵ After Hitler had liquidated the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the Party leaders went into hiding. Many were apprehended by the Gestapo and sent to Nazi concentration camps, among them Antonín Zápotocký, but others managed to escape abroad. Some of the latter made their way to France and England, but the cream of the Party leadership—Gottwald, Slánský, Šverma, and Kopecký—fled to Moscow, where they set up Party headquarters.

After the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, however, their presence in the Soviet capital became

¹⁵ *Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích poslanecké sněmovny* (Stenographic Reports of the Sessions of the Chamber of Deputies), 157th Session, December 14, 1938; *Za svobodu*, pp. 8ff.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

rather embarrassing to the Soviet regime. Anxious to please Hitler and to allay the slightest suspicions of the *Führer*, Stalin had little use in the years of 1939 and 1940 for Gottwald and his colleagues. As a matter of fact, the KSČ leaders were treated almost as if they were undesirable aliens. Things improved for them after the Nazi invasion of Russia, but even then Stalin continued to hold the Czechoslovak communist leaders at more than arm's length. Since his primary interest in Czechoslovakia at that time was to deceive Beneš, Stalin was eager to demonstrate to the Czechoslovak President in a convincing fashion that he had no thought of interfering with Czechoslovak internal affairs. Nothing could help Stalin's designs better than pointedly keeping Gottwald and his associates out of any negotiations and treating them as if they were plain citizens of a foreign country given temporary asylum in the Soviet Union. During Dr. Beneš's first official visit to the Soviet capital in December, 1943, not once did Stalin or Molotov mention Gottwald, Slánský, or any other Czechoslovak Communist. Whenever some of the Gottwald group were invited to attend ceremonies, banquets, or receptions in Beneš's honor, they were relegated to the sidelines while attention was focused on Beneš and his retinue. Only toward the end of 1944 were Gottwald and his associates finally brought forward and groomed as prospective rulers of Czechoslovakia.¹⁶ In January 1945 the process of grooming was already so advanced that, in correspondence with Beneš on the fate of Ruthenia, Stalin specifically mentioned that he had discussed the matter with "Comrade Gottwald."¹⁷

Besides complicating their sojourn in Moscow in the early years of their exile, Soviet policy reversals between 1939 and 1945 presented the KSČ's leadership with trying ideological problems. The worst by far was the dilemma posed by the Nazi-Soviet honeymoon of 1939-1941. How could the sudden Soviet friendliness toward Hitlerite Germany be reconciled with yesterday's anti-Naziism? Under the expert guidance of the Kremlin, the KSČ solved the unpleasant situation in true Leninist fashion by characterizing the war between Germany and the West as a clash between two imperialist camps

¹⁶ This evaluation of the way in which the Czechoslovak Communists were treated in Moscow between 1939 and 1944 is based partly on reports from President Beneš's liaison officers in Moscow and partly on my personal observations there in 1943.

¹⁷ For an English translation of the letter see Eduard Táborský, "Beneš and Stalin—Moscow, 1943 and 1945," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 13, 2 (1953), p. 173.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

and by denouncing Beneš as a lackey of Anglo-American imperialism. They blamed him for "sowing hatred among the Czech population toward German workers dressed in military uniforms," "driving Czech people into the English imperialistic army," "collaborating with the bankrupt Polish noblemen for the purpose of creating an anti-German and anti-Soviet Czechoslovak-Polish state," and for other activities contrary to the true interests of Czechoslovak workers.¹⁸ Bowing to such directives, Gottwald's underlings in Czechoslovakia and in the West withdrew from collaboration with Beneš's liberation movement, which had shown great promise prior to the Hitler-Stalin pact. Nevertheless, so radical an ideological somersault did not leave the Party unscathed. While Gottwald's rigidly disciplined henchmen obeyed, many had private doubts about Stalin's wisdom and some even voiced their misgivings. The most prominent of these doubters was Vlado Clementis, one of the leading Slovak Communists who escaped to the West, later to become Czechoslovakia's Foreign Minister after Jan Masaryk's death in 1948. When the purge caught up with him in 1950, his communist accusers included in their indictment against him the charge that "he had accepted the platform of international imperialism against the Soviet Union and Stalin in 1939."¹⁹

When Hitler launched his invasion of Russia in June 1941 and the "imperialistic war" became "the great patriotic people's war against fascist aggressors," the Czechoslovak Communists made another about-face. "Is it not ridiculous in the extreme," wrote Lenin, "to refuse to temporize and compromise with possible (even though transient, unstable, vacillating, and conditional) allies?"²⁰ Pursuing their Grand Master's precept, Czechoslovak Communists promised loyal support to Beneš's government, ceased to talk about "Beneš's anti-German chauvinism" and "German workers dressed in military uniforms," traded their own "proletarian internationalism" for militant anti-German patriotism, and turned into ardent promoters of collaboration between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Saxon Powers. In the wake of the German invasion, the Party's Central Committee

¹⁸ A resolution of the KSČ's central leadership, dated December 15, 1940. See Eduard Beneš, *Paměti* (Memoirs), Praha, 1947, p. 214; also, *Za svobodu*, pp. 73ff., 92ff., 125ff.

¹⁹ The accusation was made by the Chairman of the Slovak Communist Party, V. Široký. See *Rudé právo*, May 5, 1950.

²⁰ "Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," *Selected Works*, London, 1946, x, p. 111.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

issued a passionate proclamation against "barbarian, bloody German fascism" and its "bestial hordes," and stated that the governments of "the most advanced nations, especially of America and England, recognized in Hitlerite fascism the most dangerous enemy of all nations and races, an enemy against whom the forces of the whole world must be united."²¹ "It is not any longer a struggle of two armies, but a struggle of all the people, all the nations of the world against the band of Nazi murderers," preached an illegal edition of *Rudé právo*, published after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.²² Another issue, circulated in November 1941, reported jubilantly how in "a great historical step," the non-communist Czechoslovak Central Committee of National Resistance and the Central Committee of the Communist Party established "in brotherly cooperation a joint leading organ to our struggle for freedom."²³

Communist good behavior was, however, only of short duration. Based solely on Leninist-Stalinist revolutionary strategy, it lasted only as long as it served communist ends. By early 1945 the situation had changed. The Red Army and the ubiquitous NKVD agents, operating on Czechoslovak soil, were supporting native Communists and obstructing political efforts of non-communists in every way. Democratic behavior on which Beneš's collaboration with the Gottwald group was predicated no longer suited the latter's designs. Nor was Stalin any longer interested in Beneš. Having fulfilled his Moscow-assigned role of showing how correctly the Soviets would treat those non-communists who harbored no enmity toward the Soviet State, the Czechoslovak President had outlived his usefulness by the end of 1944.

The changed communist attitude was amply revealed in the crucial negotiations (in Moscow in March 1945) about the formation of the new Czechoslovak Cabinet. Since I attended some of the sessions I can personally attest to what sort of negotiations they were.²⁴ Gottwald and his associates completely dominated the proceedings, pressing home the tremendous psychological and political advantages accruing to them from the Red Army's control over Czechoslovakia and the overt Soviet support of their cause. When the delegates of the other parties arrived in Moscow, the KSČ leaders presented them with a neatly mimeographed thirty-two-page copy of

²¹ Eduard Beneš, *op.cit.*, pp. 218-220.

²² *Za svobodu*, p. 166.

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

²⁴ See also Josef Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia*, Princeton, 1959, pp. 109ff.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

their complete "program of the government of the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks." This document, although filled with communist sophistry, was forced upon the democratic negotiators with only minor changes.²⁵ The KSČ leadership confronted the non-communist parties with a ready-made list of the new Cabinet with various posts tentatively distributed among the various groups. They chose their *marionette*, the fellow-traveling Social Democrat Zdeněk Fierlinger, for the Premiership and asserted with straight face how unselfish it was for them not to claim that top function for a Communist. They made it a *sine qua non* of their participation in the Cabinet that they obtain the key position of power, the Ministry of the Interior, which controlled the police and the whole apparatus of internal administration. They secured control over the other all-important Ministry, that of Defense, by placing at its head another of their collaborators, General Svoboda whom the Communists had raised from an unknown Lieutenant-Colonel to an almost legendary hero. Two of the staunchest Party die-hards became Ministers of Information and Education respectively, giving the Party full authority over the media of communication and thought control. Another staunch Communist was made Minister of Agriculture to strengthen the Party among the peasants by distributing vast tracts of land confiscated from the Sudeten Germans. A Communist was planted as Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that the Party might watch closely the popular non-communist Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk. Finally, to clinch its control, the Party secured two deputy premierships, one each for the heads of the Czech and the Slovak Communist Party, on the pretext that those were two separate parties. Thus, although the Communists held only eight out of the twenty-five Cabinet seats, they obtained, with the sole exception of the Ministry of Justice, all the key positions for the forthcoming battle for the body and soul of the Czechoslovak people.

How did they attain such spectacular success? The answer lies not only in the situation prevailing at that time in Czechoslovakia but also in the relations between Soviet Russia and the Western Powers. The Red Army was deep in Czechoslovakia. With its backing, the Communists were terrorizing their democratic opponents, setting up dreaded communist-dominated people's courts and people's

²⁵ *Program první domácí vlády republiky* (The Program of the First Government of the Czech and Slovak Government on Native Soil), Košice, 1945. A publication of the Ministry of Information.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

committees, seizing factories, and establishing their private army, the workers' militia. The same process was evident throughout the rest of Eastern Europe. In Rumania, Vyshinsky forced King Michael to change the Rumanian Cabinet according to the Kremlin's specifications. The Polish and Yugoslav governments-in-exile, whom the Soviets did not like, were not allowed to return to their homelands. It thus became obvious that the Soviets would not tolerate in Eastern Europe any government which would not submit to communist domination. Having already seized Ruthenia, in spite of his solemn assurance in 1943 that that province would be returned to Czechoslovakia, Stalin might have at any time created a similar crisis over Slovakia. The Slovak Communists, who had meanwhile compelled the Slovak Social Democrats to fuse with them, had in fact begun a campaign for converting Slovakia into a Soviet Slovak Republic. They stopped only after receiving orders to the contrary from Kremlin agents parachuted into Slovakia, for Stalin had more ambitious plans which he did not want to jeopardize by an untimely annexation of Slovakia. Mere diplomatic protests against Soviet excesses and reminders of promises given at Teheran and at Yalta could not change the situation, and the behavior of the United States and Great Britain in 1945 clearly indicated that they did not intend to do more than that.

Under such circumstances, the hapless Beneš and the disheartened leaders of the democratic parties were at the mercy of Stalin who had by then thrown his full support behind the Czechoslovak Communists and given them an almost limitless power of political blackmail. The KSČ's leaders knew that Beneš had to comply with their requirements or risk a complete communization of Czechoslovakia while he remained deadlocked in Moscow in interminable negotiations.

"BREAKING THE BOURGEOISIE'S NECK": 1945-1948

When V. E. day came in May 1945, the Czechoslovak Communists were so powerful that they could have converted Czechoslovakia into a communist state immediately rather than wait until February 1948. Why did they wait? The reason was simple: Stalin was playing for larger stakes. Communists were gaining in France and Italy, and the Kremlin cherished a high hope that, by conquering the labor unions and gaining cooperation of the hesitant Western socialist parties, they might win "in a parliamentary fashion." The situation

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

in China and other parts of the turbulent Far East at that time called for deft maneuvering of a similar kind rather than a determined *coup de force*. Since much could still be gained by continued repetition of the wartime tune of allied cooperation, Stalin wished to refrain as much as possible from alarming the Free World. A complete communization of Czechoslovakia, which would have led to the immediate resignation of President Beneš, might have created enough of a shock in the West to upset Stalin's subtle plans. After all, Beneš's Czechoslovakia was considered by many people in the Free World as a test case of Soviet intentions.

Submitting to Soviet guidance, the Czechoslovak communist leaders concentrated upon converting the country to communism by parliamentary means. The Party's primary purpose was to win 51 percent of the vote and thus to gain a majority in the Constituent Assembly. That would have enabled it to obtain power "legally," to institute the communist system by peaceful transition through legitimate constitutional channels, and thus to validate the Party's claim that it represented the will of the people. The whole colossal Party machine with all its auxiliaries concentrated upon the accomplishment of this paramount task. Ruthless advantage was taken of the Party's control over the air waves and of its supervision of the allocation of newsprint. The public was flooded with communist propaganda designed to convince them that the KSČ was only a benevolent group of social reformers and that no one but a few industrial and financial magnates had any need to fear it. While admitting that they stood for the socialization of big industrial enterprises, the Communists loudly professed their support of free enterprise in medium- and small-scale production. They maintained that they were actually the very best friends of private entrepreneurs, since their sole desire was to free their enterprises from the unfair and stifling competition of mammoth monopolistic corporations. They posed as staunch believers in private ownership of land by those who tilled it. They rejected in self-righteous anger insinuations that they cherished any thought of collectivizing agriculture, proudly pointing to the fact that it was a communist Minister of Agriculture who was distributing land among the peasants. For the intellectuals they depicted in rosy colors the future of creative freedom and material well-being which they had in store for scientists, writers, and others. To prove their solicitude for religion they insisted that priests and clergymen be

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

included in the category of hard-working laborers who were entitled to an extra meat ration!

To serve their purpose, the leaders of Czechoslovak communism turned upside down the Leninist conception of the Communist Party as a vanguard of the proletariat. Not only did they throw the doors wide open to those seeking admission, welcoming wholeheartedly any one and asking no questions, but they applied pressure to those who hesitated to cross the line. Peasants needing tools or fertilizer quickly found out that they would get them more easily if they joined the Party. Those eager to obtain more land soon learned that the Party membership card was the magic formula which alone seemed to be able to clear the interminable red tape. Employees of ministries and offices headed by communist chiefs and their fellow-travelers saw promotion evading them until they chose to sign the membership application blanks which were periodically placed on their desks by zealous Party agitators. This experience was shared by all those who aspired to softer or better jobs in the nationalized factories, all of which were under firm communist control. Even the allocation of an apartment by the local people's committee often called for the possession of that miracle-producing open sesame, the KSČ membership card. It is, therefore, small wonder that membership figures jumped by leaps and bounds. By the time of the Eighth Party Congress in 1946, the first Congress held since the War, the Party had 1,159,164 members as compared to the estimated 80,000 before the War.²⁶

The ruthless exploitation of the advantages gained in 1945, combined with the belief on the part of a substantial number of manual workers that the Party would take good care of their material interests, brought the KSČ a major victory in the parliamentary elections of May 1946. The Party polled 38 percent of the popular vote and gained 114 out of 300 seats in the Constituent Assembly. As the leader of the biggest party, Klement Gottwald assumed the Premiership of the new twenty-six-member Cabinet, of whom nine were Communists.²⁷ Impressive though this communist show of strength was, it actually amounted to a Pyrrhic victory. Instead of being overawed by the big vote cast for the Party, the non-communists sighed with relief at seeing the Communists a full 12 percent behind their

²⁶ Gottwald's report to the Ninth Congress, *Lidové noviny*, May 27, 1949.

²⁷ See a table of election results in William Diamond, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, London, 1947, p. 239; also, Hubert Ripka, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

goal of gaining an absolute majority. Their feelings were shared by a substantial number of the outwardly red "radishes" whose belief in communism was only skin-deep and who had joined the KSČ out of sheer necessity. Sensing that this was the peak of communist strength and confident that the Party would never be able to gain the coveted 51 percent, the non-communist majority began to react more forcefully against communist excesses. In the first months after the elections over 100,000 new members enrolled in the Czech Socialist Party, the most outspokenly anti-communist among the Czechoslovak parties. Similar increases were registered by the Catholic Czech Populist Party.²⁸ The Ministry of Justice, headed by a staunch and popular anti-communist, Prokop Drtina, began to prosecute ever more vigorously the numerous abuses of authority perpetrated by the communist-controlled police. Civic courage, the main requisite of democracy, was, after years of decline, on the rise again.

All this ran contrary to communist designs and made Party leaders realize that they could not hope to win a majority in a regular election. But they had yet another stratagem in reserve. Although the Party alone gained only 38 percent of the popular vote, the Social Democrats (Czechs and Slovaks) polled almost 13 percent. Together, the two parties adhering at least formally to Marxist socialism, obtained 153 out of 300 seats in the Constituent Assembly. If the Social Democrats could be made to cooperate and vote with the Communists, a peaceful transition to socialism was still within the realm of possibility. Hence, no stone was left unturned in the pursuit of this all-important objective. Having scored their major initial success in 1945 by planting Fierlinger and a number of other fellow-travelers in the highest offices of the Social Democratic Party, the Communists followed up these Trojan-horse tactics with a persistent campaign of wooing, cajoling, and browbeating the social democratic rank and file in factories. Distinguishing between the "honest left-wing Social Democrats" and the "treacherous right-wing elements," the communist plenipotentiaries in the factories bestowed advantages and soft jobs upon the former while they made life as difficult as they could for the latter. However, these high-pressure tactics backfired. Although some of the opportunistic and weaker elements among the functionaries allowed themselves to be bribed or coerced into submissiveness, the hard core of social democratic followers began to turn more and more anti-communist after their initial uncertainty

²⁸ Hubert Ripka, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

and hesitation of 1945. The communist failure to subjugate the Social Democrats culminated in November 1947, when the Social Democratic Party Congress ousted Fierlinger from the Party's Presidency by a sweeping majority of 283 to 182 and the anti-communist forces assumed control of the Central Committee.

The crushing defeat of Fierlinger and his pro-communist wing was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. With the leadership of the Social Democratic Party no longer in the hands of pro-communists, communist hopes to take over the government in a parliamentary manner were shattered. Only by counting the social democratic votes as their own could they ever hope to gain that 51 percent majority needed for a peaceful transition to socialism. To make things worse, all reports arriving at KSČ headquarters in the late fall and winter of 1947 indicated that the Party would lose rather than gain strength in the elections which were to be held in April or May 1948, when the two-year term of the Constituent Assembly expired. A Gallup-type poll taken in January 1948 by the Institute for Public Opinion Research under the communist-headed Ministry of Information predicted that the KSČ would obtain only some 28 percent of the popular vote as against the 38 percent it had in 1946.²⁹ Since the polls had been administered by the Communists themselves and a similar poll taken prior to the 1946 elections was only one-half of 1 percent off, this was gloomy news indeed.

All these ominous developments, so detrimental to the Party's chances in the forthcoming elections, were taking place at a time when Stalin had already come to the conclusion that nothing more could be gained from the West by a pretense of continued friendliness. In July 1947 the Soviet Union declared an all-out war against the Marshall Plan. Two months later the Cominform was established to launch a crusade against American "imperialism," and communist parties the world over, especially in Europe, were ordered to adopt a much more militant attitude than they had in the early postwar years. For the KSČ this spelled a much more abrupt change in tactics than it did for its sister parties in Eastern Europe. Gottwald and his collaborators had pushed the concept of "peaceful coexistence" with the "bourgeois" elements considerably further than the communist parties elsewhere in Central-Eastern Europe. On July 4, 1947, eager as they were to secure American dollars, they went so far as to vote in favor of Czechoslovak participation in the Marshall Plan

²⁹ Dana Adams Schmidt, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

Conference in Paris. But Moscow's condemnation of the Plan forced them to execute, almost overnight, a tactical 180-degree about-face.

Gottwald was particularly hard pressed to prove himself worthy of Stalin's trust by zealously following the new line. His heretical *faux pas* in voting for the Marshall Plan without first consulting Moscow made him extremely vulnerable. One can well imagine what reception Stalin accorded Gottwald when he summoned him to the Kremlin two days after Czechoslovakia's acceptance of the Marshall Plan invitation and ordered him to get the acceptance revoked. "I have never seen Stalin so furious," Gottwald told Masaryk and Drtina, the two non-communist Cabinet members who accompanied him to Moscow, upon his return from the interview with the Generalissimo. "He reproached me bitterly for having accepted the invitation to participate in the Paris Conference. He does not understand how we could have done it. He says that we acted as if we were ready to turn our back on the Soviet Union."³⁰

Even prior to its error in accepting the Marshall Plan invitation, the KSČ leadership was criticized by other East European Communists for pushing the tactical concept of cooperation with non-communist parties too far. Tito and his aides in particular did not bother to conceal their contempt for what they considered a lack of revolutionary zeal and determination on the part of Gottwald. "What's the matter with you," one of the prominent Yugoslav Communists once barked at me, mistaking me for a Party member. "Why do you keep collaborating with those bourgeois parasites? Why don't you twist their necks as we have done?" Nor was the leadership's cautious maneuvering to the taste of some of the more radical elements within Gottwald's own Party. Speaking to the Party's Central Committee in November 1948, Gottwald defended the "correctness of the general line of the Party since 1945," but admitted that there was "impatience and even doubts" in the Party's own ranks about Party policy and that some comrades felt that the bourgeoisie should have been disposed of as early as May 1945.³¹

The Moscow-decreed switch toward increased militancy, the social democratic "betrayal of the cause of the socialist revolution," fear of serious losses in the 1948 elections, critical rumblings of the Party extremists and, last but not least, Gottwald's eagerness to make amends for his Marshall Plan blunder, and his frantic effort to regain

³⁰ Hubert Ripka, *op.cit.*, pp. 58-59.

³¹ *Lidové noviny*, November 19, 1948.

A WEAPON OF REVOLUTION

Stalin's confidence were the major reasons behind the sudden increase in KSČ aggressiveness in 1947. Since it proved impossible to gain full control of the country through peaceful means, the inexorable logic of Marxism-Leninism called for the use of as much violence as necessary to attain the desired goal. That is exactly what happened in those crucial six days, February 20 through February 25, 1948, which pushed Czechoslovakia behind the communist Iron Curtain. In a speech delivered under the protective shield of the pre-Munich Bill of Rights in the Czechoslovak Parliament on December 21, 1929, Gottwald had this to say to his bourgeois colleagues: "You are saying that we are under Moscow's command and that we go there to learn. Yes, our highest revolutionary staff is Moscow and we do go to Moscow to learn. And do you know what? We go to Moscow to learn from the Russian Bolsheviks how to break your necks, you patriots."³² In February 1948 Gottwald fulfilled his promise.

³² Václav Kopecký, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

CHAPTER II

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

HAVING YIELDED to Gottwald's ultimatum Beneš, broken and dying, left Hradčany Castle, the ancient seat of the Kings of Bohemia and, since 1918 quarters of the Presidents of Czechoslovakia—never to return. Although Beneš remained nominally the Head of State until he resigned in June 1948, the February coup rendered him powerless and the actual exercise of authority devolved on Gottwald and his communist associates. The Party's life-long ambition to overthrow capitalism and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat in Czechoslovakia was brought to fruition. The KSČ was transformed from a weapon of revolution into an instrument of power.

The circumstances by which Gottwald was carried to the pinnacle of power were vastly different from those confronting Lenin in 1917. The KSČ's leadership enjoyed in 1948 several important advantages which the Bolsheviks had not had thirty years before. Unlike their Soviet comrades of 1917, the Czechoslovak Communists had gained government experience through three years of active participation in all phases of administration prior to their seizure of power. From pre-communist days, they had at their disposal an ample supply of well-trained civil servants, most of whom, for reasons of opportunism or necessity, were ready to serve the new masters. Having managed to partially adapt the governmental apparatus to their needs in 1945-1948, Czechoslovak Communists could disregard Lenin's contention that "the working class cannot simply seize the available ready machinery of the State and set it going for its own ends."¹ On the contrary, they could utilize it forthwith for the pursuit of their goals with little or no change. They did not even have to disband the Constituent Assembly but used it, after having purged the non-communist leaders, to pass the communist-drafted Constitution. Since an experiment in Marxian socialism had been in operation for over thirty years in the

¹ Quoted after V. I. Lenin, *Sochinenia*, 3rd ed., Moscow, 1935, **xxl**, p. 394.

AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak Communists could learn from the successes and mistakes of their Soviet comrades rather than grope their way through costly trial and error or turn, as Lenin had, to the misleading experience of the Paris Commune. Unlike that of Russia in 1917, the bulk of Czechoslovak industrial production was already nationalized and largely communist controlled prior to the communist victory. Hence, solid foundations of socialism were already laid before the dictatorship of the proletariat was established. The harmful improvisation and colossal economic losses which resulted from wholesale socialization under wartime communism in Russia could therefore be avoided in Czechoslovakia. Being highly industrialized, the country had a large and well-organized working class which was quite class-conscious, viewed the private capitalist as its natural economic and political opponent, and believed, in general, in the virtues of socialization. The presence of this massive proletariat, which both Marx and Lenin visualized as the standard-bearer of the communist revolution, made Czechoslovakia a far better proving ground for an experiment in Marxism than Czarist Russia had been with her backward peasantry. There were no Kornilovs, Wrangels, or Denikins, nor any threat of outside intervention to worry the victorious Gottwald. Nor was the KSČ at the moment of its triumph plagued by any major internal dissensions and rifts like the Kamenev-Zinoviev opposition which complicated matters for Lenin after the October Revolution.

These favorable conditions, however, were offset by a few but weighty handicaps which faced the Party upon its assumption of the government. There was the embarrassing legacy of rosy promises made in the heat of competition with other parties—promises which were bound to backfire once their recipients realized that they would not or could not be implemented. There was the intense hatred engendered by the arbitrary communist behavior in the postliberation era and the painful memories of the bad conduct of the Red Army. The Party itself was overburdened with opportunists. The worst handicap which Gottwald brought with him into the conquered citadel of power, however, was his utter dependence on the Kremlin. Without Stalin's support Gottwald and his associates would never have succeeded in hoisting the red flag on Hradčany Castle. As the legendary Dr. Faustus sold his soul to Mephistopheles for the enjoyment of earthly glories, so did Gottwald pay with his own and his Party's freedom of action for Stalin's aid. It was chiefly through this depend-

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

ence on the Soviet masters that the KSČ forfeited whatever chance it may have had to gradually convert its minority support into a majority. Whenever Czech and Soviet interests collided, the latter had to be met at the expense of the former. This servility toward the Kremlin brought the Party leadership further into disrepute among non-communists and made them more and more contemptible in the eyes of numerous disenchanted Party members as well.

In the wake of its victory in 1948, Klement Gottwald's Party was thus enmeshed in much the same vicious circle that had enveloped the Party of Lenin in 1918, when its leader decided to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks were then a minority and proceeded henceforth with a single-party dictatorship based on a minority. Unable to obtain the willing support of the majority, the minority had to rely primarily on force. Excessive use of coercion, however, is bound to generate hatred which makes the ruling minority seek safety in even more repression. This in turn breeds more hatred against the oppressors.

How well is the Party equipped to meet the challenging problems which confront it as the instrument of power? What changes have been made in its composition and organization? How is the Party's new role reflected in its operational patterns and principles? What developments have taken place in the Party's high command? These are some of the questions which will be considered in this and the following four chapters.

ELITISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

The establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat should have put an end to the indiscriminate, wholesale recruiting of new Party members practiced in pre-February days. On the contrary, the elitist principle demanded that the sympathizers and the opportunists who were allowed to swell the Party ranks while it was striving for a 51 percent quota in 1945-1948 be promptly weeded out. In flagrant contradiction of one of the basic tenets of Leninism, however, the drive for a mass Party continued unabated after the seizure of power. "The Central Committee of the KSČ opens the gates of the Party to all honest working people who have had the opportunity to appreciate the Party's importance and its truly national mission in critical days. Leaning on the growing confidence of the people, we make it our task to increase the KSČ to two million members."² Responding

² Klement Gottwald, *Kupředu, zpátky ni krok* (Forward, Not One Step Back), Praha, 1948.

to this direct invitation by the highest Party organ, which also set aside the week between March 7 and 15 as "Gottwald's week of membership enrollment," hundreds of thousands of new converts jumped hurriedly on the Party band wagon. Another influx of new members resulted from the incorporation of the expurgated leftovers of the Social Democratic Party in the early summer of 1948. Thus the membership soared to more than a staggering two and one-half million by November 1948, making the KSČ the largest Communist Party (at that time) outside the Soviet Union.³

Why Party leaders permitted the membership to rise to such unwieldy proportions, elevating one out of every three adults to the lofty status of the "vanguard of the proletariat," was never explained. Not even when the Party's Secretary General, Rudolf Slánský, subsequently admitted that it was a serious mistake was the reason given.⁴ Probably their intoxication with the February victory had made Party leaders forget for a moment that the Party had moved to a new stage of development, and they let themselves be pushed by the law of continuity and by force of habit. Also, since Dr. Beneš still formally remained Head of State, they may have thought that a spectacular rise in Party membership would further solidify their victory and help them obtain the desired results in the forthcoming elections more easily. Be it as it may, such *reductio ad absurdum* of the Stalinist concept of the Party as "the General Staff of the Proletariat" could be only of short duration.

In August 1948, a new policy was begun when the Presidium of the Party's Central Committee ordered the first post-February screening of the entire membership. This resulted in the separation from the party of 107,133 members and the demotion of an additional 522,683 to the lesser status of candidates, a new category meanwhile established after the Soviet pattern.⁵ Another general screening was launched in 1950, on a much larger scale. In order to achieve better results the whole procedure was thoroughly overhauled. The files of every Party member and candidate had to be reexamined. The dark spots in their past, (i.e., those years for which there was not enough material on file), were to be subjected to a particularly careful scrutiny. Each member and candidate had to appear for thorough ques-

³ Slánský's report to the Party's Central Committee, *Rudé právo*, November 20, 1948.

⁴ Speaking to the Ninth Party Congress in May 1949, *Lidové noviny*, May 27, 1949.

⁵ *Lidové noviny*, May 27, 1949; also, *Zpráva o Československu*, I, 1 (1950), p. 2.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

tioning before a special screening commission which was to recommend whether an individual was to retain his Party membership, be demoted to candidacy, stricken from the rolls, or expelled.

After this initial purge, the unholy twins, *prověrka* and *čistka*—the screening and the ensuing expulsion of those who failed to pass—became a regular feature of Party work. This tended to serve both as the chief method of membership control and as a whip designed to make members more alive to their duties. Like the Soviet *chistka*, after which they had been patterned, they also degenerated into a weapon for the settlement of personal accounts and the liquidation of one's opponents. Supplemented by annual "controls of membership cards," which were used mainly for the elimination of those who failed to pay their dues and also as another way of ridding the Party of undesirable elements, the purges gradually reduced the Party membership to more manageable proportions.⁶ Table I will make this more apparent.

TABLE I
Membership Changes, 1948-1960

	<i>Members</i>	<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Both</i>
November 1948			over 2,500,000 ^a
May 1949	1,788,381	522,685	2,311,066 ^b
August 1950			1,899,423 ^c
February 1951	1,518,144	159,299	1,677,443 ^c
June 1954	1,385,610	103,624	1,489,234 ^b
January 1958			1,422,199 ^e
July 1960	1,379,441	179,641	1,559,082 ^f

Sources: ^a *Rudé právo*, November 20, 1948; ^b *Rudé právo*, May 27, 1949; ^c *Rudé právo*, February 27, 1951; ^d *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954; ^e *Rudé právo*, June 19, 1958; ^f *Rudé právo*, July 8, 1960.

Despite the fact that Party membership had been reduced by one million from the all-time high of over two and one-half million which it had reached in the fall of 1948, its one and one-half million members and candidates continue to make it far too large by communist standards. While the Soviet Communist Party embraces some 4 percent of the total population, almost 12 percent of the Czechoslovak people belong to the KSČ. No other Communist Party in the world comes anywhere near that ratio. Why has the Party leadership thus

⁶ See directives of the Central Secretariat of the Party of November 1949, *Pravda*, January 10, 1950; also, *Rudé právo*, April 26, 1952, calling for a "week of order during which cards are to be recalled and checked."

AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

far had so little success in correcting a situation which most definitely is at variance with Leninist conception of an elite party? Why did all those purges undertaken in the course of the ten years separating the communist coup from the Eleventh Party Congress fail to reduce the Party's inflated size?

The answer seems to be that the Party is permeated by opportunists who cling to it as tenaciously as ticks hold to the animals on which they feed. By 1953, Party members from prewar days represented only a meager 1.5 percent of the total membership, while 91 percent were postwar entries and another 7.5 percent were added through the incorporation of the Social Democrats in 1948.⁷ Most of these "mayflowers," so dubbed because they joined the Party after May 1945, sought Party membership essentially for opportunistic reasons. Since there are thus only about one to two Old Guard Communists for each one hundred mayflowers, and most of them are badly needed for more important functions, the postwar Communists have assumed control of most of the Party's primary units and local organizations. Consequently, the screening processes of the Party's rank and file have been administered mostly by those against whom they are primarily directed. Those chosen to sit on the screening commissions more often than not have been the same opportunists who were supposed to be eliminated. Indeed, many of the would-be purgers were and are no better than those they were supposed to purge, and they are keenly aware of the fact that their turn to be purged might come next. Hence, they have behaved as leniently as they could, unmasking as few unworthy members as possible and resorting to hand-in-glove collusion with other fellow-opportunists.

RULES AND POLICIES OF ADMISSION

While the purge aims at reducing the size of the Party by ejecting those found unworthy of membership, provisions have had to be made to bring about stricter control over the admission of new members. As a beginning step in that direction the admission of new members was suspended altogether in the fall of 1948. After the Ninth Party Congress in May 1949 this suspension was lifted with the proviso that, until further notice, only applicants from the ranks of the working class would be eligible, and from among them no one would be accepted but shockworkers who had been exceeding their

⁷ B. Kohler's article in *Za trvalý mír, za lidovou demokracii; Zpráva o Československu*, IV, 9, p. 3.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

norms of production for at least three consecutive months.⁸ Meanwhile, new and stricter admission rules were prepared and approved by the Party's Central Committee in February 1951.⁹ Under these rules, closely patterned after the Soviet model and only slightly amended by the All-State Party Conference in December 1952, Party membership has been opened to "every working citizen of Czechoslovakia [over eighteen years of age] who does not exploit any one else's labor, recognizes the Party's program and statutes, actively supports their realization, works in one of the Party's organizations, and fulfills all Party decisions."¹⁰ Each applicant must fill in a form packed with searching questions and submit his detailed personal history. The application must be countersigned and recommended by two guarantors with at least two years of good standing as Party members. These guarantors "bear responsibility for the trustworthiness of their recommendations." The application is considered by the executive committee of the primary organization at the applicant's working or dwelling place. A recommendation is then made and the plenary session of the organization passes on the application after having heard the applicant tell them about his life and the reasons which prompted him to apply for admission. To be valid, the resolution of the primary organization must be affirmed by the Party's district or city executive committee. Stiffer requirements are prescribed for former members of other parties who must be recommended by five Party members with at least four years' membership.¹¹ After fulfilling successfully all these conditions the applicant becomes first a candidate for membership for one year during which time he may not vote, may not be elected to the executive committee, or sent as a delegate to Party conferences. This probationary period is used to make sure that the candidate would make a worthy member. If he passes this prolonged test with flying colors, he then goes once again through the same complex process of admission with all the paraphernalia of guarantors and checks. If everything is in order, he is then issued the card of a full Party member.

With the adoption of the new rules, admissions to membership which had been suspended pending the 1950 screening were resumed. However, the expected onrush of the acceptable kind of membership-

⁸ *Lidové noviny*, May 27, 1949.

⁹ *Rudé právo*, April 13, 1951.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, November 2, 1952; *Pravda*, December 20, 1952.

¹¹ The requirement that the admission of former members of other parties must be approved by the Party's Central Committee was rescinded in 1956.

seekers failed to materialize. So disappointing was the response of those whose membership the Party desired, namely the workers, members of collective farms, and technicians, that the leaders ordered Party organizers actively to seek out potential candidates for membership and persuade them to join. "Party organizations may not and must not leave . . . admission to the Party to chance or let it proceed automatically. The committee of the primary unit and the plenary session are directly to designate the workers and technicians of the plant, the peasant members of the JZD [the Czechoslovak equivalent of collective farms] and the best people among the intelligentsia . . . whom we want in the Party. The committee will assign one or more comrades to prepare them for admission by systematically discussing with them political events, having them read Party newspapers and literature, recommending attendance at political lectures, etc. . . ." ¹² Similar thinly veiled suggestions that the "right people" were not merely to be asked but should be *told* to join continued to appear and reappear in succeeding years, bearing witness to the lax interest in Party membership. ¹³ All in all, only 83,154 new members joined the Party in the five years separating the Ninth and Tenth Party Congresses. ¹⁴ The absence of any corresponding figures in the annals of the Eleventh Party Congress of 1958 suggests that there must have been nothing to boast about in that respect between 1954 and 1958. The situation seems to have somewhat improved in 1958-1960. As reported by *Život strany* (No. 14, p. 890) in July 1960, 218,407 new Party candidates were admitted in the years 1958, 1959, and the first quarter of 1960.

Several reasons account for this unexpected switch from former eagerness to subsequent reluctance to secure title to the membership card of the KSČ, despite the fact that it opens the gate to personal advancement for its holder. One such reason lies in the persistent hopes of an early change, possibly of outright liberation. Although such hopes have dimmed somewhat over the years, particularly after the West's inertia at the time of the Hungarian uprising and the recent Soviet successes with the sputniks, they are still very much alive. With

¹² *Rudé právo*, April 13, 1951.

¹³ See, for instance, Novotný's speech to the Central Committee in December 1953, *Rudé právo*, December 6, 1953; Kopecký's speech in the Central Political School of the KSČ, *Rudé právo*, July 12, 1953; also, *Rudé právo*, June 15, September 11, and October 23, 1952, and May 18, 1953. *Život strany*, the Party's main magazine for Party affairs, has been replete with such admonitions year after year.

¹⁴ *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

people who have seen so many regimes come and go, such aspirations are hydra-headed and one learns to accept disappointment. The depth of such beliefs, and their naïveté, was illustrated some years ago. A rumor began to circulate that the Russians would reenter Czechoslovakia whereupon the Americans would march into those parts of the country which they had liberated in 1945. This wild rumor was enough to induce many more vacationers than usual to spend their furlough in the area supposed to be reoccupied by the Americans. The point is obvious: such people still hope for a post-communist order. Feeling that way, why would they, for a few transient benefits of Party membership, want to act, not only against their own moral code, but also against their future interests?

Another factor dissuading people from seeking admission stems from the various unpalatable duties which the Party imposes on its members. The Party Statutes demand that they must be exemplary workers showing others how to work. "The sons and daughters of the KSČ march in the first rows of fighters for the new forms of work, for the adoption of progressive Soviet methods, for the development of socialist competition."¹⁵ Thus they must be first to volunteer for additional work, to propose and participate in special work shifts in honor of the October Revolution, or to express their resolute protests against "American imperialism." They must display their high level of communist consciousness by spending part of their vacations to help out in the coal mines or in the fields at the peak of the harvesting season. They must incur the wrath of their fellow-workers by seeking to persuade them of the desirability of such distasteful features of Party policy as the need to strengthen the work norms or to delay the promised reduction of working hours. They are directed to spy on others. They must spend long hours of their free time attending innumerable boring meetings and classes of Party schooling. They must study the classics of Marxism-Leninism and read the tedious Party press so that they can keep abreast of any changes in Party policy or in interpretation of Marxism-Leninism the day may bring.

In view of the host of exacting duties which one must assume in joining the Party, the benefits of Party membership seem rather bleak by comparison, especially to those who harbor no strong political ambitions. A competent worker, farmer, scientist, or technician knows that the regime needs him, will reward him for good work, and pay him the bonus for exceeding the norm (the planned output),

¹⁵ *ibid.*, November 12, 1952.

or for making a helpful invention, whether he is a Party member or not. On the other hand, should he be found, justly or unjustly, neglectful of his duties, the penalty would be heavier if he were a Communist, as the Party tends to deal more sternly with those who violate its trust. The principal groups actively seeking admission, therefore, are office-seekers and government officials who hope that the red star on their lapel will bolster their chances of appointment or promotion, and that it might perhaps even help them to avoid the dreaded misfortune of being transferred some day to "productive work" in factories or mines.

While dealing with the question and problems of admission, another significant change in membership policy should be mentioned, namely, the removal of the bar on admission of Germans. That such a bar had existed at all may come as a surprise to those who are aware of the lofty position which proletarian internationalism holds in the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The fact that the Germans of Czechoslovakia were ineligible for Party membership from 1945 to 1950 illustrates how even the most fundamental tenets of doctrine can be temporarily set aside when so demanded by Party strategy. In an endeavor to exploit the bitter anti-German feelings of the Czechoslovak people caused by six years of Nazi oppression, the KSČ developed a highly nationalistic attitude, and the Party which used to have a sizable proportion of Germans among its members in pre-war Czechoslovakia, became in 1945 the most anti-German of all Czechoslovak parties. It backed most vociferously the deportation of all Sudeten Germans and rushed for confiscation of their property which it then used for its spoils system to reward its supporters and dangle as bait before those who hesitated. Its agents in the communist-controlled Ministry of the Interior and in the police were responsible for most of the cases of extreme harshness which occurred in the course of the transfer. From my position as Secretary to the President of Czechoslovakia I could personally observe the callous behavior of the communist Minister of the Interior who, acting on Party instructions, simply ignored the many urgent requests for a more lenient attitude addressed to him by and on behalf of Dr. Beneš. It was in line with this German-baiting strategy that the Party leadership decided not to admit any Germans and to consider as extinct the membership of those who had held it before the War, except for a few cases of Sudeten German Communists who had been abroad during the War.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

When Soviet Russia later found it profitable with the quickening crescendo of the cold war to court the Germans, Czechoslovak Communists had to fall into line. They began to talk officially about a "reborn, denazified, truly democratic, and peace-loving Germany of the East," contrasting it with the "Nazi-infested Germany of the West, whose governing circles served as lackeys of American imperialism." An exchange of high-level delegations took place, with East German Premier Grotewohl paying an official visit to Praha, and Gottwald reciprocating with a visit to Berlin. Under these circumstances the anti-German ban had to be abandoned, and since 1951 Germans have again become eligible for Party membership. In spite of its careful preparation by the Party press the change in admission policy gravely dismayed many Party members and the leadership had to launch a whole campaign of "persuasion" to allay the doubts of members.¹⁶ "The committees of the organizations shall make sure to explain to members and workers," the Party directives read, "why they [the Germans] are admitted into the Party, stressing that our Party is permeated by the spirit of proletarian internationalism, that international solidarity of the workers is in no contradiction to, but in close connection with, true patriotism."¹⁷

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The chief purpose of the changes which the Party leadership made in admission rules and policies was to secure a better social structure for the Party. "Correct class composition" is to communist parties what complexion is to a movie star. As she goes to no end of trouble to improve her complexion and uses makeup to conceal the natural deficiencies of her looks, so the communist parties strive for better social composition in their membership and, if need be, apply rouge to embellish the reality. To qualify as the vanguard of the working class the communist parties believe that their membership ought to consist of as high a ratio of production workers as possible. On the other hand, the iron logic of their elitism and, after they had overthrown capitalism, their nature as an instrument of power, forced them to absorb a high proportion of administrative and managerial personnel on all political and economic levels. As these are mostly recruited from among the intelligentsia, the proportion of manual

¹⁶ *ibid.*, March 1, 1950, and May 7, 8, and 9, 1950.

¹⁷ *Funkcionář*, May 11, 1951.

workers—the typical specimen of the proletariat—tends to decrease and that of the white-collar group to increase. However, “A party perishes,” teaches the *Short Course of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, the obligatory reading for all Communists the world over, “if it shuts itself up in its narrow party shell, if it severs itself from the masses, if it allows itself to be covered with bureaucratic rot.”¹⁸ To prevent that disaster from happening the communist parties are supposed to invigorate themselves by replenishing their ranks with “the best sons and daughters of the proletariat.”

As a result of its open-door recruitment policy in the early part of 1948, the KSČ grossly violated this Leninist-Stalinist precept. While workers and custodial personnel constituted 57 percent of the Party prior to the February coup, their proportion sank to 45 percent by the time of the Ninth Congress in May 1949.¹⁹ On the other hand, the ratio of white-collar employees rose from 8.5 to 15.5 percent and that of small workshop owners from 4 to 5.5 percent. To correct this unfavorable class composition several measures were adopted in 1948-1949. A great many Party members of nonworker origin were demoted to the status of candidacy. The waiting period was fixed at one year for workers with at least two years of work in production, but at two years for other candidates.²⁰ In converting candidates to membership, Party organs were ordered to apply stricter criteria to nonworkers than to workers. As mentioned earlier, the Ninth Party Congress issued a ban on admissions except for selected manual workers. Even when general admissions were resumed again in 1951, strict instructions were issued to concentrate on recruitment of manual workers and small peasants, and to limit admission from among the ranks of intelligentsia mainly to technicians. Some of the Party's district committees went so far as “directly to prescribe the number of men, women, industrial workers, farmers, and youth to 25 years of age who should be admitted to membership.”²¹ According to the Party directives of 1959 workers-at-the-bench are to constitute at least 60 percent of those admitted to Party candidacy and collective farmers at least 20 percent.²²

¹⁸ English edition of 1939, p. 362.

¹⁹ Slanský's speech to the Congress, *Lidové noviny*, May 27, 1949.

²⁰ A similar privilege was conferred in 1958 on members of collective farms. In 1960 the candidacy was set at one year for “all categories of the working people.” *Rudé právo*, July 8, 1960.

²¹ *Rudé právo*, November 18, 1953.

²² *Život strany*, No. 12 (1959), p. 708.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

How successful have been these persistent efforts to improve the Party's social composition and make it more proletarian? Judging by the stubborn reticence concerning changes in the Party's social structure since 1949, the results must have been far from satisfactory. Unlike his predecessor at the Ninth Congress of 1949, meanwhile hanged as a Titoist traitor, the new First Secretary of the Party's Central Committee, Antonín Novotný, failed to include in his long report to the Tenth Congress, held in 1954, any specific figures on this matter.²³ Instead, using a stratagem familiar in the Soviet Union, he resorted to a hazy statement that 60 percent of the Party members were "workers by original occupation." The same deceptive device was used again in 1958 when the Eleventh Party Congress was informed that "almost 61 percent of members and candidates are workers by original occupation."²⁴ But there is a great difference between "workers by original occupation" and actual workers in production, "workers-at-the-bench." As long as the Soviet Party cared to publish data on these matters, the two categories had always differed by a full one-third or more.²⁵ Although no over-all data are available in the case of Czechoslovakia to allow a dependable estimate as to how many of that 60 or 61 percent of workers by original occupation are actual workers-at-the-bench, the leadership's silence itself betrays that the gap between the two categories must be substantial.

A striking illustration thereof was supplied by the figures on the social composition of the voting delegates to the Eleventh Party Congress. As proudly announced by the Verification Commission of the Congress, 77.3 percent of the delegates were workers by original occupation, which further reflected, in the Commission's words, the fact that the KSČ was indeed "a party of the working class."²⁶ But in the same breath the Commission reported that there were 354 workers and foremen directly employed in industry, construction, and transportation among the 1,323 voting delegates. Translated into percentages this means that only 25 percent of the delegates were actually workers-at-the-bench as compared to over 77 percent of workers by original occupation. A similar ratio was conceded by the report of the Credentials Commission of the Party's National Conference in July

²³ *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954.

²⁴ Report of the Verification Commission, *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

²⁵ See table in Julian Towster, *Political Power in the USSR*, New York, 1948, p. 317.

²⁶ *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

1960 (published in *Život strany*, No. 14, p. 890) concerning the membership of regional and district committees of the Party. While 74.6 percent of regional committeemen were said to be "of worker origin," only 21.8 percent were reported to be "workers." Corresponding figures for district committees were 78 and 17.5 percent, respectively. While these ratios can by no means be applied to the Party membership as a whole, they do indicate that the two categories are vastly different.

The Party's continuous failure to secure a correct class composition of its membership is further corroborated by the frequent recurrence of complaints about the low membership percentages of workers, the meager attention paid to "the social background of candidates," "the preparation of best workers in industry and agriculture for admission into the Party," and similar neglect.²⁷ By Novotný's own admission at the Tenth Congress no more than 56.2 percent of those who became members since the Ninth Congress of 1949 were workers.²⁸ Translated into absolute figures this amounts to an increment of a meager 46,702 workers in five years of hectic recruiting efforts! Another confirmation of the unsatisfactory social composition of the Party was supplied by the session of the Party's Central Committee which concerned itself at length with this thorny topic in June 1959. Although it failed once again to reveal over-all percentages of Party membership along occupational lines, the Central Committee bewailed the excessive admission of administrative personnel, pensioners, and housewives, and conceded that "only a little over 10 percent of the construction workers were members or candidates of the Party."²⁹ The Party's effort to recruit more workers seems to have been somewhat more successful in the last few years. As reported in *Život strany* (No. 14, p. 890) in July 1960, 55 percent of the 218,407 candidates admitted in 1958, 1959, and the first quarter of 1960 were workers.

Similar difficulties developed in connection with the attempts to attract and keep more members from among the small peasantry. Following to the letter Lenin's advocacy of an alliance of workers

²⁷ *ibid.*, February 7 and August 17, 1952, December 6, 1953; *Pravda*, November 17, 1953; Novotný's report to the Eleventh Congress, *Rudé právo*, June 19, 1958; Jan Večeřa, *Za další upevňování základních organizací strany* (For a Further Strengthening of the Party's Primary Units), Praha, 1957, p. 8; and recurrent complaints in *Život strany*.

²⁸ *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954.

²⁹ *Život strany*, No. 12 (1959), p. 708.

with the poorer segments of the peasant population, the KSČ leaders have been striving hard to raise the membership ratio of "working peasants." The extreme secretiveness which the Party maintains concerning peasant representation indicates, however, that its efforts must have been far from successful. In his reports on the state of Party membership to the Tenth and Eleventh Party Congresses, Novotný failed altogether to give any figures, absolute or percentile, on this intriguing matter. While he mentioned in 1954 that 68 percent of "the total number of farmers organized in the Party" were members of the JZD, he carefully refrained from saying what the total number was.³⁰ On various occasions, however, the Party press has been more communicative. "The weakest link is the admission of candidates from the ranks of small farmers," lamented *Rudé právo* on October 23, 1952, listing a number of districts which failed to gain more than one peasant candidate in the course of the whole year. Of the 4,475 candidates admitted in 1958 in one of the richest agricultural regions of Czechoslovakia only 386 were collective farmers.³¹ As a result, 98 of the region's 731 rural organizations of the Party did not have a single farmer on their membership rosters, 71 had only one farmer each, and 75 only two each. Reporting this sorry state of affairs, *Rudé právo* stated that "a similar situation existed certainly in the other regions as well."³² In another highly agricultural region in middle Moravia only 38 collective farmers joined the Party in two and one-half years out of 7,000 collective farmers living in the region.³³

Similar complaints have been aired on a number of other occasions.³⁴ This is also why the term of Party candidacy for collective farmers with two years of collective farm work was reduced from two years to one in 1958.³⁵ The low ratio of peasants among the delegates to the Tenth and Eleventh Party Congresses points in the same direction, although the selection of congressional delegates does not reflect accurately the composition of the total membership. Lumped together with "other workers in agriculture," a designation covering Party supervisors and other bureaucrats in charge of agriculture, peasants composed only 7.8 percent of the total number of

³⁰ *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954.

³¹ *Život strany*, No. 7 (April 1959), p. 409.

³² *Rudé právo*, October 16, 1959, and September 11, 1959.

³³ *Život strany*, No. 15 (August 1959), p. 956.

³⁴ *Rudé právo*, February 7, 1952 and December 6, 1953; *Pravda*, November 17, 1953; *Večeřa*, *op.cit.*, p. 8; *Život strany*, No. 24 (December 1959), p. 1490.

³⁵ *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

delegates at the Tenth Congress, while 72 percent were styled as workers and over 14 percent as white-collar personnel.³⁶

As for the Eleventh Party Congress, official figures show that 225 of the 1,323 voting delegates "worked in agricultural production."³⁷ Of these 190, i.e., a little over 14 percent of the total number of the delegates, were listed as collective farm members and 35 percent as working on state farms and machine-tractor stations. Again, however, there is no way of saying how many of these delegates from the agricultural sector were actual dirt farmers and how many were farm directors and other administrative personnel who are mostly city people assigned to supervise the unreliable peasant element and are not peasant any more than the personnel of meteorological stations in the Arctic can call themselves Eskimos. Only one thing seems to be certain: that there was no independent farmer among the voting delegates to the Eleventh Congress, as all those reported as representing agricultural production were either collective farmers or employees of state farms and machine-tractor stations.

YOUTH

Another major concern of communist parties relating to membership composition has traditionally been the desire to keep the Party virile and youthful by steady injections of young blood. That part of the generation which had reached maturity under non-communist rule is mistrusted. The Party's future is seen in the younger groups reaching adulthood under communism who are fully exposed to the monopolized impact of communist indoctrination and thus are supposed to constitute a superior material from which to weave a stronger Party fabric.

Intent upon a continuous rejuvenation of Party ranks as the best guarantee of its future, the KSČ, upon seizing power, promptly moved to emulate the Soviet model in setting up youth organizations designed to serve as a rich reservoir from which the Party would eventually draw the largest portion of its membership. As in Soviet Russia the Pioneer movement was organized to attract school children between the ages of nine and fourteen years to provide a broad undergrowth from which to select the most suitable boys and girls for the second and far more important stage of political conditioning, the

³⁶ *ibid.*, June 16, 1954; also, *Tribuna*, vi (September-October 1954), pp. 9ff.

³⁷ *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

ČSM, Czechoslovak Youth Union. Corresponding to the Soviet *Komsomol*, the ČSM is a mass organization consisting of a pyramid whose foundation is some 20,000 basic units and whose apex is a congress of delegates meeting at intervals of several years and electing a central committee as its main central organ. Like its Soviet counterpart, the ČSM is tightly controlled and operated by the KSČ whose auxiliary it really is.

When it was founded in 1949-1950, over one million Czechoslovak youngsters between the ages of fourteen and twenty-six, i.e., almost half of the eligible youth, were "persuaded" to join; and it looked as if the Party had got itself a goose that would lay golden eggs in the form of a steady stream of zealous and well-indoctrinated candidates for Party membership. But it soon appeared that the goose was far less productive than expected. Stagnation in membership as well as in spirit and activities became the most pronounced characteristic of the much-pampered institution. Since the formal establishment of ČSM in 1950, its number of members has remained stationary. Despite the Party's frantic endeavors to swell ČSM ranks by incessant recruitment drives, the membership rose only from 1,055,000 to 1,116,428 in 1955, and amounted to 1,112,000 at the time of the Eleventh Party Congress in June 1958.³⁸ "In spite of all its efforts," deplored *Mladá fronta*, the Union's daily, on April 27, 1956, "the Youth Union succeeded neither in attracting into its ranks the majority of young people nor in exercising decisive influence upon the youth outside the Union." The relative relaxation of controls in the post-Stalin era caused many of the basic units of the Union to fade away or lapse into utter passivity, especially in rural areas. As Novotný conceded in 1956, there were no organizations of the Youth Union in as many as 4,500 villages.³⁹ That was also when many ČSM members gained courage to spell out the reasons for their adverse attitudes and get publicity for what they had to say. *Mladá fronta* itself took the unprecedented step of publishing a scathing criticism of the ČSM from the pen of one of the organization's members, a high school girl. "I am completely indifferent to the ČSM," the girl wrote. "Without taking the slightest interest I vote each year for the new committee and listen with silent amusement to their new plan, the evaluation of the work of the previous committee, the thanks for the vote of confidence—but I do not expect anything at all to come out of

³⁸ M. Vecker's report, *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

³⁹ *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1956.

all this The Youth Union has no attraction for me, no appeal. It is not youthful, but old and weary. It is for old grandmas and grandpas who want more tranquility than I. Something is lacking in the Union which I myself cannot define" Following the publication of this letter *Mladá fronta* invited its readers to contribute to a daily column which it started under the title "What Does the ČSM Mean to Me?" The gist of the answers was simple and unanimous: The Youth Union was dying of intolerable boredom and its name ought to be changed to Tedium, Incorporated.⁴⁰ Instead of generating enthusiasm among the youngsters for the new system, instead of making them more receptive to the communist creed and conditioning the best of them for admission to the Party, their voluntary-compulsory membership in the Youth Union only made them more resentful of communist regimentation.⁴¹ What continued to keep most of them in the Union was primarily their realization that they might otherwise endanger advancement in their jobs or jeopardize their chances of admission to institutions of higher learning.⁴² "We do not seek to conceal," admitted the First Secretary of the ČSM at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1958, the fact that there are "those who are not worthy of ČSM membership, particularly those who join the Union to obtain advantages, [who join it] essentially for opportunistic reasons, as occurs, for instance, in schools. Does a member who knows of the ČSM only when it is a question of admission to a college or assignment to work belong in the Union?"⁴³

Unavoidably, such a situation could not remain without adverse effects on the Party's efforts at rejuvenating its ranks by the influx of dedicated youthful Communists. What the KSČ has been getting via the Youth Union is mostly young opportunists ready to buy personal advantages by superficial conformism but cured of illusions which they might have held previously about the nature of communism. While the addition of an adequate number of young opportunists might in due time make the Party younger in the physical sense, it certainly cannot rejuvenate it in spirit. Whether or not any physical rejuvenescence has as yet been attained cannot be deter-

⁴⁰ For details see *News from behind the Iron Curtain*, 4, 6 (1955), pp. 25ff. Hereafter cited as *News*; also, *Československý přehled*, iv, 7-8 (1957), pp. 39ff.; *Mladá fronta*, October 14, 19, and November 4, 1958.

⁴¹ The compulsory character of membership in a great many cases was admitted by *Mladá fronta*, May 30, 1956.

⁴² About the continued disaffection of the members of the Union see *Tvorba*, April 25, 1956, *Mladá fronta*, June 19, 1957, and August 21, 1960.

⁴³ Vecker's report, *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

mined because of the dearth of published data. At the Ninth Party Congress in May 1949 the percentage of Party members below twenty-five years of age was said to be 14.5 percent. No figures to that effect were revealed at either the Tenth or the Eleventh Party Congress. Such partial data as could be gleaned from various press articles indicate that the percentile share of persons under twenty-five among the newly admitted Party candidates is considerably higher than that of other age groups. Thus 51.2 percent of those granted the status of candidacy between the Ninth and Tenth Congresses were below twenty-five and 29 percent were between twenty-five and thirty-five.⁴⁴ However, since no announcements are made about the age of those who simultaneously cease to be members or candidates, the net results cannot be determined. That the Party's hope of gaining in the Youth Union a rich reservoir of Party recruits has thus far fallen short of expectations has been confirmed recently by *Rudé právo*: "It is necessary to point out that the number of Party members in the organizations of the Youth Union has been declining substantially from year to year. Of the total membership of the Youth Union only 5 percent are Party members."⁴⁵ That would put the number of young people who belong simultaneously to the Youth Union and the Party at some 55,000, i.e., only about 4 percent of Party membership. Thus, twelve years after its seizure of power, the KSČ continues to have little attraction for the young generation, despite the many offices and prebends it has to offer to its faithful. As Novotný told the Eleventh Party Congress, "The analysis of the age structure of the Party and its important tasks among the youth stress most urgently the need of enrolling in the Party a far larger number of active young people."⁴⁶

WOMEN

A similar lack of recent over-all data prevails with respect to the ratio of women in Party membership. By the time of the Ninth Party Congress in 1949, as many as 33 percent of all Party members were women, half of them housewives.⁴⁷ But no breakdown of Party membership by sex was included in reports to the Tenth and Eleventh Party Congresses. The lower representation of women among the delegates, 13.3 and 14 percent respectively in 1954 and 1958, while

⁴⁴ *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, June 20, 1957.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, June 19, 1958; also, *Život strany*, No. 12 (1959), pp. 707ff.

⁴⁷ *Lidové noviny*, May 27, 1949.

AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

clearly indicative of the weaker political influence of women under communism, cannot serve as a basis for any computation because Party delegates are by no means chosen in direct ratio to social origin, age, or sex, and women as a group are habitually underrepresented in Party Congresses.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

Finally, a few words should be said about the ethnic composition of the Party. In postwar Czechoslovakia the Czechs and the Slovaks are officially considered as two separate nations living together in a common state. Moreover, the illogical and unsymmetrical political arrangement which allows the Slovaks special autonomous organs of government while none are available for the Czechs extends also to the Party system so that there exists a Communist Party of Slovakia as a special subdivision of the KSČ with no equivalent on the Czech side. In view of this setup, as well as of the recent history of troubles between the Czechs and the Slovaks, it is of some interest to see how the Czech-Slovak relationship is expressed in terms of Party membership.

Upon their assumption of power in 1948 the Communists were considerably stronger in the Czech provinces than in Slovakia. While over 40 percent of the Czechs cast their ballots for the Communist Party in the 1946 elections, the Party was the choice of only a little over 30 percent of the voters in Slovakia.⁴⁸ Of the 2,311,066 members and candidates of the KSČ in 1949 only 236,432 were from Slovakia, i.e., slightly over 10 percent, although more than one-quarter of Czechoslovakia's population lived in that area. Also, the Party's appeal to the youth was far less effective in Slovakia than in the rest of the country. While the over-all percentages of Party members below twenty-five years of age in 1949 was 14.5, the corresponding figure for Slovakia was only 9.7.⁴⁹ The ensuing years altered only slightly this disparity in communist numerical strength in the two parts of Czechoslovakia. Of the delegates to the Tenth Congress of the KSČ in 1954, only 10.2 percent were Slovaks.⁵⁰ Reporting to the Eleventh Congress of the Slovak Communist Party in April 1955, its First Secretary, K. Bacílek, announced that the Party had 191,690 members, which amounted to about 13 percent of the total member-

⁴⁸ See table in William Diamond, *op.cit.*, p. 239.

⁴⁹ *Rudé právo*, May 27, 1950.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, June 16, 1954 (Bacílek's report).

ship. By 1958 the Slovak membership in the KSČ climbed to 14 percent.⁵¹ But this is still far below the 28 percent Slovak share in the total population of Czechoslovakia.

The reasons for the weaker standing of the Party in Slovakia than in the Czech provinces are easy to understand. Slovakia suffered more heavily at the hands of the Red Army than did Czech provinces. Slovak Catholicism goes deeper and is more conservative than the Czech variety. Despite a recent upsurge in its industrialization, Slovakia remains more agrarian than the Czech areas and has therefore a smaller ratio of industrial workers. Much less confiscated property was available for distribution in Slovakia than in the Czech provinces and thus there was much less reason to be thankful for gifts from the communist donors. The Slovaks have always resented "Praha centralism," no matter who ruled from Praha; and that was bound to militate even more so against the present rulers whose democratic centralism dwarfs whatever centralizing tendencies there had been in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia. The fact that the Communists had initially supported Slovak autonomistic demands in 1945, then reversed themselves sharply and reduced the Slovak autonomy to an empty shell, further added to Slovak bitterness. The interplay of these political, economic, and psychological factors has made the Slovaks somewhat more immune to communism than their Czech brothers, and this impedes Party recruitment in Slovakia even beyond the difficulties encountered in the Czech provinces.

Though the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans has made postwar Czechoslovakia nationally much more homogeneous, national minorities were not completely eliminated. There are some 415,000 Hungarians (about 3.1 percent of the population), 76,000 Ruthenians (0.5 percent), a remnant of some 163,000 Germans (1.2 percent) and some 79,000 Poles (0.6 percent).⁵² How are these national minorities represented in the KSČ? As the KSČ does not release any figures on the ethnic composition of Party membership, this question cannot be answered. However, information is available on the nationality of delegates to the Tenth Party Congress, of whom 0.9 percent were Hungarian, 0.6 percent Ruthenian, 0.2 percent Polish, and 0.1 percent German.⁵³ These figures do not reflect the exact membership proportions of the said groups. Nevertheless, they do suggest

⁵¹ Based on the report of the Verification Commission at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1958, *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958.

⁵² *Ročenka*, Praha, 1960, p. 58.

⁵³ *Rudé právo*, June 16, 1954.

AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

the proportional share of minority ethnic groups in Party membership is well below the average. Relating the percentages of Party delegates to the percentages of total population one may further advance a conjecture that, of all these ethnic groups, Ruthenians have relatively the highest ratio of Party membership while Germans have the lowest, closely followed by Hungarians. That would correspond also to the prevalent attitude in Czechoslovakia, which looks upon Ruthenians as good Slav brothers who can be trusted more than Germans or Hungarians. By 1958 the share of ethnic minorities evidently sank still lower. As announced at the Eleventh Party Congress, the delegates of Ukrainian, Polish, German, and Hungarian nationality constituted together a mere 1.4 percent of the total number of voting delegates as against 1.8 percent in 1954.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Report of the Verification Commission, *Rudé právo*, June 22, 1958. The split among individual nationalities was not given in 1958, though it was given in 1954.

CHAPTER III

PARTY ORGANIZATION

THE communist parties' obsession with correct class composition is matched by their constant preoccupation with matters of organization. "Give us an organization of revolutionaries," Lenin wrote in 1902, "and we shall overturn the whole of Russia."¹ His life's work shows indeed that he concentrated as much on the excellence of organization as on the need for dedicated revolutionaries. This organizational perfectionism becomes even more imperative whenever the Party is transformed from a weapon of revolution into an instrument of power. The new duties and opportunities accruing to it after the overthrow of capitalism in each of the satellite countries brought with them new risks and temptations. Such dangers as "opportunistic pollution," "bureaucratic rot," abuse of authority, and complacency tended to deepen and multiply after the "proletarian" victory. "The history of the Party further teaches us that a party cannot perform its role as a leader of the working class if, carried away by success, it begins to grow conceited [and] ceases to observe the defects in its work . . .," warns the *Short Course*. "A Party perishes . . . if it gives way to self-complacency and vainglory and if it rests on its laurels."² Furthermore, the Party's new role as supreme ruler necessitated both a substantial enlargement of Party apparatus and a constant streamlining of its machinery so that it might cope with perennial and increasingly complex governmental problems.

The Czechoslovak Communist Party could not escape such problems and dangers any more than its sister parties in the Soviet Union and elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain. To meet them, it too felt compelled to adapt its machinery and to refurbish and even amend its organizational philosophy. In doing so, the KSČ followed quite closely the Soviet model. Whenever a change occurred in the organizational pattern of the Soviet Party, Czechoslovak Communists un-

¹ *Chto Delat, Sochineniya*, 3rd ed., Moscow, 1935, iv, p. 458.

² *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Short Course)*, Moscow, 1939, p. 361.

PARTY ORGANIZATION

dertook similar alterations. However, it seems that this imitative behavior of Czechoslovak Communists has been motivated more by considerations of personal security than by a genuine belief in the intrinsic value of Soviet organizational precepts and practices. To "do as the Soviet comrades do" has been and still is the best possible protection in case something goes wrong.

ADAPTATIONS AFTER THE SOVIET IMAGE

Thus the organizational pattern of the KSČ has undergone since 1948 a gradual adaptation along Soviet lines. The KSČ entered the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat with a constitution which differed in several ways from that governing the Soviet Communist Party. Instead of the monolithic Stalinist arrangement of first secretaries as leading Party functionaries on all levels, the KSČ had rather a dichotomous system headed by two officers, the Chairman and the Secretary. At all levels in the pyramid of the Party organs the usual powers and duties of the Soviet Party secretaries were shared by these two officers, the Chairman being the more important of the two. The Party's strongest man, Klement Gottwald, was Party Chairman while Rudolf Slánský, the number-two man, was Secretary General. Similarly, in the lower Party organizations the chairmanship was habitually held by the local Party leader with the secretary regarded as second best. Unlike the Soviet Party, the KSČ thus carried over into the fifties the original bolshevist pattern of Lenin's days when the highest leader did not hold the Party's top Secretaryship and when the Central Secretariat lacked the authority which it subsequently gained under Stalin's rule.

Nor was the status of the Chairman of the KSČ in any way comparable to the exalted position of the Secretary General of the Soviet Party. Although he was elected by the Party Congress rather than by the Central Committee, the Chairman wielded no special powers of any major importance, whether by virtue of Party Statutes or through their application in actual practice. He presided over the Presidium of the Central Committee which, like the Soviet Politbureau, was the conclave of the highest-ranking leaders. But he was only *primus inter pares* and could neither force his opinion on the others nor overrule them.

Yet another notable departure from the Soviet prototype existed at the very base of the organizational pyramid. While the foundation of the Soviet Party consisted of primary units established in factories,

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

offices, collective farms, and other places where people work, the lowest Party units in Czechoslovakia were local organizations with membership determined by the place of residence rather than by the place of work. Even at the time of the Ninth Party Congress in May 1949, i.e., fifteen months after the February coup, local organizations of a strictly territorial type constituted over 70 percent of the Party's basic units.³

It was a foregone conclusion that such deviations from the organizational pattern of the mother party could not last long. What could be condoned on grounds of expediency at the stage of "the overgrowth of the national revolution into the socialist revolution," could no longer be tolerated once the dictatorship of the proletariat was firmly established. The initial step in that direction was taken in September 1951. The first major purge of high Party functionaries was then in full swing and Gottwald's group, which had been steadily gaining ground since the February coup, could thus accomplish two objectives: to remodel the Party's constitution and to profit by the occasion to entrench themselves more firmly in power. Acting in direct violation of the Party Statutes reserving such matters for the Party Congress, the Central Committee decreed a reorganization of the central Party organs along Soviet lines. The function of the Secretary General was merged with that of the Party Chairman. A Political Secretariat, composed of the seven highest-ranking Party leaders, was created "for the daily direction of the Party's political affairs" and given a new Organizational Secretariat of several elected secretaries as its subordinate auxiliary.⁴

The similarity of the new arrangement to the Soviet model is clearly apparent. The new seven-man Political Secretariat was an obvious replica of the Soviet Politbureau, while the Organizational Secretariat was a "kissing cousin" of the Soviet Orgbureau and Central Secretariat. The fusion of the two highest positions, the Party Chairmanship and General Secretaryship, also bore a strong resemblance to the Kremlin pattern. So did the substantial increase in the authority of the Party's topmost incumbent, Klement Gottwald, whose new status within the KSČ organization came fairly close to that of Stalin within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He now held the combined powers of Party Chairman and Secretary General.

³ Novotný's report to the Tenth Party Congress, *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1954.

⁴ *Rudé právo*, September 8, 1951. In December 1951, the membership of the Political Secretariat was increased to eight.

PARTY ORGANIZATION

He headed both the Political and Organizational Secretariats, which gave him a definite advantage over his colleagues in the everyday operational control of Party affairs. The adaptation was completed in the ensuing session of the Central Committee in December 1951, when a new Commission of Party Control was set up to serve, as did its Soviet namesake, in the capacity of disciplinary arm of the Central Committee.⁵

By the end of 1951 the central organs of the KSČ were thus recast in strict conformity with the Soviet model. The only difference of any consequence was the continued existence of the Presidium of the Central Committee for which there was no equivalent in the Soviet system. But the 1951 transfer of the daily direction of the Party's political affairs to the Political Secretariat pushed the Presidium into political semiobscurity and paved the way for its extinction within the next three years.

The next step in the sovietization of the KSČ organization came in December 1952, when a National Party Conference convened to enact new Party Statutes. Since the Soviet mother Party adopted new Party rules at its Nineteenth Congress in October 1952, its obedient child could not act otherwise. "It is understandable," said Gottwald in his report on that "historic Congress" upon his return from Moscow, "that the draft of the new Statutes of our Party is based on the new Statutes of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted by its Nineteenth Congress It is a fact that we have much to learn from our Soviet comrades even in matters of the Party's construction, organization, and work"⁶

In spite of these words of praise for the Soviet system, Gottwald's "creative application of the results of the Nineteenth Congress" led to only one notable alteration of the central organs and that was the careful omission of any mention of the Party Chairman. Though Gottwald continued even thereafter to be tacitly considered Party Chairman, the Statutes were drafted with the anticipation that he would be the last bearer of that august title. Indeed, the title died with him shortly thereafter in March 1953. His successor as President of the Republic and number-one Party man at the time, Antonín Zápotocký, was not awarded any specific Party title and was referred to solely as "member of the Political Secretariat." The direction of the work of the Organizational Secretariat was entrusted to another

⁵ *ibid.*, December 8, 1951.

⁶ *ibid.*, October 24, 1952.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

member of the Secretariat, Antonín Novotný.⁷ The matter was then regularized in September 1953 when, following N. S. Khrushchëv's formal election as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party, Novotný was chosen to fill the same position within the KSČ.⁸

A similar fate met the chairmanship on regional, district, and city levels. In line with Soviet practice and in order to consolidate operative leadership, the new Party Statutes of 1952 replaced the chairmen, who had been elected by the respective Party conferences, by "leading" secretaries. Chosen by the executive committees of the respective Party organizations, these secretaries had to be approved by the committee of the next highest Party level. The only chairmanships retained by the Statutes were those in local and primary units. But instead of being elected, as previously, by plenary sessions of these units, they were henceforth chosen by their executive committees from among their members. Furthermore, since the parallel positions of secretaries in these units were simultaneously eliminated, the said chairmen served for all practical purposes as secretaries, with the title of chairmen appended merely as a consolation prize.

But the main feature of the 1952 reorganization was the resolute drive to replace the existing system of local organizations based on residence with primary units established directly in places of work. "The foundations of the Communist Party must be in production, in the places of work," argued *Rudé právo*. While the system of local organizations may have been adequate for Social Democrats, "for whom the highest struggle was the election," it could not be enough for the Communist Party "which has higher goals From the beginning Lenin and Stalin built a revolutionary party in Russia so that its foundations lay in production"⁹ In pursuance of the prescribed territorial-productive principle the base of the organizational pyramid was completely rebuilt in 1953. Local residence-based organizations in urban areas were abolished and their membership transferred to primary units in factories, business enterprises, offices, and other places of their employment. People in retirement were even assigned to primary units of their former work sites and housewives to those set up in their husbands' places of work. Occasionally, the furor of reassignment went far beyond the Party's

⁷ *ibid.*, March 22, 1953.

⁸ *ibid.*, September 14, 1953.

⁹ *ibid.*, November 9, 1952.

PARTY ORGANIZATION

original intentions, as the overzealous reorganizers kept assigning until some factory units had a majority of members who did not actually work there.¹⁰ When the reorganization was over, what was left in the urban areas was a relatively small number of street organizations to hold under Party aegis those members who did not belong or could not reasonably be transferred to production units. By the time of the Tenth Party Congress in 1954 there were 29,933 production units comprising 67.2 percent of the total number of basic Party organizations as against 1,006 street organizations (2.2 percent) and the corresponding figures were 31,343 working-place units as against 1,643 street organizations as of January 1, 1960.¹¹

The remaining 30.6 percent consisted of 13,623 village organizations. While the territorial-productive principle was drastically applied to urban settlements, the policy was to retain the original territorial principle in rural areas, at least until such time as the bulk of the rural economy was fully collectivized. With the precarious ideological hold of the Party over the peasantry and the dearth of staunch Communists in rural areas, it was deemed strategically more advantageous to have only one Party organization per village, open to both collective and individual farmers. Since many peasant Party members were doing all they could to delay collectivization in their area, any other course might have created a highly embarrassing situation where an undernourished and anemic collective farm unit would have contrasted sadly with a vigorous Party unit of individual farmers, hoping that they could obstruct collectivization more effectively from under the Party's banner.

With the adoption of the new Statutes in 1952 and the resolute reorganization carried out on their basis in 1953, the sovietization of the whole apparatus of the KSČ was brought to its virtual completion. The slight variation in the respective central Party organs of the two countries, resulting from the retention of the waning Presidium as an intermediate organ between the Political Secretariat and the Central Committee's plenum in the KSČ, disappeared in 1954 when the Tenth Party Congress decreed that the Presidium be abolished. Simultaneously, the Political Secretariat was renamed the Political Bureau and the Organizational Secretariat shortened to the Secretariat.¹²

¹⁰ *ibid.*, November 9, 1952, January 16, 1953.

¹¹ *ibid.*, June 12, 1954, and *Život strany*, No. 14 (1960), p. 890.

¹² *Rudé právo*, June 16, 1954.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

Thus, except for the different names of the two highest organs, the Presidium in the USSR and the Political Bureau in Czechoslovakia, there is now a complete identity in central organs. As for the lower organs, the only disparity of any substance which still remains lies in the continued Czechoslovak use of the afore-mentioned territorial principle for Party organization in rural areas. However, far from being a heretical deviation, this specific departure from the Soviet pattern is a legitimate Leninist device approved by the Kremlin for the period of the "transformation of the village to socialism." Once this transformation is completed and agricultural production fully collectivized, the territorial-productive principle will be introduced in rural areas. In fact, the initial steps in this direction have already been taken. A resolution of the Party's Central Committee of December 30, 1957, ordered the establishment of primary Party units in collective farms located in predominantly industrial areas as well as in those agricultural areas where an overwhelming majority of JZD members were Communists. However, as bared by *Život strany* (No. 13, p. 794) in July 1960, only 872 collective farm units were set up as of January 1, 1960, as against 13,191 village Party organizations based on residence.

While the vital need of the KSČ leaders to keep in the good graces of the Kremlin was the main motive force behind most of these rearrangements, there were several other reasons. Besides releasing several tens of thousands of badly needed functionaries for other Party work, the elimination of the "unhealthy dualism" of the Party command through the fusion of the separate functions of chairman and secretary established more clearly the lines of authority and heightened personal responsibility of the leading secretaries. The requirement that the choice of Party secretaries be subject to higher approval helped to tighten still further the reins of control by the superiors throughout the organizational pyramid. So did the transfer of the right to choose secretaries and bureaus from plenary sessions or conferences to the much smaller executive committees. The shift from the territorial to territorial-productive principle for the lowest Party units not only simplified the supervision of the Party's rank and file, but also served to strengthen labor discipline and to help boost the output.

THE PRESENT SYSTEM

Since the "rich experience of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," acknowledged in the very First Article of the Statutes, has

PARTY ORGANIZATION

served the Czechoslovak Communists as their guiding light, it is hardly surprising that the present organizational structure amounts to a small but faithful reproduction of the Soviet original. Also, like her Soviet mother, the Czechoslovak daughter is a being of two widely different faces. The theoretical face, as outlined by the formal phraseology of Party Statutes, radiates broad and serene democracy, while the practical face displays the stern features of oligarchical totalitarianism.

Central Party Organs

According to Party Statutes the supreme organ of the KSČ is the Party Congress which is to meet every four years on the call issued by the Central Committee. An extraordinary congress may be convened on the initiative of the Central Committee and must be convened when demanded by at least one-third of the whole membership of the Party. The powers of the Congress are threefold: (a) It approves the reports of the Central Committee, the Central Auditing Commission and other central organs. (b) It determines the fundamental line of Party policy and tactics, and approves the Party program and statutes. (c) It elects a Central Committee and a Central Auditing Commission and determines their composition.

However, as Shakespeare said, "Thoughts are but dreams till their effects be tried." Three Party Congresses have taken place since the February coup, in 1949, 1954, and 1958, and all three have been assemblies of yes men, greeting with "thunderous ovations" the reports of Party leaders, electing and reelecting unanimously whomever the leaders had proposed, and approving without one vote of dissent the preordained results laid before them. Invariably, it would be resolved that the report of the main Party leader or leaders be considered "as the directives for further work" of the Party. No counter-proposals, spontaneous debates, or embarrassing questions have ever marred the smooth harmony permeating the thirteen to fourteen hundred delegates usually sent to these congresses. In brief, since the communist seizure of power the congresses of the KSČ have become a carbon copy of their Soviet equivalent.¹³ They sharply contrast with the Party's prewar congresses which abounded in lively exchanges of views and tough factional and ideological battles. Even the Eighth

¹³ For further information on Party Congresses see *Rudé právo*, May 26-29, 1949, June 12-17, 1954; *Lidové noviny*, May 31, 1949; *Rudé právo*, June 19-23, 1958.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTNERS

Congress of 1946, though much more conformist than its predecessors, was a debaters' paradise compared to the stifling uniformity of its successors.

The only time when the Party Congress might have become a forum for a genuine debate and a critical opposition might have made itself heard was just after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Khrushchëv's famous speech demolishing the Stalin myth made such a tremendous impression on many Party members and stirred up such hopes of forthcoming major changes that as many as 235 Party organizations dared to voice a demand that an extraordinary Party Congress be convened.¹⁴ Such demands, allegedly made "under the influence of vague notions and various incorrect opinions," were scornfully rejected by the Party leaders and their initiators were pressed to reconsider. Thus Novotný could report to the National Party Conference which met in June 1956 that "a considerable proportion of these organizations became aware of the groundlessness of this demand and withdrew it."¹⁵ By then the Party leaders had already managed to ward off the direct threat of the oppositional *élan* triggered by Khrushchëv's anti-Stalin pronouncement and to force it underground.

A similar spectacle of drab conformity is offered by national Party conferences which may be called by the Central Committee "to discuss urgent matters of Party policy" between the congresses. Even by the terms of the Statutes the National Conference is a powerless institution. All that it is authorized to do is to pass resolutions which are binding only if they are approved by the Central Committee and to replace up to one-fifth of the Central Committee's members. The impotence of the conferences has been amply corroborated by actual practice. Three such conferences were convened between 1948 and 1960. The first met in 1952 to adopt the present Party Statutes; the second was summoned in 1956 to consider the directives for the Second Five-Year Plan and the "situation and the tasks of the Party"; the third was convoked in 1960 to discuss a new Czechoslovak constitution and to approve the Third Five-Year Plan.

The 528 voting delegates attending the 1952 conference unanimously ratified the new Statutes as well as all the replacements of unworthy Central Committee members and alternates laid before

¹⁴ Novotný's speech at the National Party Conference, *Rudé právo*, June 12, 1956.

¹⁵ *ibid.*