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MARXISM
MARXISM-LENINISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Introduction

In addition to the international political circumstances and the specific development of each national economy prior to World War II, post-war economic development in the Central European region was considerably influenced by the theoretical concepts of further post-war economic development. In each country, these theoretical concepts formed unique combinations of the development level of the national economic thought, the experience of the German economy during the war, and the influence of Marxism, pushed through the Communist parties, which at that time had reached a specific phase, perhaps overcome in this region today, called Marxism - Leninism. Regardless the distinct political circumstances conditioning the historical way of the individual Central European countries (CEE) into the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, we are faced by one principal question: could the economic theory of Marxism-Leninism have served as a theoretical conception? In other words, could it have played the same role as Keynesianism did in Western Europe? As this issue can be looked at from two different points of view, we may formulate our answers on two different levels. While on the one hand, we need to ask ourselves whether the content of the Marxist-Leninist economic theory was ever internally consistent and whether its application could have resolved post-war reconstruction problems, on the other hand, it is highly questionable whether any other political and economical conception could have been used at all.

Methodological notes.

My objective is to find out whether the theoretical concepts of managing the national economy, as asserted after World War II in the countries that set out on the path to “build socialism”, actually originated from the initial thoughts of Marxism, or Marxism-Leninism.

My research progressed from the study of Marxism-Leninism as a theoretical work of socialist political economy, based on the conception used in the Soviet Union in 1920s and 1930s. Next, I concerned to point out the extent of knowledge and understanding of Marxism, and in particular Marxism-Leninism, among the economist of the future socialist countries. Then, I wanted to

demonstrate – using the situation in Czechoslovakia in 1945 and the following years as an example – what particular economic and political measures were used by the Communist Party on its way to centrally managed economy and how the Communists managed to reach consensus with other political parties. And finally, I attempted to illustrate on one hand, that although the elements of central planning were not completely new to the country, and on the other hand, that the structure of political power played a key role in gradual application of the principles of Marxism-Leninism to all economic processes. In order to keep the planned extent of my thesis, I concentrated only on theoretical and/or conceptual circumstances in all stages of my research, putting aside the particular economic development in individual countries.

The terminology of post-war economists explaining the principles of Marxism-Leninism differs in many important respects from modern economic terminology. At first because Marx differs from classical political economy and at second also because most publications were written shortly after the end of World War II ordered by the respective Communist Party. Those publications were addressed more to the masses rather than intellectual opponents and had a strong ideological content.

The theory of Marxism-Leninism

I am from a country of which the governments from the 1950s to 1989 explicitly tried to show the world that their economic development materialized and confirmed the theories of Marxism – Leninism in practice. There was even a stand-alone research field called socialist political economy. In the form of given truths that were not subject to discussion and it was deemed, that they expanded the original ideas of Marx concerning the inevitable development of capitalism.

Marxism-Leninism was the application of Marx's political economy to particular conditions in Russia. It was considerably affected by the fact that at that time, proletarian revolution had been successfully completed only in one single country. It contained a conception of non-monetary, central-allocating economy that was to be implemented in a relatively short period of time (several years). Lenin characterised state as a network of production/consumption communes recording production and consumption information. Money, if still existing, was to serve only as an instrument of evidence and control, with banks playing the role of a central accounting department and trade replaced by distribution.

The Marxist political economy called Lenin as sucesor of Marx, which in some aspects surpassed his teachings. Lenin's most important contribution in developing the Marxist political economy was generally considered to be his critical analysis of the new development phase of capitalism, i.e.

imperialism. This analysis was later used as a basis for elaborating the concept of proletariat revolution and proletariat dictatorship, based on the idea that the revolution would first win in one country only. Lenin's concept was first confronted with the views asserted by representatives of liberal nationalism and "legal Marxism".

Of course, Lenin's analyses of the functions of financial capital, mass industry and state interventions did not discover the principles of socialist economic management. Firstly by using of these principles in the transition period from capitalism to communism, they should become the instruments overcoming the market spontaneity. Here, it is important to point out that in the terminology of first post-war Marxists, it was Stalin who "generalised Soviet experience and discovered in it the economic laws of socialism".

The theory of planning (socialist planning) was elaborated in the Soviet Union as early as in the 1920s. The main theorists in this field included Krzsizsanovkyi and Strumilin. They both acknowledged and remained with the existence of relationships based on goods and money, i.e. the exchange of goods (as expressed in terms of classic political economy), thus the existence of private ownership. Even the New Economic Policy declared by Lenin included this institute. Only after it ended, and with the rise of Stalin, did opinions emerge with a greater frequency that relationships based on goods and money must be eliminated. The advocates of this view most often used the argument that the NEP was not a true socialist economy but rather an interim step on the way toward such an economy. The plan, as the primary regulator of the socialist economy, was considered the primary economic law of socialism. However, in the 1930s, when this "law" proved to be unsustainable in view of the significance of plans in the German economy, a new law was formulated; the law of proletariat dictatorship. The first textbook of the socialist political economy, prepared in 1936 and primarily approved by Stalin, stipulated the main law of socialism as ensuring the maximal satisfaction of the constantly growing needs of the society by means of continuous growth and improvement in socialist production. The said textbook also maintained the existence of exchange, which is invoked by the survival of two ownership forms, the state and the cooperative ownerships. The law of planned and proportional development remained the most frequently discussed law of socialist economy. The discussions ensued from the relation between planning and proportionality; frequently, the planning was defined as systematically maintaining proportionality. However, the opinion gradually prevailed that maintaining proportionality was only one, though the primary, element in planning; another required element should be controlling the national economy. These contemplations resulted in a thesis on the necessarily proportional development of socialist economy in contrast to the necessarily disproportional development of capitalist economy, which may only

occasionally be proportional – in an unorganized and partial manner. Together with this went another conclusion, namely that implementing the planned and proportional development is based on the single-minded activities of the Communist Party and state institutions. Its main instrument was the “balancing method” of national economic planning.

Originally, when preparing the national economic plan in the Soviet Union, they used the method of “alternative approximations”, which meant proceeding from industry-based proposals to national economic indicators. The 1930s brought a U-turn in the planning methodology; first, the planners defined the primary economic and political goals for the next period, which the Communists needed, as they used to say, “... to direct the national economic development”. The author of the scheme of the economic balance was Strumilin, in 1936. The basis of every such balance was to be an analysis of the socialist society as a class-free society with a single controlling body, divided into three spheres—production, services, and control. After 1940 the methodology developed by Voznyesensky prevailed, which included a balance of the social product, national product, primary funds, financial balance, and balance of cadres for the entire national economy and each industry. This method was used to compile the balance during the war and thereafter until 1957.

Marxist political economy had almost no tradition in CEE countries. Doubtless a considerable group of economists noticed – its extent made it impossible not to be noticed – the work of Karl Marx. The economists mostly differed in their opinions on Marx’ teachings, depending on whether they understood socialism as a method of production and distribution or as a tactic of the Second International. Only one Czech textbook of Marxist political economy had been published in Czechoslovakia before World War II. Prior to 1948, there had been only one Marxist lecturing the Marxist political economy of pre-socialistic formations among all Czech university lecturers. The situation in all other CEE countries had been very similar.

In order to understand the form of Marxism-Leninism that became the official state ideology of all socialist countries, it is necessary to study the work of the first post-war theorists of Marxism-Leninism. Most of them, however, took part in creation of theoretic conceptions firstly when it became clear that the Soviet model of economic management was going to be adopted almost completely. In addition, almost all their theses were based on the same textbook published in the Soviet Union.

Marx analysed individual laws determining the development of capitalist economy. He identifies the antagonistic difference between the public character of work and private capitalistic appropriation of its results, i.e. private ownership of production means. According to Marxist-Leninist theoreticians the progress of socialism is directly proportional to the level of collective ownership of production means

eliminating the antagonistic disharmony typical for capitalistic production. Expropriation of private property and its take-over by the state is, therefore, regarded as a theoretical necessity (that needs to be verified in practice). All post-war Marxist-Leninist theses define the principal difference between capitalistic and socialistic ways of production as follows. In capitalism, all economic laws function spontaneously, thus creating regular crises. The socialistic way of production is also subject to economic laws, but their nature is known and people have an opportunity to use them to transform reality consciously.

All those theses also quote the law of socialistic industrialisation and the law of agricultural collectivisation as the most important laws of socialism. While the objective of socialistic industrialisation is to increase the proportion of industry in the country's economy, the objective of agricultural collectivisation is to ensure revolutionary support of small farmers by the means of cooperative movement (the latter law was formulated by Marx himself). Socialism is to eliminate completely the existence of social classes. Apart from the aforementioned two principal laws, the socialistic way of production is supposed to be subject to the following additional laws:

- production-based remuneration eliminating exploitation of man by man;
- planning (sometimes also referred to as a law planned development);
- socialistic accumulation; • allocation of production power;
- increase of living standard.

All of them are based on one simple reasoning (rather naive from today's point of view) and certain ease, with which the new order is supposed to resolve all individual problems that the "competing" capitalistic system have been battling for decades. All of them are also supported by a truly unique scientific axiom – their practical functioning was confirmed in the Soviet Union.

Czechoslovak way to socialism.

On its way to socialism, Czechoslovakia had to deal with two key issues: nationalisation and planning. From the legislative point of view, socialism in Czechoslovakia dates back to 24 October 1945 when the then president E. Beneš signed a decree on nationalisation of mines, selected industrial companies, banks and insurance companies. As a result, the state took over the most important industrial and financial subjects (i.e. the most important production means). This decree had a considerable support among the public.

The task of nationalisation was included in the so-called Governmental Programme of Košice adopted by both the representatives of Czechoslovak exile government in London and the officials of the Czechoslovak Communist Party six months earlier, in April 1945, in the town of Košice. This document was binding for the future government of Czechoslovakia regardless of its political structure. Chapter X of the Programme specifies that all assets held or managed by enemies of the nation, such as German and Hungarian nationals, quislings or traitors shall be seized in accordance with a presidential decree in order to ensure all necessary economic functions in “transition period”. All nationalised companies were to be managed in accordance with a two-year plan proposed by the Communists. In May 1946, the plan became an integral part of the declaration of new Czechoslovakian government and on 28 October of the same year, on the anniversary of the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, was symbolically legalised.

After the declaration of the Programme the Communist Party established an Economic Commission whose objective was to prepare organisational conditions for the setup of two-year plan. At the beginning, immediately after the end of World War II, when the planning process was largely an unknown territory, the extent of intervention in the country’s economic structure was subject to very heated discussions. Nevertheless, all political parties regarded the plan as a method of fast post-war reconstruction, including industrialisation of Slovakia. Only the Communists occasionally talked about a milestone on the way to socialism. Seemingly, however, everything remained as before, with the old multi-sectional economic system preserved. All economic processes were monitored by the Economic Council established in May 1945 as a supporting governmental body, with the plan managed by the Central Planning Commission associating specialists delegated by individual political parties. Each party established its own special economic commission consisting of experts sympathising with its political programme.

The first Czechoslovak plan had several characteristic features. Above all, it was a partial plan because it applied directly only to the nationalised part of economy. It was also a central plan, prepared without any participation on the part of production levels. Even though the plan was specified for individual industrial sectors, it did not take into account regional development (except for the industrialisation of Slovakia, where, however, the ideological point of view did play most significant role).

In 1945, Czechoslovakia had an opportunity to follow a very specific way towards socialism based on three-sectional, centrally planned economy. At that time, it still seemed possible that there was an alternative to proletariat dictatorship and Soviet-type state system. Even foreign representatives of economic theory and practice were very eager to see whether a different approach could be successful.

It is necessary to realise that at that time, Czechoslovakia's economic potential was comparable to that of Western European countries and the country was economically much more powerful than the other members of Soviet block. That is why the introduction of central planning could have become an important precedent for possible adoption of some of its aspects throughout Western Europe.

So, why did Czechoslovakia leave the aforementioned way? In order to answer this question, we have to look above all at foreign affairs political circumstances because the Soviet economic model was imported to Czechoslovakia mainly as a result of post-war division of Europe, with one of the most important factors being the presence of the Red Army within its territory. However, I decided to focus more on internal reasons for I regard them as more relevant to the purpose of my study. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia (the Communists as well as other political parties preferred the term "national and democratic revolution"), the situation was ripe for deeper structural changes at least for the following three reasons: pre-war elite significantly discredited, national economy considerably affected by the war and requiring fast reconstruction and above all, existing division of political power enabling the Communists to adopt measures not possible for any other political party.

All political parties associated in the so-called National Front included socialistic ideas and principles in their programmes because they simply could not afford to ignore the socialising tendencies characteristic for the period. However, their attitude to socialistic changes and realisation methods was quite diverse. Even the interpretation of the term socialism was not uniform. The least obvious was rather paradoxically the position of the Communist Party. Although there were no doubts concerning its socialistic profile, it was much less clear how it was going to implement its political programme. Apart from the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, all parties advocated the principle of private ownership, most frequently in combination with collective and state ownership. But even the Communists stated that they were in favour of private ownership of working classes and that they did not intend to use the seized property to create collective or state farms. They argued that nationalisation of large corporations protected small entrepreneurs from being swallowed up by banks and cartels. They also frequently declared that they were not interested in becoming the leading political party of the National Front.

If we accept the thesis that during the years 1945 – 1948 the overwhelming majority of people was in favour of socialism, we have to add that in their minds the term socialism represented the system created after 1945, not after 1948. Only the Communists talked about the fact that Czechoslovakia had already covered “... a substantial distance” on its way to socialism. As early as in the first months after liberation the Communists demanded that the national and democratic revolution continue even further and that the country’s economy be completely nationalised and democratised. The Communist Party pressed not only for total liquidation of the German and Hungarian business elite, quislings and traitors, but also took steps that eventually resulted in gradual elimination of domestic private capital. The very first step was installation of so-called national administrative bodies in companies owned by “enemies of the nation”. As a result, the state effectively took over all most important industrial enterprises even before starting the process of nationalisation. On 29 June 1945, the Co-ordination Committee of the National Front published a document dealing with economic policy in selected sectors, including industry, trade, banking, transport and food production, in the course of transition period. It says that political, economic and military power, together with national independence, can be fully secured only in a socialist economic order. The National Front, at this moment still unified, at least on the outside, expressed its opinion that “... the socialist economic order in which all production means are in various forms (i.e. public, co-operative or municipal) owned by the society, cannot be our immediate goal.” The argumentation concerned exclusively German and Hungarian bourgeoisie or Czech and Slovak quislings. All other classes and groups were to participate in economic and political decisions. However, the Communists managed to put through an article expressing their fears that “... the predatory interest of parasitic individuals and groups ...” might prevail “... over the interest of working people in towns and rural areas”. The Communist Party demanded that the national administrators installed in nationalised companies be checked on daily (!) basis in order to make sure that they protected public and not private interests. The strictest control applied to banks, so-called key industrial sectors (mining industry, power production, heavy industry) and insurance companies. In addition, all companies operating in the aforementioned sectors had to become members of so-called National Associations warranting unified administration and co-ordination with other economic sectors (with national administration supposedly distinguishing the new body from former associations of industrialists and cartels). Similar associations were also planned for other industrial and agricultural sectors.

In mid-July 1945, the Ministry of Industry established the Central Commission for Nationalisation of Industry. Its first task was to prepare the text of a nationalisation decree (a draft was completed within a month). The Commission’s activities were being influenced by all political parties through their

representatives. Thanks to their co-operation with the Social Democratic Party, the Communists managed to legalise nationalisation of all companies with more than 500 employees. Practical application of the nationalisation decrees agreed upon in Governmental Programme of Košice completely muddled the initial plans of all its participants, except for the Communists. Whilst the originally planned nationalisation of heavy industry affected a relatively small part of electorate, the nationalisation of all “large corporations” put across by the Communist Party had an immense impact on most voters.

In the course of 1947, the Communist Party created an internal body of confidants (instructors) working in selected economic institutions who were to act as a certain extended arm of its Central Committee. Individual confidants were to pursue the political line of the Communist Party in the course of their professional managerial tasks. As they were to be liable for their actions directly to the Central Committee, they also received relatively extensive political authorisations. The plans of economic experts within the Communist Party show particular proposals concerning individual ministries, including Ministry of Finance, the National Bank and other important financial institutions. It is clear from the preserved archive files that in the course of 1945, the Communists frequently discussed particular staffing of the highest executive ministerial posts, including deputy ministers and heads of sections.

Later on, especially in 1947, all negotiations between the Communists and other political parties were heavily influenced by the anti-millionaire’s campaign organised by the Communist Party. Soon, it became obvious that total elimination of private sector had formed an integral part of the Communist Party’s plans since the very first moment. In the same year, the Economic Commission also established an operative board whose main objective was to gather information on private enterprises in all sectors, including industry, wholesale and building industry. Step by step, the board created an extensive statistical review of all largest entrepreneurs that included particular information on their turnover, numbers of employees, political orientation, etc. Individual regional organisations were preparing reports on local businessmen that were later updated by information provided by the intelligence service of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance. The resulting materials were used as source documents for massive economic inspections.

Another initiative of the Communist Party with the same objective, i.e. to discredit its political opponents, was the preparation of lists of economic experts sympathising with other political parties and establishment of social and even personal contacts with them. Later on, the Communists selected approximately twenty “most important specialists” that were to be systematically followed.

They also very closely monitored potential influence of capitalistic ideas on individual political parties paying special attention to possible political involvement of the owners and representatives of large private corporations.

It took just three years for Czechoslovakia to leave its way towards popular democracy and turn into a socialistic state. It took just three years; the old dominating social classes were completely removed and replaced by new elite. The properties and social positions of first ones disappeared, but there arised - almost unobserved - the properties and positions of second ones. It took just three years; it came the time, when the entire Western civilisation became for all CEE states solely imperialistic. It came the time, when former coalition partners were being described as reactionaries. It came the time, when the Communist Parties became the only leaders of its people.

The Limits of alternative Solutions: The Missing Choice

The post-war economic development of Central and Eastern Europe could have theoretically led up to any of the following three systems:

- Liberal system
- Mixed economy with certain level of state interventionism
- Centrally planned system of the Soviet type.

My study of the development of economic theory before 1945 convinced me firmly that no return to liberalism after World War II was possible. On the other hand, however, in CEE existed relatively strong conditions for a certain type of mixed economy. Those conditions result of both, pre-war economic thought at first, secondly of the economic model introduced by the Nazi Germany in all occupied territories. Finally, the reason why all CEE countries proceeded from mixed economy to centrally planned economy is their implementation of Soviet-style administration model.

Firstly, economic thought

Economic thought in the CEE countries in the inter World War period was a compilation of four uniquely combined streams of the world economic thought: the classic school, the German historic school, the Marxism, and the neoclassic school – and from this stream, the Austrian subjective school in particular. It arose from the tradition of the German historic school, adopted certain postulates of the Austrian subjective school and developed them further. Despite these historically oriented streams

of thought, the CEE environment to a certain extent possessed knowledge of the Anglo-American economic schools, either acquired directly or through the German environment. This is evidenced by the current translations of the latest English works. The “Swedish approach” was also subjected to study. In the mid-1930s, the environment formed by economists close to the Social Democratic Party also created good ground for the fundamental work of Keynes.

The cause of this eclecticism – and to a certain extent also the lack of any distinctive economic school in CEE countries – is (from the economic point of view) circumstantial: it is a result of their geographical and cultural closeness to Austria and Germany. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were influenced by two economic schools, the first of which, German, determined the character of academic education of most inter-war economists, whilst the second, Austrian, attempted to update the rehashed (neo-classicist) idea for the 20th century. While the former constrained, the latter broadened the horizons of practical economists. The particular degree of their establishment within the given territory to a large extent affected the depth of discontinuity of its economic science in inter-war and post-war periods. While Czechoslovakia and Poland were more influenced by the German historic school, Hungary was much more affected by the Austrian subjective school. The Austrian subjective school represents return to classical political economy, which, however, had almost no tradition in Central Europe. It is based on the presumption that all economic processes have the nature of law, while explaining this fact through principles followed by the people satisfying their needs (above all the principle of marginal utility). The Austrian school brought to Central Europe the idea of classical political economy saying that the capitalistic production system based on market regulation is the most effective production system available.

Whereas the classic political economy was strongly influenced by the philosophic individualism of Locke and Hume, the work of Hegel played the role of philosophic inspiration in the German environment. In his concept, a developing human society is nothing more than a demonstration of the national spirit; from the ethical point of view, the state takes up a leading role to the detriment of the individual. And this is the core aspect in the thought of the German historic school regarding national economy. Not only did they reject economic liberalism, which they considered an obstacle to the industrialization of Germany, but they considered economic issues as equal to political issues, thus opening the door for the state to interfere in the economy in a kind of neomercantilism. Following the teachings of Hegel, they postulated that the purpose of political economy was to analyze economic and social life in order to allow the nation – not the individual – to attain its goal. The second generation of the German historic school considered as a part of political economy that specific recommendations should be made for the practical economic policy, being deeply interested in social

issues. One of its leading representatives, Wagner, is regarded as the predecessor of the modern theories of mixed economy. In his opinion, the economy always consists of two sectors, the private and the state sectors, with a general trend of growing importance of the state sector.

In spite of its relatively extensive tolerance for state intervention, it does not advocate the inclusion of planning elements in economic management. That is because its proponents were theoreticians standing outside the official stream of economists and taking no part in practical economic politics. Among the first propagators of economic planning in Czechoslovakia was, for example, J. Macek, later the most important Czechoslovak representative of Keynesianism who introduced J. M. Keynes (but also Harold Laski, Barbara Wooten or Lenin's domestic opponents) to the general public. During World War II most CEE economists (whether working in exile or within individual illegal structures at Nazi-occupied territories) moved towards social-democratic economic ideas, creating conceptions based on various types of mixed economy. All of them included some common elements, such as agrarian reforms, nationalisation of key industrial sectors and active role of the state in the planning process of post-war reconstruction and economic development.

Secondly, experience in German central planning

The Nazis were aware that introducing their system of direction in the occupied countries was the best way how to control the economy of the given country. In line with the German economic plans, production was defined in terms of volume and structure, and so were the resources needed. The market function was replaced with goals set forth in directives. Nevertheless, private ownership was not eliminated – every company remained in private hands, yet the rights of the owners were considerably restricted. The war economy in the occupied territories affected all spheres of social life. It was distinctive in several main attributes:

- 1) State control of industrial production, a system of mandatory supplies in agriculture, and a compulsory association of entrepreneurs. The state assigned goals to companies, and using directives, allocated resources to be used for the production. Similarly, the state forbade certain activities;
- 2) Rationing system in supply, when the market was replaced with a voucher system;
- 3) Defining binding prices and controlling their observance;
- 4) State control of wages and distribution of the labor force by means of Labor Offices. This policy introduced the instrument of forced labor;
- 5) Controlling foreign trade and the payment system.

By analysing the economy of the Nazi Germany, Walter Eucken demonstrated that in centralallocating mechanism private enterprises as well as the economy on the whole behaves in the same way as state-owned corporations, i.e. minimising their production and maximising their demand for all centrally allocated elements, such as employees, materials and investments. Prices no longer serve as a criterion of effective allocation and production is based on central plans disregarding costs. Permanent imbalance results in production of so-called narrow profiles, with demand significantly exceeding supply not only in the area of consumer goods but also in the area of production means. Free and open market is then replaced by a rationing system (and black market), where money no longer plays its role of the regulator of economic competition and becomes just an instrument of accounting evidence.

As a rule, the Germans penetrated the headquarters of all corporations showing significant concentrations of capital situated within the occupied territories and took them over. All such enterprises were, therefore, nationalised immediately after the war. The war thus affected the economy of future communist countries in three different ways at once. Apart from causing massive material losses, it also directly contributed to the implantation of central management of economic processes in all occupied territories and German satellites. And finally, the post-war political arrangement of Europe agreed upon by the victorious powers enabled the Soviet Union to enforce its economic system within its sphere of interest. It is, therefore, possible to say that the war accelerated the implementation of central management elements in this economic area.

Thirdly, the implantation of the soviet governance model

Each of the countries within Central and Eastern Europe was on a different level of economic development: there was the industrially advanced Czechoslovakia, the agrarian Hungary and backward Bulgaria. The key issue in this context, solved by Marxist economists throughout Europe, was whether a phase similar to Russia's New Economic Policy (NEP) would have to be realised in other countries following the victory of the revolution. Why, the NEP was a reaction to the victory of the socialist revolution in one country, and an economically undeveloped country at that. It was an unusual transition to socialism, justified by the interruption of the worldwide socialist revolution. Therefore, the NEP strategy was focussed on coexistence with capitalism within the country, and the simultaneous development of socialist positions.

The goal of post-revolutionary Russia was industrialisation (as a way to eliminate economic backwardness). If we look away from the effectiveness of soviet industrialisation for a moment, we

¹⁴Inovace studijního programu Ekonomie a hospodářská správa s akcentem na internacionalizaci výuky, individuální práci se studenty a praxi. CZ.2.17/3.1.00/33332

must admit that for the CEE countries that were small in size and had low populations and limited raw materials resources, making them incapable of creating an economy with a universal structure, a route of this sort was clearly unfeasible. Under fundamentally altered political conditions compared to the year 1917, the capitalistic production methods were subordinated to socialist methods. Contrary to the 1920s in Soviet Russia, this was taking place in countries, some of which were industrially advanced (like Czechoslovakia) and which had developed under democratic conditions before the war. The reality after World War II clearly confirmed the Trotsky line and refuted the of "true Marxism". The need to liquidate private business in the interest of political victory did not change, although under varying foreign policy circumstances. The proletariat dictatorship needed economic power to rely on. If found this power in the "key positions", which were acquired through industrialisation and forceful takeovers particularly in the areas acquired by the state in industrially advanced countries through economic instruments. The entire economy was controlled from these key positions – but with the dominance of purely power-based interference of state over the use of economic instruments in the form of currency and structural policies or fiscal processes. The key positions were used to control the forms of private enterprise that were to be permitted (in less economically advanced countries), respectively left intact (in economically advanced countries such as Czechoslovakia).

All of the nations of the future Communist block entered the route to socialism through justified settlement with quislings and traitors. During the first two post-war years, Communist dictators concentrated on grasping political power and eliminating any form of opposition that could be weaving plans for a free and democratic organisation. Besides the nationalisation of industry and land reforms, they used two- or three-year plans for post-war reconstruction. During the implementation of these plans, economic management was a mix of directive direct planning, indirect control through the division of production resources, consumer goods and supply obligations, and a free market. The latter element was minimised to the same degree as the elements of a controlled economy were maximised. With one exception, indirect control was considered to be a concession to directive planning, the pinnacle of which was the total planning of society's entire life.

The aforementioned exception was the Yugoslavian model of state enterprise management. It was based on self-governed (cooperative) ownership in combination with a regulated market mechanism. The company's entrepreneurial and social functions were integrated into a single body – the self-administration. Almost all the CEE countries were fascinated with the concept for some time, when considering the application of cooperative and group ownership in industry. Finally, it was rejected by all except Yugoslavia. In later years, the Yugoslavian method proved that the combination of

entrepreneurial and employee interests within one whole leads to the repression of entrepreneurial interests and the dominance of social functions over business functions, with all of the negative consequences for the conduct of enterprises and the economy as a whole.

Non-Communist parties in Czechoslovakia also initially defended the concept that national companies should not belong to the state, but rather the companies's management. State enterprises were to have the position of independent legal entities. These considerations on the functioning of a Communist economy were based on the idea that enterprises can act independently while remaining mere executive links in a perfect central plan, which must first determine the proportions in which the economy will develop while continually satisfying all the needs of its members. The market, which determines the proportion through the "ex post" price mechanism and with losses, becomes useless within this type of system. The Communists fought contested this concept, claiming the risk that it could later become a means for the transformation of state enterprises into joint stock companies and the admittance of private capital therein.

Actual developments in this issue in the CEE countries led to the weakening of the enterprises economic independent in the first post-war years. Firstly, through the centralisation of financial resources and secondly through the centralisation of a number of economic functions into the hands of central corporate bodies, controlled by the Communists. Moreover, the state interfered in the operation of these enterprises through its allocation policy, state control of price policies, direction of employment policies and through renewal plans, while unilaterally emphasising the need to ensure full employment, eliminated shortages, etc. All this took place in a situation when there was no formulated theory for planned control and no concept for the creation of a plan had been adopted.

The centrally controlled and partially planned economy was not a complete novelty in the given region. The expanding share of the state sector was already evident between the wars, and the Nazi occupation brought a model of centralized direction in economy that proved very viable. It was the Communist Party that understood this the most. The Soviet experts who came to Czechoslovakia after World War II to "introduce" the planned and centrally directed economy did not bring a new system; it was already there. One of the authors of the planning mechanism in Czechoslovakia, Kurt Rozsypal, admitted much later in his memoirs that the system of control that Czechoslovakia introduced after World War II was to a great extent adopted from the time of the occupation. The Soviet experts only introduced technical procedures that in the subsequent phases enabled the elimination of the private ownership of means of production. And of course, they brought the ideological apparatus to explain each of their steps taken on the basis of power. The specific Soviet control in practice depended primarily on the political situation in the nation, on the fights of economic and social structures. The

dogmas of the socialist political economy were implanted in a completely different economic structure, creating risks for future development. The Soviet system of control and planning was not systematically described anywhere at that time; the experts and advisors only knew the system within their narrow field of specialization.

Like in Soviet Russia in the twenties and later, alternative solutions did not have sufficient support in Central and Eastern Europe after the war, because the Communists effectively displaced it throughout the transition period. It is doubtless that the battle for power, which liquidated the opposition in the interest of the party's unity, destroyed not only the effective controlling mechanisms of political power, but also eliminated the possibility of recognising facts objectively. During three years, the soviet economic system was implanted almost totally into the economies of these countries. The specific way to socialism ended in the CEE countries with the adoption of the soviet model of political and organisational power.

We can only speculate how the economies of CEE countries would have developed, if Stalin and Churchill had not toyed with a piece of paper and a blue pen at the October negotiations in Moscow in 1944. However, one thing is certain: The Soviet Union implemented a form of economy into these countries, which was absolutely foreign to their development to date. The existence of central direction during World War II says nothing about the direction of CEE countries to central administration or about what the populations of these countries really wanted and expected from the post-war developments. It only proves that there was some experience with central control in the monitored territory, largely enforced by the occupants in these nations. However, it is more than likely that many of these countries would have sought a remedy to their post-war crisis in a mixed economy; in Czechoslovakia and Poland, it is highly probable that the concept would have been based on Keynes's teachings, because it had a number of supporters in the area. The active role of the state in the economy was no foreign term, and its expansion did not pose a substantial threat to any of the interest groups in economy.

No escape: Dissolution and Adaptation

Between the wars Europe saw two systems of centrally planned economy developing, which enclosed Central Europe in a manner nearly impossible to escape. It became obvious that inside the future Soviet bloc the thoughts of strengthening the state's active role in the economy were living. This stemmed from the prevailing influence of the German historic school in this territory, Marxist postulates disseminated through Communist programs, and from a fairly wide acceptance of

Keynesian thoughts in social democratic spheres with political power. Many of the economists oriented in this direction gathered soon after the war within left-wing power blocks.

Walter Eucken, the spiritual father of the German economic marvel, neatly termed the years following World War I a period of economic and political experimentation. Before 1914 the economic processes in European countries were directed very differently from after 1918, differently from the period of the Great Depression of 1929-1932. Experiments followed in Germany, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden and of course, in the USA. Those experiments did not surpass the limits of private ownership in any of the countries. Nor did the theories advocated in Central Europe after World War II emphasize requirements for radically abolishing private ownership. Yet they were present in a latent form. Apart from the two wars that affected the lives of the people in the first half of the twentieth century, the ideas that better control of the economy can solve social issues also played a role. Ideologies tied to the interests of their creators and advocates, as instruments of fights for power, during the 19th and 20th centuries assumed the form of redemption-like teachings accepted by entire nations. Power blocks were constituted which waged fights for power under the banner of such ideologies in order to win and control economic and political positions. In the crucial area of the political spectrum, the opinion prevailed that development toward centralized control and planning was inevitable; the opinion that it was time to implement Marx' famous sentence that until that time philosophers only interpreted the world, and then it was time to change it. Eventually, the tragedy of the then future Communist countries was the belief that the centrally controlled economic process tended to expand. And so many of those who sincerely believed they were building a just order actually assisted in creating and strengthening an order without freedom.

A centrally controlled economy cannot be mistaken for the institute of collective ownership. In terms of ownership, there are two types of centrally administrated economy: one with private ownership and the other with collective ownership. The method of centralized planning enabled the existence of market forms of economy, a brisk natural exchange, and self-sufficient agricultural sectors in each country. Only the prevalence of cooperative, collective or solidarity-based methods of production and their effects in all spheres of social life necessarily brought with it the retreat of private ownership, and it turned out to be just a matter of time before this was actually eliminated. And this point of time was determined by the growing need of the ruling elite not to share economic and political power any longer.

The communist elite scrambling for power understood the need to present the requirement for the collective ownership of means of production as the materialization of social justice; this idea took deep root in the minds of people, as did the injustice of the private division of property. They came

with the thesis that all profits generated should belong to the people. And here we need to discern two critical moments: the issue of ownership became the fundamental issue of the economic (and social) policy, and introducing collective ownership was presented literally as a synonym for resolving the social issue. Collective ownership played two roles in the then future Communist bloc: gaining positions of power, and securing them later.

The existence or non-existence of the market is a significant qualitative difference between the centrally controlled and the monopoly market economy. A centrally controlled economy represents the greatest possible concentration of economic power. By taking over industry, agriculture and banking, the state extends its competencies. It assumes the position of power of a universal concern that owns all means of production. However, collective ownership is not available to or disposed of by each member of the society as a co-owner of all factories etc., but to a bureaucratic apparatus that controls the entire economy. Individual members of society have to resort to officials who manage the production apparatus; however, they alone have no influence, being dependent and uncertain.

As soon as the economic order starts to be dominated by elements of a centrally planned economy, all economic institutions change their nature as well. The ownership right, banks, firms, unions and labor offices continue to exist, yet they assume a considerably different content. Ownership right no longer gives the bearer the right to act independently and to dispose of property. Nor do banks or firms operate on commercial principles, they only fulfill the goals that they were assigned by the plan on the basis of the central balance. The unions act as a transfer lever that has no specific task; they only transfer the government's slogans to the working classes. The labor offices do not work for the unemployed; on the contrary, they make sure that no member of the society escapes the prepared network of artificially generated full employment.

It is doubtless that the ways of considering and solving post-war economic problems had to follow up on the heritage of the past in terms of economic theory and economic-political practice. Considering the specific route of the individual CEE countries towards socialism means accepting the hypothesis, which was not even given time to develop because it was displaced so quickly in the political battle. This hypothesis is the creation of a body containing an obvious pleonasm in its very name: a popular democracy. Within the framework of this hypothesis, the defeat of fascism was simultaneously a defeat of the domination of private ownership and the strengthening of the Soviet Union not only as a nation, but also as a model of state governance. The newly founded "popular democracies" were supposed to confirm the teachings of Marxist classics, which claim that there is a different way to socialism than the proletariat dictatorship. The transition of the individual countries

was meant to show that Marxism-Leninism is not schematic, but rather that it is a theory capable of analysing the specific situation.

A characteristic feature of the Communists progress was emphasis not on the political, but on the economic aspects of the programme, in which widely acceptable compromises were possible. Solving the issues of economic recovery meant interfering in the ownership structure of capitalistic society and realising profound reforms, the implementation of which would be firmly linked to the political battle and the factual liquidation of opposition. Czechoslovakia, the economically most advanced CEE country with the longest democratic traditions, continued to seek its way to socialism for the longest time, only to abandon it entirely and accept the soviet governance model in full. This despite the fact that, according to the original Marxist theory, it had the best conditions for the victory of the socialist revolution. The basic features of the specific route to socialism were:

- Fatal changes in the ownership structure
- Total centralisation of the economic management system
- Subjective approach to territorial and sector restructuring

Secondly, it is doubtless that the representatives of the communist parties learned from the revolutions after the end of World War I and from the opportunities provided by the Russian revolution. Based on these two experiences, they developed a strategy and tactics during the war for their approach after the end of World War II, in close cooperation with the Soviet Communist party. The roots of the specific way to socialism and its failures lie undoubtedly in the period of World War II. The opinions that were enforced in CEE countries after the war may have (and did) differed considerably from Stalin's opinions. The core of all these considerations was clearly a relationship with the non-proletariat urban and rural classes. Within a few years, however, Lenin's thesis was confirmed, which claimed that the socialist revolution is enforced through the overtaking of power by the working class, meaning a proletariat dictatorship. This is merely due to the fact that radical social ideas remained hidden under the surface. On the outside, it may have seemed that the communists are still interested only in a national and democratic revolution.

It was even shown that in general, the "transition from capitalism to socialism" in the individual CEE countries as the same as in Soviet Russia. There were analogical tasks, similarly formulated phases (including the unique features of each country) and there was the omnipresent leader – whether he arose from the war or thereupon glorified. The individual phases and steps bore his name. The theory commonly called Marxism was termed Stalinism in the post-war years. The specific way of the individual CEE countries towards socialism exploited the experiences from the course of the NEP and its termination by Stalin at the end of the twenties. Here, the communists found inspiration for

the definition of their relationship to the middle classes, the private sector, to the means of regulating national enterprises, and particularly to the methods of taking over political power; although this idea took on various contents in the individual countries. The shorter the distance overcome by the individual CEE countries on the road to an advanced economy and democratic social establishment, the more accurately the soviet model of the revolution repeated itself. Therefore, the specific way of any given country towards socialism may only be spoken of in terms of how the actors at the time understood the concept of the socialist revolution – and to what extent they identified it with the soviet model.

Finally, it is doubtless that the socialist national economists based their concepts on mere ideas about the possible functioning of a socialist, non-market economy, without being able to actually rely on experts, educated by market economies, during their practical controlling activities. This contributed significantly to the fact that the "... economic mechanism rapidly crystallised into its central-allocating, strongly bureaucratic form, and that the formation of preferences (strategies) for political development gained a permanent, strongly ideological-political character." The ideology transformed into apologetics for the existing political actions, and the theory that generalised the reality of building socialism became a servant to ideology. Theory could reveal nothing of the essence of real processes, and practice reacted voluntaristically to its encounters with reality by applying the "from wall to wall" policy. Corruption, the predatory interests of individual and groups in instant profit, and a certain form of indifference to any social needs and values, became the moving forces of the political-economic mechanism.

If any part of the national economic experts, who gained their experience and knowledge under the conditions of mature private economy, remained in any of the countries (such as Czechoslovakia and Poland), they generally joined the services of the Communist party. Many were members of the Communist Party even before the war. Some studied at western European universities between the wars. Only three economists of those that remained in the CEE countries and continued to develop the theory of Marxism-Leninism became internationally acknowledged economists: M. Kalecki, O. Lange and J.Kornai; the first two are valued more for their scientific engagements in English and the USA than for their publications after returning home. The fate of people whose scientific activities were forbidden either temporarily or definitively was typical, for example the Czechoslovak economists L. Frejka and J. Goldmann.

The transition of CEE countries to socialism was not conducted under a integral theory, nor the theory of Marxism (Marxism-Leninism respectively) as a unique economic theory that offers a new concept

of controlling a mixed economy. Marxism – Leninism was not a theoretical concept. Introducing common ownership of means of production was not the implementation of theoretical postulates, but a practical political step. Marx' ideas would have had to include elimination of the state together with eliminating private ownership and introducing the collective ownership of means of production. But this did not happen. On the contrary, the centralized state continued to be strengthened. It was not Marxism; it was a vulgarized form that was meant to serve as a form of fighting for power. The tragedy of the CEE countries lay in the fact that it impacted their fate at the moment when they were searching for a new economic and social orientation following the hardships of World War II.

NATIONALISM

NATIONALISM IN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Introduction

In view of economic effects, nationalism could show certain way in searching for the optimum size of an economic unit. As frequently as nationalism creates larger national units it tends to break down the existing large ones – Czechoslovakia, however, was a multi-national state in this (temporary) optimum size, which fact complicates the matter enormously. Czechs were “destined” to share a common space with other nations for long centuries. The formation of the Czechoslovak Republic changed only one aspect of this sharing radically: before 1918, Czech had been in the position of a subordinate ethnic group (nation constituting itself) with all social and political consequences. After 1918, though the national composition of the society did not change markedly, Czechs gained their nationally-demarcated state where Germans became the largest minority having their own national state in the immediate neighbourhood. As the mutual comparison of Czech and German successes in the varied areas of life of this society during the whole nineteenth century marked the thinking and the value criteria of the members of both nationalities, it is quite natural that the new (renewed) economic elites were stuck in the nineteenth century with the full weights of their personalities, seemingly unable to conceive any new strategy in the first years.

Nation and Nationalism

Nationalism always tries to put the feeling of unity with a larger unit into people’s minds. In the opposite value angle of view, it seeks to force people into the feeling of insufficient satisfaction, protection, and even danger. If the psychological presumption of grouping of individuals consists in the trustworthy human need to achieve one’s own confirmation through devotion to a supraindividual society, then it is rather different in economic relations. The economic man is “devoted” to satisfying his individual needs. If for him it is more profitable to remain an individual in the economic point of view, he will. If, on the other hand, it is more advantageous to join into groups and enter into an agreement, he will do so. The theory of games shows that he is always ready to break such agreement. It also teaches us that if every party to an agreement chooses its own strategy, though optimal for it, it will not always lead to an optimum result. The nationality of those with whom the economic man

enters into agreements plays no relevant role regarding the possibility of generalizing the traced tendencies. The economic man always enters into agreements which are optimal for him, except for the situation when he acts in an environment that put barriers to free competition – through misusing national feeling in our case. Reference to national feeling served a quantitatively limited group on its way to grasp or keep holding power and, at the same time, justified this way both a priori and ex post. Economy simply became the rewarding field of action for an idea of work for a nation, the idea bordering with an illusion with which the remaining part of the society should sometimes be driven and sometimes lulled. In reality, however, not the national interests were involved but those of that part of the society which had ambitions to confirm and strengthen its position of an economic-political elite.

Out of the psychological motives which bring nationalism into life, frustration from one's own inadequacy (failure in the market process in the economic sense of the word) which may result in an aggressive reaction of economic weaker people against stronger ones comes into account in the sphere of economic relations. It is nothing else than an attack on the positions of those who have confirmed their success in the market process by those who are still waiting for such confirmation.

This rivalry caused by frustration takes on national features at the moment when

- a more successful competitor is characterized with his nationality;
- the state power tends to place nationally-selective barriers to the free competition, as if saying: "You won't chum with that one!" It is however important that when the agitation level fails or the economic thinking prevails, the state approaches to this step, which is extreme, non-standard and harmful in the market environment. As if cards were shuffled in the middle of a game. Through this step, the state paralyses the price, the main coordinator of the market process, virtually in all its performance functions. The price stops informing about the rarity of inputs, motivating producers and consumers to react to its changes as it is not possible to distinguish precisely the influence of market mechanisms and state regulation at any moment, and, finally, stops providing for the effective allocation of resources. Through restricting the function of the price mechanism, the market rather inclines to the position of poor competition, causing finally an increased uncertainty in the decision-making process of the economic subjects, which results in the decrease of credibility of the national economy as a whole, reduces capital inflow, throttles the economic growth and, consequently, lowers the good of the society, though it has risen under the banner of raising it. If the state follows a protectionist policy towards other states under the same banner, it always covers all citizens on both sides of this policy including the members of national minorities. It is therefore not nationalism but protectionisms. Nationalism would occur at the moment when

the state aims its protectionist measures exclusively towards one particular nationally-defined state. It could further concern acts of economic policy aimed against the members of national minorities within the state. We know that Czechoslovakia did not assume such a policy.

Was the aim of the supporters of the policies described above to strengthen their own country economically as a society of nation-defined people, to increase the level of its industrial and agricultural production, and to provide for the good (though not defined) of the society? Was the wealth of the nation the relevant goal? In confrontation of these questions and being aware of the so far fragmentary empirical research, I would propose to name all the manifestations identified so far as “economic nationalism” in the First Republic period with two terms: economic emancipation and national economism.

Economic emancipation experienced its peak prior to the formation of independent Czechoslovakia. I would characterize it as a requirement for levelling the economy of the Czech nation with that of Germany. European Enlightenment came with the idea of equality of people as well as continuous and progressive development of the material civilization. The future Czech captains, however, wanted to reach the position of German capital for their own benefit, not for the chimera of the common or national-economic interests.

So I don't see the Czechoslovak economic emancipation as a process of economic stimulation of the Czech national market subjects but as agitation initiated through concrete historical circumstances in favour of the nationally determined parties of a competitive fight. It is the proof of how effectively national feeling can be used to enforce narrow personal or group economic interests. The most important role was played by the reference to the need of economic emancipation at the agitation level, its significant attributes being the overestimation of own abilities and the only target: Germany or the German industry and capital in general. And although it seems to be a mere non-scientific “attack on feelings” in this position, it transformed into a tactical procedure aimed at gaining unilateral benefits in the competitive fight. The characteristics of the rationality or irrationality of such procedure change with observer's characteristics and interests. However, its non-democratic substance demagogically justified as protection against foreign capital persists.

With utmost circumspection, I would propose to use the term of national economism for all other manifestations traditionally called “economic nationalism” in the economic relations in interwar Czechoslovakia. Economism, contrary to economic behaviour, is only characterized with the requirement for good living with minimum efforts thanks to benefits, contacts, and even through breaking rules. I understand national economism in the meaning of non-standard economic relations, situation misuse, and politically motivated creation of a highly imperfect market situation where free

access to industries is not possible, the disqualifying characteristic being just the nationality of the capital owner. The economic relations were transformed into the ones of economism by the fact that, in informal negotiations, the nationally foreign capital was refused but kept in the country actually in the state of uncertainty in many cases, which fact suited the Czech and Slovak national market subjects as it gave them the possibility to reach capital growth or achieve extraordinary profits for a limited period of time, i.e. to experience seeming expansion which lasted to the moment only when it turned out that the capital security of the country was insufficient, the foreign capital considered the Czechoslovak environment uncertain, even the still allied countries were not willing to provide loans, and the crown strengthened owing to speculation waves, and to that moment only when these privileged market subjects had to bear the consequences of their decisions. For they were already borne by the society as a whole and included competition limitation, growth of prices and taxes, growth of state sector indebtedness, lack of financial funds, and economic development deceleration. National economism does not unify but separates nation members. National economism divides the society strictly into the groups of manufacturers and consumers, while manufacturers are its supporters and their economic interests are its target. National economism benefits the group limited in number, i.e. manufacturers, splitting them further by a national key into Czech (Czechoslovak) ones and the other. A law even applies here, stating that what is good for the manufacturer is not good or is neutral for the consumer; free competition barriers provide short-term benefits to those manufacturers whom they do not affect, but all consumers experience price growth, taxpayers are burdened with the growth of taxes and indebtedness of the state sector, the economy as a whole is burdened with the lack of financial funds and the inevitable deceleration of economic growth. This poses a real risk that, eventually, even the manufacturers would be affected adversely by the situation from which they have had the short-term profit. And was this group ready to bear the negative impacts of its steps? The answer is no based on the research realized up to now. What seems to be victory at first sight, i.e. the enforcement of the Czech (Czechoslovak) element in the country economy, is nothing we can actually consider as a nation's benefit in the economic point of view.

It is beyond all doubt that national economism influenced the development and character of the Czechoslovak First Republic's economy very strongly. If an economic growth occurred in the period, it was not due to the assertion of the purely Czechoslovak element in the economy as a whole. In my belief, even economic growth does not justify its use. Both economic emancipation and national economism do not follow from nations but from economic interests. They are not of a nation-forming nature, unless we admit a heretical idea that every nationalism is based on (or chronologically preceded by) the personal ambitions of its leaders which, not infrequently, assume the nature of

economic ambitions. After all, even incomes from the performance of a clerical function have a financial dimension which is surely accompanied by moral incomes from the clerical function which, at the same time, multiply further the financial receipts.

Conclusion

Without undertaking a thorough research it is not possible to refuse the thesis that certain economic rivalry between the Czech and German business levels could be the accelerator of the Czech economic regeneration in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is however problematic to place this rivalry into the environment of newly formed Czechoslovakia – i.e. the environment where a multi-national state gave birth of a new, also multi-national one where the roles of individual nations changed radically: the periphery transformed into a centre still agitating in favour of the Czech national economic interests. In view of the encounter of nationally different economic subjects, pragmatism already dominated quite clearly.

AGRARIANISM I

PEASANT PARTIES IN THE CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1890 – 1938.

Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the research of the political party system in Czechoslovakia. It is based on a comparative analysis of political programs of peasant parties and political agrarianism is placed in the context of both the political party system in general and, historically, within the Czech lands and Czechoslovakia.

The position of agrarianism is the comparison criteria I have chosen for this ‘program’ study. After characterising the position of a given political entity within the political party system, I go on to describe the programs of individual parties and then carry out a comparison using the criteria mentioned above. The Czechoslovak Agrarians are given most space as their program has been analysed most extensively so far. In my research into peasant parties, I focus almost exclusively on the socio-economic factors that lead to the formation of political party systems. I also follow only one direction, albeit a crucial one, of ideological concepts – the programs of political parties. It was in this direction that political parties endeavoured to capitalise on the elections. The analysis and subsequent comparison of the programs might provide some answers to the questions of what role ideological concepts actually played, and whether political parties aspired to gain political power in order to primarily realise a certain ideal and fulfil their ideological concepts, or whether their outward appearance – the presented image – was to secure them a share in political power and, in turn, material benefits for their members.

The principal historical methods applied in this paper are description and comparative analysis of the fundamental program projects of peasant parties, and also a critical review of historical sources. Not all sources are of equal evidence value and, therefore, a party affiliation and/or any other potential bias had to be considered carefully in the case of each of the printed media.

The studied materials fall into three categories. Firstly, I worked with archive sources, namely the Parliament Archive, the National Archive and, within the latter, the Presidial Council Collection. The archives of individual parties are made use of to a very small extent. In fact, the circumstances of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party disposing of their own archival documents posed a great problem for the Agrarians during their 1938 “liquidation” convention. Secondly, I worked with official publications to do with party-related matters (programs, congress minutes) and, on a small scale, with

daily press. Thirdly, documents mapping out the political party system, and the situation of ethnic minorities within it, proved to be of priceless help in compiling this paper.

Introductory notes on political party system

The term ‘political party system’ denotes a specific social organisation, bound together by a set of rules and connecting people of similar interests and opinions. The primary objective of this type of social organisation is to gain and retain a share in political power. As such, it transcends its initial parliamentary role and becomes a significant component of the state apparatus, a machinery of power. The recurrent theme in all definitions of the term “political party” is that political parties are people grouped together for the purpose of taking part in political life, seizing power and promoting their members’ ideas and interests.

Historically, all political parties in every country have essentially been built on the same foundations, formed by social, economic, nationality, religious and legal conditions. Therefore, the political party system in any country is always an outcome of the combined effects of a whole range of factors, including national traditions, history, religious beliefs and the nationality composition of the population. In addition, the socio-economic, ideological-cultural, and technological factors have to be weighed. However, since individual parties were founded on different ideas, transformed over time into party ideologies, several party types evolved, which then battled for political power within the party system. The scholarly literature of the early 20th century differentiated among four basic types of political party systems: a program-driven, a personality-driven, a two-party, and a singleparty rule system.

The splitting of political parties at the end of the 19th century, which fully manifested itself in the inter-war period, may be seen as a conflict of economic concepts. The oldest is the conflict between conservatism and liberalism, which gave rise to political parties that, in the following stage, can be regarded as non-socialist, i.e. in opposition to the socialist parties. The other two lines of conflict represent the path towards the establishment of political party systems through affiliation to estates, namely the self-determination of the countryside as against the towns – agricultural against industrial capital. This occurred as the rural population’s response to the rapid industrial expansion and gave rise to peasant parties.

The parties newly counterpositioned themselves in terms of socialist versus non-socialist, only to find a common language later when a radical socialist – the Communist – party rose within the socialist wing, propagating the establishment of proletarian dictatorship and elimination of private ownership.

In contrast to the revolutionist and authoritarian Communists, the remaining socialist parties began to define themselves as either evolutionist or democratic. However, the programs of the parties created as a consequence of the political fragmentation contained very little of the original theoretical concepts. In fact, the initial ideas on which the parties had been built gradually gave way to the interests of those who had risen through the party hierarchies to positions from which they could become part of the power structures.

The political differentiation and the introduction of universal suffrage at the turn of the 20th century brought about the need for differentiation among parties and a massive expansion of the electorate. The parties thus proceeded to refine their ideologies so as to become more legible, more easily recognisable and more successful. Over a short period of one or two decades, they reshaped the original ideas which they developed from into ideologies, now part of not only their programs but also their members' public speeches. By the time of the First Republic, the notion of party ideology had become so common-place that it penetrated the whole political party system. In line with the authors of the time, a political ideology is defined here as a theory which clarifies social reality from a personal perspective, which either intentionally or unintentionally obscures the true state of affairs. It is, therefore, not about objective understanding of a particular situation but rather about justification of the propagated ideals - the goal of an ideology is *"...not the objective understanding of a given reality and its causes but rather the vindication of the author's ideals."*

A political program is a set of ideals and goals, which a party presents to its electorate with the aim to win political power. For the political parties in question, i.e. peasant parties, the program became a fundamental building element, in accordance with which parties came into being and/or perished. They used it to reassure their electorate that they are the ones who are capable, through accomplishing their program goals, of improving the existing social and, above all, economic conditions. Without a doubt, this is why almost all political parties started off by analysing the existing conditions and depicting the past, portraying individual issues in different colours, depending on the degree of a given party's involvement in the particular state of affairs. What followed was a portrayal of the party's guiding notion, made to look like a universal truth, which opened doors for further voters: *"From the tales of Premysl the Ploughman...all the way to our revolution during and after the War – our history is but one epic of a nation's struggle for land."*

The political party system in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia in 1890-1938

The universally applicable mechanism of forming political parties in dependence on a specific combination of social, economic, national, religious and legal conditions also applies to the Czech (Czechoslovak) political party system. Here, too, the decades prior to WWII witnessed the

30Inovace studijního programu Ekonomie a hospodářská správa s akcentem na internacionalizaci výuky, individuální práci se studenty a praxi. CZ.2.17/3.1.00/33332

transformation of honorary and ideological parties into mass and interest parties, respectively, and the creation of a modern political party system. Yet there is a specific, lasting trait in the Czech Lands of the political parties being nationality-related in character. Their names alone speak clearly. It will be my task to prove in further research whether nationality issues played a more significant role in the formation of the political party system than ideological, social or economic differences. The nature of the Czech (Czechoslovak) political party system in the period in question could be likened to a philosophically historical notion. A political party first formulated and then offered a certain world view, composed of elements of positive interpretations of its own ideology and of negative self-definition with respect to its rival political parties.

At first glimpse, the political image of inter-war Czechoslovakia may seem highly complex. However, once insight is gained into the essence of the stratification and the different program foundations, their origins and development, the picture becomes much simpler. Some authors list up to one hundred political entities of the interwar period under the category of political parties, aspiring to various degrees to gain a share of the political power in the country. This vast number alone reveals little about the content of the political party system. Among these hundred political entities there are many political movements and clubs, which fail the definition of a political party.

The figure does, however, reveal the following two fundamental facts:

- the privileged status of political parties after the birth of Czechoslovakia, and -
- the fragmented political spectrum.

The reason why these two factors were present concurrently lies in two deep roots which the Czech (Czechoslovak) political party system had stemmed from.

Firstly, there were the general circumstances in which the Czech political party system was coming into being at the turn of the 20th century. The process of forming modern nation states prevailed in Austria-Hungary at the time. The multifaceted stratification arose from the fact that each of the two regions of the newly founded multinational state evolved in a different way. Thus, (at least) two civil societies formed alongside each other, co-operating economically in areas of everyday life, also to a large extent culturally, but virtually not at all politically. A question arises here, which will be answered in my further research, of whether the agrarian branch of the First Republic political party system ever overcame the aspect of ethnicity, and whether the Czech society may have lived up to the term of a united civil society. Was the gap between the Czech and German ethnic groups ever bridged? At this point, my answer for the political party system as a whole is negative. Moreover, further national divisions can be identified, running between the Czechs and the Slovaks, and then between these two and the Hungarian and Polish populations. A separate analysis altogether would

be required for the Jewish population. In most cases, any union of nationality diverse parties was temporary.

Until the 1890s, only the nobility had political rights in Austria-Hungary and then large landowners and urban and rural municipalities were entitled to the right of representation in the Imperial Council. However, the weight of the votes was such that one landowner counted for 46 urban and 168 rural voters, both of whose numbers were kept low by high requirements for the minimum tax paid. The year 1896 was a significant milestone in the process of political party differentiation, enabling the existence of four main currents – liberal, conservative, agrarian and socialist – by the time general suffrage was introduced in 1907.

Secondly, there were the specific conditions under which independent Czechoslovakia and its political mechanism were founded. In this context, another factor, just as important as that of party fragmentation, needs to be stressed – the five or six political parties that were active throughout the period either kept returning to the Imperial Council or the Parliament, or participated in government coalitions.

The parties were key institutions in the legislative process and having a share in political power was essential when came to parliament negotiations about new laws. Paradoxically, they themselves had no status as legal entities for a long time. Initially, they conformed to the Guild Law no. 134/1867. However, this law did not define the term “political party”. The general rule was that political parties were political associations, overseen by the state. Although the legal system made provision for political parties, the legal definition of their work was absent during most of the First Republic’s existence. The Municipality Election Law no. 126/1922 (and its amendments) contained a provision under which a mandate in municipal government was lost also in the event of expulsion or secession from the represented party. It was only the Parliament Election Law no. 205/1925 (and its amendments) that changed this practice by allowing only political parties, not loose coalitions of voters, to participate in elections. The first law to deal specifically with political parties was Law no. 201/1933 (and its amendments) about the termination and dissolution of political parties. Its objective was to protect the country from parties posing a threat to its independence, but it is where the first definition of the term “political party” appeared and it included all political groups, associations and movements. The law, however, did not define any other aspects of political parties, such as their position or status as a legal entity. One year later, in 1934, the government tried to issue a bill which would mean that only parties registered with the Ministry of Interior and legalised by a government resolution could participate in elections. The bill was not passed as the politicians did not reach an

agreement on the definition of the term “political party”. It was not until 1938 that the Political Party Law entered into force in the shape of law no. 355/1938.

Regardless of the above, what had existed since 1919 was the rule of the so-called deputy waiver – a candidate’s written declaration that he would give up his mandate should he be asked to do so by the party. This suited the parties, no doubt, and was made use of repeatedly.

Peasant parties within Czechoslovakia’s political system

The emergence and force of agrarian political formations in the Czech Lands are a striking phenomenon in the history of the political party system. They need to be differentiated not only in terms of nationality, i.e. German, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian or Polish, but also regionally as Bohemian, Moravian, Silesian and/or Slovakian. While the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party worked its way up to become the only pivotal party of the First Republic political system, minority parties were very rarely part of the coalition. The extent of their political power can, therefore, only be estimated by their election gains, much less so by the particular practical and/or political steps they took. Thus, we will first define the circumstances under which they came into being and evolved, and then focus on the description of their political and especially economic programs.

Among ethnically Czech peasant parties, the first peasant party in Bohemia – the Association of Czech Land-workers for the Kingdom of Bohemia – was established in 1899 and renamed Czech Agrarian Party a year later. The Moravian Agrarian Party was founded in 1904, both parties merged in the same year under the name Czecho-Slavic Agrarian Party and Silesia got its peasant party in 1912. All three shared the same executive committee. Soon after its formation, the Agrarian Party became one of the most powerful political entities, gaining most seats in the Imperial Council already in the 1907 elections.

The origins of the agrarian political camp in the Czech Lands date back to as early as the late 1870s. The first, albeit unsuccessful, resolution demanding the establishment of an autonomous peasant party was passed in Chrudim in 1876. At the Moravian Peasants’ congress in Olomouc in 1883, Jan Rudolf Demel (1833-1905) gave impulse to the foundation of the Bohemian-Moravian Landowners Society, whose agenda contained political demands. The agrarian agenda as such, however, was carried out within the Moravian National Party (the Old Czechs) and the Catholic Society of Czech Farmers for Moravia. While Bohemian landowners made a failed attempt to establish an peasant party in Mladá Boleslav in 1884, South Bohemian land-owners progressed further in organising themselves and formed the South Bohemian Agricultural Union in Pisek in 1881. Their leader, Alfons Šťastný (1831-

1913), excelled in being proactive and was also one of the co-founders of the Union of Peasants for the Kingdom of Bohemia. This political institution was to assert the interests of middle peasantry against large-landowners, who were traditionally backed by the Old Czech Party, and was transformed into an exclusively political organisation – the Bohemian-Moravian Agricultural Party – in 1891. Unfortunately, its expansion to Moravia and Silesia was unsuccessful. Further political entities were created in individual parishes and counties in 1896 under the auspices of the Young Czech Party, which later united to form the Czech Agrarian Party. The names of Stanislav Kubr, František Udržal, Emanuel Hrubý, Karel Prášek, Jan Antonín Prokúpek, Antonín Švehla Sr., František Obrtel and Kuneš Sonntag became widely known, and shaped and set the direction for the Bohemian, Moravian, and later also Czechoslovak agrarian movement for the years to come.

In Slovakia, the agrarian movement only started coming into being in the 1890s, and the peasant party as a political entity was only established after the creation of Czechoslovakia. Besides the time lag, there is also a difference in the social momentum. In Slovakia, peasant parties did not come together as a result of an upward pressure coming from the peasants themselves. Peasants were drawn into political life by a small group of intellectuals, predominantly leaders of the national movement and members of the National Party, in which the agrarian wing pushed for the demands made by peasants. The names associated with this process are Pavol Blaho, Vavro Šrobár, Ľudovít Okánik, Anton Štefánek and Milan Hodža. This already small political current began to split into two. Milan Hodža took the path of building a network of Slovak Peasant Unions, aimed at those applying for land allotments in a planned land reform. Vavro Šrobár, on the other hand, advocated the notion of a party formed from the top down. Hodža's approach won and gave rise to the National Republican Peasant Party in 1919, which joined the Slovak National Party in an election coalition in 1920. As they were unsuccessful in the elections, this was to be a mere episode in the history of the Slovakian political party scene, and the two entities became independent again. The National Republican Peasant Party and Slovak Homeland – The Smallholders Party joined forces with the Czech Agrarians in 1922.

The founding of independent Czechoslovakia in October 1918 was thus closely monitored by powerful agrarian political entities, determined to retain their power even in the new state. What changed dramatically after 1918 was the existing asymmetry in the political party system. Whereas the ethnically Czech political parties' scope of action had been limited by the Czech borders, ethnically German or Polish parties had always been able to lean for support on parties outside the Czech Lands. The latter were now cut off from their central offices abroad, and thus had to undergo the process of reshaping themselves and adapting to the new political setting. Parties previously

benefiting from being ethnic majority parties (German and Polish) became overnight parties of ethnic minorities.

Besides the Agrarian Party, now renamed the Republican Party of the Czechoslovak Countryside, the entities which are relevant to our analysis of the peasant political party scene in Czechoslovakia include the Bund der Landwirte (German Peasant Union), the Hungarian Peasant Party and Jewish political parties and Ruthenian ones in Carpathian Ruthenia.

The Programs of the Czechoslovak Agrarians

Between 1899 and 1938, the Agrarian Party adopted four programs, each stating the idea of agrarianism, sometimes in the sense of agrarian democracy, as its fundamental principle. To the Republicans, the idea of agrarianism was a platform on which they wanted to build their defence of peasants having the same rights as the other 'civil work' classes enjoyed. "*We lay our foundations upon the idea of agrarianism, which to us is the only guarantee of development and assures the existence of our nation and state.*" They perceived agricultural work as working directly on the land, in all sectors of agriculture, forestry and agricultural industry. It also included mental work leading to agricultural advancement.

Their first program, passed in 1899, was composed of four parts: the national-political, social, cultural and agrarian. It contained the Agrarians' own interpretation of Czech history, with the irreplaceable role of peasantry, who had always been the bearer of democracy in the Czech Lands until the incursion of the feudal, essentially undemocratic, relations from the German territory. The heroism of the Hussites, the tragedy of the White Mountain and the Thirty Years' War, and then the new heroism of landowners rebelling against the foreign nobility all fitted well with the paradigm. The abolition of serfdom represented the beginning of a new era, of the Czech landowners becoming free again "*...before the eyes of the nation's astonished enemies*". The actual agrarian agenda was based on demands for intensive and direct state support of agricultural production.

Alongside agrarianism, the program defined democracy as the main political principle, explaining that the people are the only source of power in the country. The 1922 program was based on a system of agrarianism, democracy and republicanism, and was divided by issues into: (1) Land, Man, Work; (2) Family, Community, Self-Government; (3) Nation, Homeland, State; and (4) Mankind. Each of the sub-chapters then dealt with a specified range of questions. Chapters 2 and 3 proved the most important in terms of the economic agenda,

In issues related to the country's economic policy, the agrarians' motto was to simplify the central apparatus to the 'bare minimum' and to do away with both the historic tradition and the historic concept of bureaucracy. They insisted on so-called "social fairness in taxation", which distributed the tax burden among the population in accordance with their wealth and economic power. In their 1919 program, they intended to work towards the war proceeds to be delivered to the state and large wealth to be subjected to a progressive property tax.

Social welfare of the economically weak was to be the priority of the new democratic state and so war victims and the unemployed were to be looked after. The 1919 agenda suggested doing so by quickly mobilising the domestic industry, using coercive measures and continual governmental investment if needs be (but does not elaborate on this term any further). Even in the area of social welfare, the state should not ignore, despite the subordination of its citizens to "general higher interests", the fact that without the individual's cooperation it cannot guarantee "...a decent existence of every human being and even universal well-being, no matter how managed and organised." The agrarians upheld the principle of economic self-determination, providing new conditions were built, reflecting the changed circumstances. Thus, the agricultural workers, who had suffered from the excessive dominance of industry and big capital, were to enter a relation of 'solidarity collaboration' with their agricultural employers and have a share in all social benefits, including insurance against illness, injury and old age. At the same time, "...all justified specific claims by the industrial workers would be met with sincere and selfless support." The Party made promises to demand effective care for entrepreneurs and their protection by the state from the "devastating competition from big capitalist businesses" and the domestic industry was to be given special attention.

The Agrarian Party insisted on the principles of private ownership and private enterprise as "...only private ownership can secure the state's economic and social interests." According to the 1919 agenda, the Party would also strive to eliminate any 'excesses' resulting from historical violence or abuse of any power. "It is our goal to achieve a state where any exploitation of or excessive use of an individual's economic power would be prevented." The Agrarian Party demonstrated its readiness to support any 'sound' reforms, through which private economic power would become a means to universal well-being. This was based on the notion that ownership leads to rights as well as responsibilities, which are social in their nature. Land ownership makes the farmer duty-bound towards the nation, the country and the mankind. "The twentieth century will have to awake the awareness of ownership duties, thus becoming a social century." A "sufficient degree" of nationalisation of enterprises that were "based on exploitation of natural resources" was, together with social and taxation policies, a way to fulfil the duties. "It is the nature of economic activity to

strive for the greatest possible benefits for the smallest possible sacrifice, and of each man to pursue his own priorities in doing so. It is part the human nature and of the self-preservation instinct, there is nothing unseemly about it.” The 1922 agenda continued to regard private ownership, contractual freedom and free competition as the foundations of social order, encouraging private entrepreneurship, which in turn was seen by the agrarians as the only vehicle for the betterment of the entire society. They were, therefore, in favour of the preservation of the so-called individualist legal order, “...since there is no evidence that any other social order that could replace it has proven better and more beneficial for the human society.” The Agrarian Party ideologists, however, were prepared to discard and condemn private ownership as soon as it led to the exploitation of others. According to them, whereas peasant private ownership posed no such risk, as the land reform would deal with this issue, accumulation of capital in the hands of a limited circle of entrepreneurs, organised in cartels and other “...large industry, trade and finance organisations with conquering tendencies” was a different case altogether.

Private ownership of means of production, especially land in the hands of small and medium-sized peasants, was supposed to be a prerequisite for advancement in agricultural production. The 1922 program criticised regarding land as an agent of production, on par with private capital in industry and trade. Capital is not the ‘ultimate source’ of production in the way that land is. It is merely a means of production. It is a proportion of accumulated labour, it is mobile, it can be multiplied and it can disappear. Land is none of these. It can be asserted that the question of land was the key issue on the Agrarian Party’s agenda – the programs referred to a law on popularisation of land, which should be carried out to such a degree that would satisfy the population’s (“small people’s”) desire for land. The first post-war Party program spoke of the latifundia in the hands of the nation’s enemies, while portraying the land reform as a crucial step in resolving the entire social issue, since the landless rural population constituted a substantial segment of the ones in need. Thus, the aim if the land reform was to reallocate these latifundia to smallholders and the landless, whereby ownership would be determined by willingness to work directly on the land. The rural population could either buy land freely or a process of internal colonisation would bring new owners to the land in newly formed model settlements, “...whose outer appearance would correspond to the national style of a rural village.” In connection with the land reform, the 1922 program included a demand to pass of a new forestry law.

Issues to do with agricultural improvement were addressed systematically by the agrarians in their programs – land integration and improvement, professional training for farmers, experimentation and research, introduction of machine manufacturing using water power and electrification, organisation

loans and insurance for farmers and, naturally, issues related to customs. In terms of customs protection, in 1922 and in 1929 the argument was that Czechoslovakia was as an agrarian industrial country. This being the case meant that the government was obliged to “impartially and fairly” support the agricultural (as well as industrial) advancement and “...*protect their minimum desired prosperity from the damaging effects of foreign competition.*” Their position on industrial production was quite different. Since sufficient production means of all kinds needed to be made available to agriculture, then if domestic industry failed to supply them at prices that agricultural budgets allowed, the state was not to hesitate and purchase them abroad. In other words, industrial production only deserved customs protection if it corresponded with the population’s interests and needs. In these cases, measures such as transport tariffs were proposed so as to promote the export sector. The so-called self-help co-operative enterprises are described in the 1922 program as one of the most effective means of eliminating the “excesses of the principle of private ownership and enterprise”, and of securing a fair share of the national income for the broadest segments of the population at the same time. They are also an efficient instrument against a violent social upheaval. In this respect, the Agrarian Party intended to get them to be legally protected and, for tax purposes, be classified as “universally beneficial organisations” rather than typical profit-making businesses. The sugar and potato industries were earmarked as the most important branches of agricultural production. The Party called for the preparation of a special plan for a systematic “...*transformation of all agricultural industries into peasant industries, as the aristocratic-capitalist nature of the former is being changed by the land reform to democratic.*” Food was to be supplied by domestic production: “...*domestic production and domestic markets must remain the primary support to our future economic development.*” Domestic production was also to be granted effective protection from foreign competition. The government’s priority was to transfer all land to the same high degree of culture, among other means, by establishing economic autonomy for farmers and by getting them organised as a profession. In 1929 the Party modified this by stating that agricultural self-government was to serve as a foundation for agricultural councils, which all farmers would be members of.

Political agendas of minority peasant parties in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia

The German peasant movement had a relatively weaker position within the German political party system than within the Czech one, where its origins date back to the last third of the 19th century. While initial attempts to establish a peasant society took place in 1898 in České Budějovice, the German Agrarian Party (Deutsche Agrarpartei) was formally founded in Bohemia only in 1905, in Moravia in 1914 (following a failed attempt in 1906), and not at all in Silesia (Bunddeutscher Landwirte Schlesiens – the German Peasant Union for Silesia – was active there from 1906). Despite

38Inovace studijního programu Ekonomie a hospodářská správa s akcentem na internacionalizaci výuky, individuální práci se studenty a praxi. CZ.2.17/3.1.00/33332

it, the party was among the largest German political parties in the Czech Lands, was represented at the Imperial Council and its agenda was in line with the agrarian movement in Germany.

The Peasant Union (Bund der Landwirte) was set up in Česká Lípa immediately after the creation of independent Czechoslovakia and its first general congress in Bohemia took place in 1919. Although the party only started operating country-wide in 1920, and only appeared in government coalitions in the latter half of the 1920s, I think it deserves attention in terms of how much its agenda differed from its Czechoslovak 'equivalent'. As far as its demands for national self-determination are concerned, it called for proportionate representation of Germans in the government and other state institutions.

In the nationality section of its program, the party was in favour of national self-determination, while respecting the republican character of the state. As far as its economic, or rather socioeconomic agenda is concerned, the greatest emphasis was placed on love to the land and the cultivation of a positive relation to it among the youth. It respected the principle of private ownership and its programs dealt with issues of its legal protection, particularly land ownership. At the same time, it supported the idea of land reform, in which disabled war veterans and agricultural workers would be included among the recipients. Above all, it focused on the situation of agricultural regions with predominantly German populations. Here, it called for protection of all rural social classes, including intelligentsia, craftsmen and tradesmen, but most of all for smallholders, for instance by advocating support to medium and small-sized farms. The Party intended to direct government support to all areas related to agricultural production. It supported the idea of a uniform progressive income tax and a progressive wealth tax, as well as higher taxation of speculative profits. The state administration was to tackle speculation and profiteering by means of a special state institution to ensure appointed to oversee any dealings with lands.

Political agendas of the German peasants can certainly be seen as liberal, although they allow for interventionism in the agricultural sector, typical of the time. There are no hints of nationalisation, except for the land reform.

The Polish parties in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia could not see past the Těšín Region, allocated to Czechoslovakia on 28 July 1920. A system of ethnically Polish political parties started forming there already shortly after 1848 and followed two paths – either that of the National Party or that of the Pro-Frankfurt Assembly (Nurt frankfurcki), later followed upon by the Old Silesians. They were against agitations for Greater Poland and against migrants from Galicia. While they spoke a dialect of Polish, they did not consider themselves to be Polish and, in fact, accepted a certain degree of Germanisation (as in Volkslist), and within the Habsburg Empire were labelled as pro-German (deutschfreundlich). This movement became a political party in 1904 under the name Silesian

People's Party (Slaska partija ludowa). Its program spoke of the superiority of the autochthonous population over both Poles and Czechs and their closeness to the Germans in cultural and economic terms. They espoused Evangelism and sought support among the wealthier rural classes.

Differences in religion seem far more defining for the Polish political party system than nationality. This manifests itself already in the studied period, when the Catholic population took up the founding activities as well. The Union of Silesian Catholics (Zwiazek slaskich katolikow) was founded in 1883 and the People's Political Comradeship (Politiczne towarzystwo ludowe) a year later. Both were headed by clergymen. The Radical National Party (Stronnictwo radykalnonarodowe), established in 1897, appointed as its leader the Peasant Bank director Franciszek Friedel. Not one of these parties, however, had a program which would be clearly professionoriented. The Silesian Polish Social Democratic Party (Polska partia socialno-demokratyczna Slaska) founded in 1906, was an exception in this respect. Nor was there a strong agrarian focus – they were all mostly pro-German and anti-Czech.

Once Czechoslovakia was created, separate Polish political parties began to emerge on the Czech side of the partitioned Těšín Region and the political party structure was very varied. Again, no specifically peasant political entity came into being and the interests of the wealthier farmers were defended by the Catholic Party. In 1932 there was an isolated attempt by Polish peasant organisations to give rise to a Polish section of the Republican Party. Dr. Wolf, a member of one of these organisations, was a visiting member of the Parliamentary Club of Czechoslovak Agrarians after the 1925 elections. The 'activist' spirit within the Polish parties grew weaker in the 1930s, in favour of another shift towards German parties.

The interests of the Hungarian peasants were defended by a number of parties. For instance, the years 1923-1929 saw the evolution of the Hungarian Agricultural Republican Party (Köszársasági Magyar Földműves Párt), a political entity under the direct influence of the Agrarian Party, which it merged with later, and which worked towards a weakening of the influence of the Hungarian Smallholders' Party in Czechoslovakia. The Provincial Landowners' Party (Országos Paraszt Párt) was also formed in order to defend peasants' interests, especially a speedy completion of the land reform, but ceased to exist after it failed the elections. Thus, the political party that remained and continued to defend interests of land workers was the Hungarian National Party. It was the outcome of efforts by Hungarian political powers in Czechoslovakia to establish an ethnically uniform political entity, founded in 1920, although it took on the above name only after 1925. Its strongest component was one of the founding parties, the Provincial Independent Peasant Party of 1848 (Országos 48-as Függettlenségi Gázdapárt), and other peasant parties. On the whole, the party agenda can be

characterised as nationality-driven, as its prime demand was the defence of the economic interests of the Hungarian population. Its agenda was usually critical of the Czechoslovak government, calling for the right to self-determination in the sense of a national autonomy within Czechoslovakia. In the late 1920s, it embraced the idea of Slovak autonomy. In the economic sphere, it continued to be in favour of free enterprise and protection of small and medium-sized agricultural and industrial businesses. It rejected the land reform as the wrong solution to the peasant question but as it needed to satisfy its voters, it called for allocation of land in Hungarianspeaking areas exclusively to Hungarian peasants.

Carpathian Ruthenia, too, had a number of active political entities but they did not markedly affect the process of division of political power in Czechoslovakia. Parties with agrarian agenda, however, took on a definite shape. The Peasant Republican Agricultural Party (Selansko-respublikanskaja zemledelskaja partija) was established in 1920 on the initiative of Czech Agrarians. It was the founding member of the Carpathian Republican Agricultural Party, which lasted for less than one year, but was succeeded by the Association of Russian Farmers, which Milan Hodža successfully incorporated within the Slovak Agrarian Party.

What remained of the party formed the Autonomous Agricultural Union, an instrument of antiCzechoslovak agrarian opposition. Its agenda was in favour of autonomy, against Czech centralism and it inclined towards closer links with Hungary. The party's membership base comprised of the wealthier Ruthenian-Ukrainian farmers, two of whom became members of the Czechoslovak Parliament: country gentlemen I. Kurtjak and A. Brody.

The Christian People's Party (Christijansko-narodnaja partija) also deserves a mention. It arose from the Russian Peasant Party in 1925 and although it established itself as a clerical party, its followers – Catholics – were mostly smallholders of Ruthenian nationality. In their view, the terms Ruthenian and Ukrainian blended into one.

Program priorities

Agrarianism was the leading principle for all peasant parties. It was based on the assumption that land is the ultimate source of all life and the only lasting means of sustaining a nation. It encompassed the emotional relationship to land as well as working directly on it. The idea of agrarianism is based on the assumption that land is the ultimate source of all life, which gives rise to all tangible wealth. This was a usual and relatively wide-spread notion, inherited from the physiocrats and imported to the Czech environment from German historicism. Land, which supports agriculture as the primary sector of the economy, provides man with the basic tools he needs to fulfil the meaning of life and to

advance. Domestic agriculture is the only safe and lasting means of sustaining a nation. Therefore, it is vital to endeavour to preserve national autonomy and protecting the borders. For the agrarians, the crucial point in explaining the importance of land for a man's or nation's life lay in valuing it not just in economic or social terms but, above all, from the point of view of personal, if not emotional relationship to the land as 'our native soil'. Democracy was presented alongside agrarianism, as a principle of state power that belongs to the people. Although the peasant party's ideology is anchored in the centuries old relationship of man to land, it was practical politics, spurred on by the confrontation between the rapidly expanding capitalist towns and the lagging countryside in the late 19th century. No theoreticians were part of the agrarian movement in the Czech Lands or Czechoslovakia, it was largely local in its nature and it could not count on its ideas being adopted by the masses without a land reform. Their agendas lack cohesion, ideas are scattered, not sorted or ordered in any way. What is more, the different versions of the programs, particularly those of the Czechoslovak Agrarians, were almost identical. Apart from the pages being renumbered, only the names of new institutions and formulations of some of the issues were changed. Where the 1922 version speaks of a global economic crisis as a result of the world war, which may only be overcome by rapid restoration of agricultural production, the 1929 talks about an economic crisis rooted in the times of the world war, which is still affecting mainly agriculture and which may be overcome (the word 'only' was dropped) by providing agricultural production with "...*all that was enjoyed by industry in the first decade after the war.*"

Although in issues related to industrial production the peasant parties drew on the concept of agrarianism, they were always prepared to fight for the preservation and support of small-scale industrial production. They did not wholly respect the principle of private ownership being untouchable except in the case of agriculture, and even there only until 'popularisation of land' and 'peasantification' of 'agricultural industries' located on the expropriated land took place. The agrarians' view was that private ownership was not to rest on exploitation of man by man but on intensive exploitation of the land, the outcomes of which would benefit the entire society.

However, all political parties distanced themselves from any promotion of private ownership per se. They only respected a limited degree of private ownership but never beyond it ensuring life for an individual and his family. They all supported the expropriation of farming estates and forests, nationalisation of mines and control over monopolies. Another political principle which all parties had in common and which was crucial for economic issues was that of the state being a key employer. This is an important moment for agrarians.

Concluding remarks

Always, but especially prior to elections, all parties strive to win over the public for their demands, to maximise their vote count and overcome political rivals – paradoxically their closest rivals in terms of ideology. In addition, the nature of the political party system of the studied period may have been shaped by the arrival of the Enlightenment's rule of reason, and the time proximity of the Marxist degradation of any previous ideology by labelling it as false consciousness. The 19th century was governed by the notion of natural patterns of social evolution. All political parties gradually followed suit and, like the socialist parties, took up this philosophy and then presented their notions of the future, laden with 'fateful missions' and 'natural inevitability'. Each party presented its ideology to gain belief and thus gain as many 'believers' as possible. Political party affiliation was becoming almost like a faith. The simplicity of the political party ideologies was supposed to make them easy to read and understand by the broadest masses, and yet they were trying to pass off as scientific treatises. The innermost feature of any party ideology was to correlate with the interests of both the given political party as well as a specific social interest group, whose needs the party tried to respond to since it formed the core of its voter base. The more the party succeeded in sensing the voters' needs, the more successful it was in the political struggle.

Thus, the initial ideas on which the parties had been built on gradually gave way to the interests of those who rose through the party hierarchies to posts from which allowed them to be drawn into the power structures. In general terms, each member of a political party has a personal interest in maximising its election success since the number of seats in the elected state bodies determines the number of party members who will take part in the execution of the state power or, more broadly and precisely put, the political and economic power. Each party member is therefore interested in his party program appealing to as many voters as possible and, conversely, people often join those political parties that give them the best chances of satisfying their own interests. These may include, besides the desire to participate in public life, the desire to attain a position within the politiceconomic power structures. I am not denying people's need to fulfil the altruistic feeling of own usefulness. I am, however, very interested in the needs that express one's own advantages.

The huge quantitative disproportion of the political programs of the various political parties, which is evident at first glimpse, points towards several facts:

(1) The extent of and the degree of elaboration of the political and especially economic agendas tell us a lot about the "availability" of experts in the given field within the parties. (Just as the extent

of and the degree of elaboration of the parties' political programs reveal how well established the party is within the political system).

(2) The space dedicated to individual issues within the party programs is indicative of the importance assigned to them by the party management.

(3) The acceptance of certain economic issues suggests a lot about the party's influence on their potential voters.

Research into political party systems shows that the demands formulated in the party programs were not the same as those that the party then defended in government coalitions. Coalition partners and government policies contained differed in their contents. What differed most, however, were their agenda ideas and the actual steps taken by individual political parties within practical economic policy. A large proportion of members of parliament were pluralists in the true sense of the word, who accumulated positions and income from them at party, parliamentary, governmental as well as private levels. Further research into the social background of the affiliation to political parties should confirm and refine our understanding of the fact that the Agrarian Party, though a party of the profession, was not a party for the profession.

The political party system of inter-war Czechoslovakia displays, therefore, the phenomenon of what could be described as a gradual weakening of the initial ideals which had given rise to the political parties. The ideals gave way to those who rose up the party hierarchy to positions leading directly to the political-economic power structures. Party members were duty-bound to their parties. They had to sign a declaration that they accept their parliamentary posts, or positions in the managing boards of companies, only thanks to the influence of their party, that they will comply with its organisational regulations and that they will give up their mandates when they are requested to do so by the executive committee of their party. With their mandate they would automatically lose all other positions they had been appointed to.

Even when a party represented the interests of specific part of the population and even characterised itself as the party of a certain population segment, it always formulated its official program in such a way that it appealed to the broadest spectrum of people possible. Thus, the notion of universal well-being is overly used yet never actually explained. By the inter-war period, the parties had become alike. In the end, their division into ideological and profession-based parties only meant that the latter bore the name of the interest group, which they tried to accommodate most, in the party name, while the former 'modified' their concepts in order to reach out to as many voters as possible without focusing on a single interest group. The reasons, traditionally seen as defining a party as being of a

particular interest group, are reasons derived ex-post, based on the knowledge of its lobby background, not on its program principles.

The used ideological instruments proved not to correspond entirely to the social stratification of the society. Even the social-economic characteristics of the population segment addressed by the program do not indicate clearly whether the party actually defended the group's interests once it gained political power. The agrarians were initially, in their "founding period", against non-peasant professions, later at least against large owners – of land or other forms of capital. In doing so, they inevitably violated the idea of a unified nation. They considered themselves to be protectors of the land-owners' needs in particular, who monitor their proposals as to solutions to problems. However, the landowners' specific needs and interests, as opposed to those of other social groups, were not formulated in any detail. The foundation of the peasant party was, above all, an act of protection of the weaker against the stronger ones, both in the sense of nationality and in social-economic terms, i.e. "industrial enterprise owners versus land owners." Their nationalism was discriminatory from the very beginning and as such undemocratic. They claimed repeatedly that their goal was not to shatter the nation's integrity but to let it continue in a democratic way. It appears that the nationalist ideology meant to provide an ideological justification for the agrarian movement's right to its own political organisation and existence. The Czech and Czechoslovak agrarians used it as a reassurance for their voters that they would not repeat the mistakes of the national parties, leading to defeats in the struggle over linguistic or constitutional demands in the latter half of the 19th century. The attempt to first define itself as a party representing the interests of the entire nation, even if this was not the case, had probably stemmed from the fact that a number of nationally defined systems of political parties existed within the Habsburg monarchy. This process, however, excluded from political party affiliation such nationally indifferent classes as the nobility and the bureaucrats, which would manifest itself fully during the First Republic. Nevertheless, the peasant question was always presented as a Czech issue, as the strengthening and prosperity of Czech agriculture was a precondition for the nation's existence. This is why the first political program from 1899 emphasised the indivisibility of large estates as the large and medium-sized land-owners were the core of the nation in question! The 1922 agenda became more conservative in this respect, fully supporting the protection of private ownership, while the attitude towards dividing large estates into smaller plots far more sober. "Czech" became "Czechoslovak" but not without emphasis being placed on the Czech component within it. Similarly, the protectionist attitude towards ethnic minorities remained. The party posed as the party for everyone who came in contact with agricultural work. This potentially involved everyone, as consumers Thus all the potential voters. Each era has its ideals. The early 20th

century was about social equity, which was to be brought about by means of radical economic changes, including those of property relations. The economic agendas, therefore, became a crucial part of the political programs for most parties in the studied period and so the political party system at the turn of the 20th century was strongly defined by one aspect: it was very closely linked to the economic organisation of the country. This connection came about as a result of several factors, acting simultaneously. Firstly, as the political party system reached mass proportions, its need for financial resources, which would pay for its pre-election battles as well as for the favours in the 'everyday' political life, grew to unprecedented levels. Secondly, with the growing influences of the state over economic processes, the state machinery required a justification of its work. This was delivered by political parties through their programs being accepted by voters in elections. Moreover, parties represented the top of the power hierarchy by then. Last but not least, the post-war economic conditions lent justification to the growing state intervention in the economy.

AGRARIANISM II

THE NATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE LAND REFORM IN THE LEGISLATIVE AREA. CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1918-1920

Introduction

On the 28th October 1927, the 9th anniversary of Czechoslovakia's independence, President Masaryk announced that the programme of land reform for the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) would soon be completed. He spoke of "the greatest achievement of the new Republic", of "the crowning act of the Revolution and its true realisation". Just a month later, Masaryk's speech was subjected to stinging criticism by one of the most prominent champions of the Sudeten land interests, Wilhelm von Medinger. He attacked all aspects of the reform in the Senate as the "so-called social considerations merely provided a mask for national and party covetousness". At this moment it is not so important that Masaryk split Czechoslovakia into the Czech and the Slovak parts. What is important is the huge difference between the attitudes of the Czechs and of the other minorities. While Masaryk saw the land reform as a crowning act, Medinger saw it as a crime. I do not wish to oversimplify the relationship between the Czechs and the minorities. At the same time, we cannot pretend that differences between them did not exist. The Land reform is an excellent opportunity to show what forms these relationships took, if there was a national(istic) dimension and if nationalism was the strategy of agrarianism.

The subject of Czech and/or Czechoslovak agriculture and, in a broader sense, of the Czech countryside has been interesting for scholars at least since the middle of the 19th century. And it continues to be of interest. After all, it is the agricultural dilemma that represents a substantial part of the negotiating agenda between the Czech Republic and the European Union these days and in today's political reality. However, you will not come across any agrarianism in the Czech conditions; agrarian parties do not operate in the Czech Republic and farming has very little prestige.

The years after the First World War did not bring about any changes to the basic rules of the functioning of the society. There was an elementary tendency towards the principles of market economy and towards respect for private property. There was also a tendency towards the principles of civic society, as it was developing over the course of the second half of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century. After centuries of life within a multi-national monarchy, however, the

Czechs, now forming an ideal half of the construct of the Czechoslovak nation, had the opportunity to declare a state of their own. The state was created within the territory of the former monarchy, copying not only the monarchy's socio-economic characteristics but also – and this is very important from the point of view of our research – the nationality structure and the complications in terms of social communication between individual ethnics. Here, complications in social communication do not need to imply open animosity, let alone fighting. Suffice to say that in the newly formed state there were latent economic and social differences between individual social groups, which can, among others, be defined from the point of view of nationality. And, at least theoretically, every seat of economic and social rivalry and conflict could have been amplified sixfold – from the viewpoint of the Czechs, the Germans, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Ukrainians as well as the Slovaks.

Authors dealing with the Czech and Czechoslovak agriculture and countryside mention four or five milestones during its development in the 20th century. The first 4 are:

- 1) The Agrarian Crisis of 1908
- 2) Land Reform after 1918
- 3) Collectivisation after 1948
- 4) De-collectivisation after 1989

The birth of political agrarianism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries is often regarded as the 5th milestone, although it is the first one chronologically speaking. Our objective is to look upon political agrarianism as a phenomenon, forming at the end of the 19th century, and acquiring its political capital within independent Czechoslovakia. Let's follow this phenomenon from the angle of the above mentioned amplification to the power of the number of nationalities within one economic-political process – land reform. The starting hypothesis is that it was Land Reform that granted political agrarianism political power and helped it considerably in becoming a key player on the political stage of interwar Czechoslovakia.

Historical methods allow us to analyse and compare alternatives that may have come about, had different economic-political strategies been pushed through. This is of particular use in the case of the Land Reform. If the initial hypothesis is formed appropriately and the strategy for its testing selected carefully, we can gain relevant answers to the questions that emerge even so many years after the Land Reform and call for re-evaluation.

The crucial question which has not yet been asked in the context of the Land Reform (in Czechoslovakia) is that of national dimension. The first important consideration is the what degree decision-making about the shape of the laws which legalised the Land Reform and then to what degree its subsequent implementation altered in relation to changes to the status of the Czech, Slovak,

German, Hungarian and/or Polish nationalities within the new multi-national state. Secondly, how did the Land Reform, its legalisation and its progress influence the attitudes of politicians of various nationalities?

Three aspects to the national dimension of the Land Reform

The Land Reform is no doubt laden with numerous questions and sub-questions. If we look into its national dimension, our field of investigation can be divided into three areas: the accentuation of national elements during the debate over the Land Reform in the Parliament, the accentuation of nationality issues during the implementation of the Land Reform laws, and nationality-based speeches at the discourse level. This means that we are working at 3 different levels:

- Formal legislature
- Agitation campaigns
- Informal relationships, unofficial behaviour

Each of these levels is explained in more detail in the full version. At this moment I find it important to sum up and emphasize that it is not only the decision sphere and the decision-making institutions that are the domain of the nationality-based argumentation. Nationality-based argumentation can take place across the whole of the society. It may be stated clearly within the legislative area and agitation campaigns (e.g. media campaigns) or there could be hints of it in certain tendencies and/or events in the area which I have labelled “informal relationships”. It is at the first and the third levels in particular that we might find indications of a nationally tainted economic policy, provided that we can reveal cases when large estates are taken away from the foreigners (the atonement stereotype) and allocated preferably to applicants declaring their Czech or Slovak nationality. Or if it is solely the social situation of Czech (Slovak) employees that is being settled. Such a nationally-selective economic policy leads to a disadvantageous division of the riches in the society – in favour of a “nationally” predestined group. In other words, nationalism would act as an unethical principle in the formation of a civic society and a democratic political system. It would be a process, the aim of which was to allocate capital in the form of land possession to a certain part of the nation only, which would then be relatively easy to define.

The combination of two attitudes – appealing to national feelings and to the age-old relationship to motherland (one of the forms of agrarianism) might have become a vehicle to establish the rising economic-political elite or to strengthen the positions of the existing elite in the areas where the means of standard competition were not persuasive enough. There is no doubt that at such times

national(istic) and agrarian argumentation may have become a mighty instrument in the hands of the bureaucratic machinery and various lobbies pulling the strings throughout the political spectrum. The question is: What role did nationality characteristics play?

Land Reform: key players and rules of the game

My starting principle is that laws are of cardinal importance for the social construction of reality. Departing from the point of a trivial hypothesis that the enemies of the Land Reform were the landowners – while the natural followers were landless – we should keep in mind the multipleness character of Czechoslovakia. The multiple-nationality aspect is the frame of reference to apply when you assess the dichotomy of “we” versus “they”. However, once you have adopted and introduced laws, you have to protect them. If not, room will be given to informal laws - which may dramatically change the diction of the previously- intended and projected laws. If this is the case, informal relationships and institutions become just as important for social construction of reality as formal institutions.

Developing the keynote even further, I suggest examining two initial aspects of the Land Reform, its legislative and institutional framework, i.e. the formal rules that substantiate the law, the international agreements, treaties and contracts, and the institutions of that period, such as the Cabinet, the Parliament and its committees, the Land Office and official lobbies; for example, the Union of Czech Landowners. Taking into consideration the fact that the Land Reform interfered in foreigners' rights in property as well, we need to examine the international treaties with the countries involved and, finally - as the birth of Czechoslovakia was strongly influenced by the intervening world powers - we do have to pay attention to the diction of final engagement of the Versailles treaties. All these aspects are the legal framework for us. Naturally, research in the area of the laws may help us to come closer to an answer to the question - What was the government's relationship to minorities? – Indeed, if we find elements of national selection in the laws, it will be clear that on the Cabinet's part the process was deliberate.

The rules of the game were based on the game principle. And in this game, apart from political parties, whose programmes we know, there were other sides involved (various lobbies). Giving the political mechanism characteristic for interwar Czechoslovakia, one should expect political junctioning, trading with votes, and promising to vote for a certain bill in exchange for support in another matter and/or for a concrete economic profit. We will spend more time on this level when we study the implementation phase of the Land reform in more detail. Let me focus on both, the institutional and

legislative framework of the Land Reform during the years 1918-1920 – the period of the Czech Revolutionary Assembly and the first two Cabinets, the time when the core laws related to the Land Reform were being passed.

A. The institutional framework of the Land Reform consists of

1. Czech Revolutionary Assembly
2. The Land Reform Committee
3. The Land Office Board of Management
4. The Land Office
5. Unions of Landowners

It is obvious that the “legislative whirlwind”, covering (among other things) the legal regulations related to the Land Reform, took place in the Czech Revolutionary Assembly without the participation of representatives of minorities, and was conducted exclusively by Czech politicians. However, within the Union of Czechoslovak Large Landowners the members communicated and cooperated with each other regardless of their nationality.

B. The legislative framework for the Land Reform implementation

The laws dealing with the implementation were adopted by the Parliament in the spring of 1919. However, in November the act on the nationalisation of forests was adopted, followed with the act cancelling noble titles and privileges in December, along with the law forbidding theft, mortgage or burdens put on estates without the permission of the state. These and other laws may be considered omens of the Land Reform – many of them were discussed and adopted without any interest on the side of the public.

Constitution, the Treaty of Versailles, the law preceding the Land Reform, acts linked to the Land Reform : Act No. 215 of 16 April 1919 on the expropriation of large estates, act on allotment or Act No. 81 of 30 January 1920, Act No. 118 of 12 February 1920 was adopted, on the administration and management of expropriated property, the Act on Compensation, Act No. 329 of 8 April 1920 and more than dozen related legal regulations. The laws are described in the full version. From our perspective is important to say, that minorities neither took part in the legislative process nor were there any nationally-selectiv formulations in these laws.

Partial conclusions

What are the conclusions following from the Czech Revolutionary Assembly's legislative orgy in the area of land ownership? In the course of one year, the Assembly adopted nearly three dozen legal regulations. Debate was minimal, and representatives of minorities were not present. The Cabinet, the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Land Office first declared and then insisted that the Land

51Inovace studijního programu *Ekonomie a hospodářská správa s akcentem na internacionalizaci výuky, individuální práci se studenty a praxi.* CZ.2.17/3.1.00/33332

Reform was a means and a measure of economic and social necessity. Following from research in the Act dealing with the Reform, the national dimension seems irrelevant. However, there are many documents proving that political parties, leaders of national minorities, or foreign governments blamed the National Land Office for discriminating against German and Hungarian landowners, and favouring Czech and Slovak applicants.

Slowly but increasingly often, the idea was asserted that expropriation was necessary for national-political reasons, especially as an official act of punishing reparation at the time of the confiscation after the Battle of White Mountain – the restitution of “land stolen from the nation”. A couple of years later, the official authorities started using expressions like “atonement for White Mountain”.

Why?

In my opinion, the first reason is the political structure of the institutions that decided to adopt the reform-related law: Most influential were the left-wing parties, especially the Social Democrats; the proposals presented by the MPs came equally from the right-wing MPs as well. After World War One, the mainstream voter was focused on social issues, and the Land Reform definitely falls in this area. Although it was mostly Social Democrats who called for abolition of all large estates, the individual proposals were sponsored by MPs across the entire political spectrum. The Agrarian Party was somehow standing aside at that time, the attitudes and the speeches produced by the Agrarian MPs and by Karel Prášek, the Minister of Agriculture were rather reserved. However, the motto of national-democratic and social revolution caught all parliamentary political parties present in the Czech Revolutionary Assembly, forming the first Cabinets afterwards. They are to blame for this, since they are the creators of all legal regulations in the background and starting line of the Land Reform.

The second reason was simpler: The Czechoslovak lawmakers were under time pressure. The first Cabinet promised regular elections which is why the political parties worried losing voters: the Social Democratic Parties were the winners in the first Parliament elections in April 1920 – the Czechoslovak SD won 25.7% and the German won 11.1% of the votes. Agrarians, with their 13.6% of the votes came second. Therefore, it was a Parliament with minorities - German and Hungarian MPs, representatives for the region of Těšín did not take part in the meetings for the unsettled issue of the state borders.

Seeing that it is impossible to trace any indications of national selection at the legislative level, it can mean only one thing. The government of the multi-national state tried to maintain the status quo between the majority and the minorities. Czechoslovakia, with such a complex national structure,

really tried not to introduce any laws discriminating against minorities, and not to adopt any legal provisions that might be interpreted by the Allies as nation-discriminating. This not to say, that nationally selective steps were not taken while these “conflict-free” laws were being implemented.

The Land Reform, its supporters and opponents

There is a trivial hypothesis: that landowners were the natural enemies and the originally landless were natural friends of the Land Reform. Unfortunately, the situation was not that simple. The landowners and the landless, were not the only participants in the game called the Land Reform: One should keep in mind that for some politicians the Land Reform was simply a way to gain political capital and it brought them real capital as well. land and other assets or finances. I suggest speaking of those who benefited from the Land Reform and of the others who lost.

In order to understand the attitudes of individual nationalities we need to know how land was divided and the relevant statistics. Again, the preliminary results of statistical analysis are published in the full version of my paper. Let me expand on just one aspect:

The graphic chart below shows the structure of the land and owners before the Land Reform. According to data from 1913, a mere 151 landowners possessed nearly 30% of the land in the entire country (Czech lands); in Slovakia, 935 landowners possessed land of more than 546 hectares. All in all, the 150 largest noble estates of a size beyond 5,000 hectares kept more than one tenth of the land in the territory of the newly established Czechoslovakia. However, the wealthiest in this manner was above all the Catholic Church. During the first period, in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (except the large estates within the area of “Greater Prague”) 176,000, hectares of agricultural land, 265,000 hectares of forest and 7,000 hectares of other land were to be taken over. This was a total of approximately half a million hectares of land to be confiscated from the large estates and sold to small farmers. The National Land Office carried out their own research and issued guidelines for the confiscation procedure. The following types of property were taken:

No mention of the owners nationality.

The statistics is, no doubt, vital for understanding the extent of the Land reform. Thanks to the above figures, we can move on to the second stage of the Land Reform, the implementation stage.

At this stage of the research, the fundamental question was, if there were any limits in terms of national argumentation in the legislative process accompanying the Land Reform; whether or not it was an active strategy of agrarian movement. It is obvious that – during the short period from November 1918 to April 1920 there was not much room for that, and especially not on the agrarians

part. Complaints by the minority representatives submitted to the League of Nations did not have much chance to succeed. Agrarianism served as an instrument of social justice, but it was not verbalised as it was being spread by parties that were not explicitly agrarian (social democrats, national socialists, national democrats). Agrarians were inclined towards the necessity to introduce the Land Reform. However, not in the sense of elimination of social inequality but in order to fulfil the everlasting relationship to the mother - native land. For them, the relationship was not determined by ownership but by working on it. I would say that at the beginning, the agrarians defended the level of “inner agrarianism”; they called for farmers' self-identification with the native land. This stage was to be replaced with mobilisation of the electorate when the Act on Allotment was passed and the agrarians got their economic/political opportunity. It was them who held the key positions for implementation of the laws. And they took their chances, too: the elections in the spring of 1920 did not give them enough time to win. However, the victory was on its way. The orgy of legislative enactments (according to the British Minister Sir George Clark) was the first step towards it. Then, started the strategic game over winning and keeping the economic and political power. And the agrarians were star in both formal and informal negotiations. The winners and the losers presented themselves differently now: the agrarians were the most viable subject on the political scene at that time, with a great sense for quick and politically meaningful solutions. If we look at the social structure of the rural population, it is obvious that any party – in an effort to gain political power and with ambitions to become a leading political subject – will have to declare its mass character. It is the superiority of minor and medium farmers in the countryside which defines their party. The small group of rural bourgeoisie would not have guaranteed the election success. The famous Švehla's slogan, “The country is one big family” indicates that “country” meant landlords, allotment holders and the landless – any and all of them, across the nationalities. Although the party defended the interests of a specific part of the population, and – even when the party defined themselves as “the party of a certain part of the population”, their official program was formulated in such a way that they addressed the widest spectrum of the population. And it was – from an economic and political point of view – a wise and effective approach.

TOTALITARIANISM

CZECH-GERMAN RELATIONS

Introduction

The end of WWII in 1945 is undoubtedly an important milestone in the modern world history. It influenced the fates of many countries, the Czech Republic being no exception. In Czechoslovakia it caused the loss of 337-343,000 lives and, after the war, the country's international relations, ethnic composition, political system as well as its economic situation changed. How has the Czech society reconciled itself with this uneasy legacy and national discontinuity? A whole 65 years after the war, this may seem a purely academic question but it is not - the process of reconciliation with WWII is yet to be completed. Within this process, the Czech (Czechoslovak) society and historiography have passed through 3 phases:

- the period 1945–1948, when Czechoslovakia searched for its path to socialism,
- the period 1948–1989, when Czechoslovakia was ruled by the Communist Party,
- the period 1989–present, when Czechoslovakia tried to define its place within Europe, whereby different paths were taken in the Czech and Slovak Republics post 1993.

The political milestones which define these phases complicate both reconciliation and reflection on it. Firstly, much wider contexts have to be considered, both in terms of time and space. There were the migration and emigration of the 20th century, the politics of the powers-to-be prior to WWI and post the Versailles Agreement, the coalitions during WWII, the overemphasised Yalta Conference, and last but not least the Potsdam Conference. There were also the Russian revolution of 1917, social tensions that followed both world wars, land reforms after 1919 in more than 20 European countries, redistribution of property in the descendant countries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Great Depression.

Secondly, it needs to be said that any reflection on these experiences remains trapped in causality – as if the history of Czech-German relations brought about nothing but injustice. For the Czech (Czechoslovak) society and historiography, any kind of reconciliation is tainted by the Munich betrayal, the active role of Czech Germans in the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, and by the persecution of the Czechs during the war. On the German and Austrian side, collective memory is tarnished by experiences of Sudeten Germans, and also by personal ambitions of leaders of Sudeten associations in Germany. In this light, Czechoslovakia is seen as an oppressor of minorities, and so the reaction by the Germans at the end of the 1930s is a logical outcome of this ill-treatment. The coexistence of Czechs and Germans is stereotypically regarded as conflicting in the whole of the long 19th century.

In my paper I will first try to explain to what extent the Czechs may have reconciled themselves with the war, and then to formulate the factors which hindered reconciliation and why. I shall employ the classic historical method – address the matter chronologically, but in reverse order. Günter Grass, the

Nobel Prize in Literature, titled his novel in which he reconciles himself with his own past *Peeling the Onion (Häuten der Zwiebel)*. Like him, I will attempt to remove at least some layers of the 65-year-old process of the nation's reconciliation with its history, its neighbours, its former fellow citizens and its former enemies. Over the years, some subject matters were purposefully removed by political leaders, others by the actors of the day, and others still by their descendants today. This paper is supposed to be a quick overview of how far the Czech Republic has come along the path towards reconciliation. The questions asked are: *Who are the actors behind this process? What exactly does the term mean?* and *Do these questions pose any potential dangers?*

Post 1989

The subject of reconciliation with the war was essentially only broached in the Czech public discourse in the context of defending the so-called Benes' decrees. On the Czech side of the matter, the Czech-German relations appear to be defined by two events only: the Munich Agreement and Benes' decrees, i.e. by the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and by the transfer of the Sudeten Germans. The timing and the course of the discussion demonstrate what a handy tool history can be in legitimising or delegitimising politics. The discussion took place in 1992, when Czechoslovakia began its attempts to join the EU, and Germany and Austria were willing to support Czechoslovakia in this if Benes' decrees were declared void. What was left undefined was whether all the decrees or only some of them should be nullified, or perhaps only some of their passages, if they should be void *ex tunc* (from the moment they were signed) or *ex nunc* (as of now). In negotiations with Czechoslovakia, Germany dealt with two sides of the same problem: compensation for the victims of Nazism and the question of the Sudeten Germans. Although the German public had never disputed the former, it could not be resolved earlier due to the Cold War. The latter was, for a long time, regarded by the Germans as a regional, Bavarian problem, which would disappear with the passing away of the transferred generation. The vast majority of Czech lawyers and historians of law believe that the decrees conform to the European legislation, thanks to the adoption of the European Human Rights Act. Moreover, the question of whether the transfer of the Sudeten Germans was legitimate or legal is not inevitably linked to Benes' decrees. The transfer occurred in accordance with the laws of the time and with the support of the international community. The Czech Republic's response to any debate on the topic is unyielding, coming back to the issue of the Munich Agreement. This is because for the Czech Republic the non-validity of the Munich Agreement is in part what determines its right to the execution of sovereignty over its current territory.

According to the legal interpretation, any doubt over absolute nullity of the agreement would inevitably evoke the possibility of territorial and then proprietary claims by the neighbouring countries.

The issue of reconciliation presents itself in a different light in 1989 from the one we are familiar with. Rather than the fall of Communism, it portrays the end of major ideological systems together with their interpretation frameworks. In the Czech Republic, however, the stereotypical interpretations of the 20th century's key events in public discourse remain almost the same. The war, started by Nazi Germany, tends to be blamed for all damages and changes in the situation. The Czech side refuses to engage in any kind of discussion with the Sudeten Germans, as those responsible for breaking up Czechoslovakia. The idea that the culprits of the tragic war and postwar events could be found beyond Nazi Germany, as well as within it, is literally revolutionary. It is also becoming apparent that there are still people on both sides of the long-gone war conflict, who are sensitive about any mention of WWII. Whether they are actual witnesses or their descendants, they perceive it with a sense of wrong-doing and injustice.

In as early as December 1989, only three days after being elected President, Vaclav Havel apologised in his speech in Berlin to the Sudeten Germans who were forced out of Czechoslovakia in 1945-46. In doing so, he acknowledged the outcome of the dissident debate of the 1970s about the moral dimension of the transfer. His statement outraged public opinion in Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, it coincided with the hurried process of German unification and so it did not receive the expected reception from the Germans either. Both the Czechoslovak-German agreement from 1992 and the Czech-German agreement from 1997 aimed to nullify Benes' decrees. The latter consistently condemned their consequences, which were in conflict with human rights, but the Czech Republic has never agreed to actually declare the decrees void. From the moment Vaclav Klaus became the second Czech president, he called for a separate agreement with the EU, before the country's joining, so as to spare it from any potential legal actions by those expelled in 1945-46.

He secured it at the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

Period 1945-1989

Apart from losses in terms of lives, Czechoslovakia also calculated the cost of direct and indirect damages and filed a claim for 11.5 billion US\$ at the Paris Reparation Conference. This amount was later raised to 19.5 billion US\$ and further claims, arising from the Munich Agreement, were added against Germany. Czechoslovakia received only 91.3 million US\$ from the Brussels Reparation

Bureau and through direct restitutions and, from the very beginning, President Benes regarded confiscated German wealth as the repayment of this debt. The Cold War slowed down or completely stopped further financial compensation but, ironically, dealings proved to be more complicated with the allies than with Germany. Confiscations had targeted only German and Hungarian properties; nationalisation affected the wealth of the allies as well and, according to valid international laws, Czechoslovakia was entitled to do this only in exchange for compensation. In 1945-1982 Czechoslovakia carried out negotiations with Great Britain, the USA, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy, and concluded 168 compensation agreements.

The post-war chapter in Czech-German relations, however, bears the stigma of the transfer of the Germans – an event that stemmed from the tragedy of war and scarred the peaceful post-war years. The transfer of the Germans from the Czech lands and Slovakia after WWII involved 2.6-2.7 million Germans, about a quarter of all Germans displaced from their homes in Europe at the time. A vast majority of the German refugees from Czechoslovakia headed for Germany as Austria rejected them as wartime espousers of Germany, not Austria, as trouble-makers and as ex-Nazis. Legislatively, the transfer rested on several out of the 143 decrees published by Edvard Benes, the prime minister of the temporary government from the end of 1938 until the end of 1945. It has its political, legal and historical dimensions; research has so far ignored the economic one. However, the “Sudeten question” goes beyond the post-war transfer of the Germans - it is invariably connected to the Munich Agreement as, to the Czechs, these are two sides of the same coin. This is demonstrated clearly in the building of relations between Czechoslovakia and East and West Germany: despite the different political frameworks, both the transfer and Munich were at stake. As far as Munich is concerned, East Germany admitted in as early as 1950 and then in 1967 that the agreement was signed under duress, and that it was part of the Nazi conspiracy against peace. As such, the agreement needs to be regarded as nonbinding from the very beginning, with all the consequences. West Germany first joined this debate in the 1970s, willing to distance itself from Munich on moral, political and historical grounds, but not on legal ones. In the end, the agreement was declared void in 1973 and both states resolved controversial legal issues, concerning citizenship and acting in good faith in relation to property.

On the Czechoslovak side, it was not the legality as much as the legitimacy (entitlement) which was discussed in connection with the transfer of the Sudeten Germans. The Czechoslovak legal stance was that the transfer was the result of the negotiations of the Potsdam Conference, which makes it, first and foremost, an international legal matter. The decrees only specified who the Potsdam agreement applied to, i.e. who was to lose their citizenship (whereby it was not the nationality but citizenship of the German Reich, which was of prime importance). They also determined the fate of

German wealth within Czechoslovakia, which was labelled, even by the allies, as hostile. A logical lapse is often ignored: after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Germany, a vast majority of Czechoslovak citizens of German nationality automatically became German citizens. The decrees, however, bank on the fact that, from the perspective of the Czechoslovak law, the citizenship of even those with German nationality remained unchanged, and that they were released from their bond with Czechoslovakia only by the relevant decree. Thus, according to the decrees, the citizenship was to be retained only by those Germans and Hungarians, who even during the unfree times declared themselves as Czechs or Slovaks, which would have required a civic stance, impossible to imagine when one's life is at stake. Apart from anti-fascists, the transfer was also not supposed to apply to German experts, family members from mixed-nationality marriages etc. However, when it came to the execution of the decree, the number of people who were spared was minimal, and among those transferred were even antifascists and German-speaking Jews.

This fact should call our attention to the need to analyse not only the legal regulations but also the corresponding regulatory statutes and their application in practice. What it means in the case of Benes' decrees is to acknowledge the role of decisions made by relevant administrative authorities, people's committees and courts, including the Supreme Court. And in democracy, they should have played their role. Probing into the conduct of these authorities in the process of redistribution (i.e. punishment of war crimes and collaboration with Nazis) shows that the practice differed from the relevant legislature, and it varied depending on the time and region. Within Czech historiography, research into this area is at its very beginning and the first significant work comes from the American historian B. Frommer.

Most cases of people affected are to do with the period of so-called wild transfer, which took place before the verdict of the Potsdam Conference and before any organised transfer was implemented. The wild transfer involved 600.000 Germans, of which 25.000 were victims of violent acts. The so-called Amnesty Law was adopted in as early as 1946 and it amnestied criminal acts in the first months after the war, "executed on the occupiers and their aides" of the period from 30 September 1938 (the adoption of the Munich Agreement) until 28 October 1945 (establishment of the temporary National Assembly). The few sentences that were passed were amnestied after February 1948. Even prior to this, the future first Communist president K. Gotwald expressed an opinion that crimes committed on Germans (and Hungarians) should no longer be investigated and, if possible, should be kept secret.

For completeness, after 1945 Czechoslovakia was addressing its relations with other neighbours – Hungary and Poland. In the case of Poland, it was territory around the mutual border as well as

citizens. A complicating factor was that both countries (Czechoslovakia and Poland) were on the side of the winning powers and also the fact that Soviet Union had territory claims against Poland in the east of the country. Therefore, the powers pressed for disputes to be dealt with by the means of bilateral negotiations. In the case of Hungary, the issue was that, essentially, the transfer applied to Hungarian citizens all over Slovakia. There were three approaches to dealing with population of these nationalities – determined by either Benes' decrees, or international agreements, or by the application of the principle of collective guilt. The second of these approaches meant that 6,000 Polish nationals and 30,000 Hungarians, who moved to Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement was signed, were expelled. 400,000 Hungarians were transferred from Czechoslovakia on the basis of international agreements about the exchange of citizens. In this respect, Hungary demanded, in vain, a transfer of land as well, given that there were 600,000 Hungarians in Slovakia, but only 60,000 Slovaks in Hungary. The principle of collective guilt led to the Polish and the Hungarians being identified as Germanised nationalistic collaborators, and a part of the Hungarians were subjected to forced internal colonisation.

All the above steps were undertaken in the name of national cleanliness, of rectifying the Munich Agreement, and of restoring pre-Munich Czechoslovakia. The fact that Czechoslovakia wanted to satisfy a proportion of its reparation demands and make up for the loss of Subcarpathian Rus to Soviet Union by gaining territory at the expense of Poland, undoubtedly played its role.

At the time, the transfer did not become a topic of academic or public debate in Germany or Austria. Moreover, Austria felt like a victim of the Nazi expansion and did not join Germany's compensation claims even in the years to come. This suggests that the Sudeten Germans' approach to the same part of history is just as ambivalent as the Czechs' – having become members of the German state after 1945, they have since the 1960s undergone a process of reconciling themselves with the consequences of the war and the holocaust, which as Germans they were responsible for. At the same time, however, as a minority, which had been displaced and eliminated, they felt they had become victims of the war frenzy. The transfer was only discussed in the world of the Czechoslovak dissent in the 1970s. Their debate posed three questions: *How morally right was the transfer, given that it broke all the humane principles which the First Republic had been built on?*, *To what extent did the transfer of the Germans lead to a greater closeness between Benes and the Communists?* and finally *To what extent did the transfer alter the social composition of the society, given that in ethnic terms the change was dramatic?*

Period 1938-1945

This era of Czech-German relations began by Hitler's great diplomatic success in Munich and it seemed to mean success for those Sudeten Germans who, for the past one hundred years, dreamt of making their land part of the German Reich. In fact, it was the second out of a number of Pyrrhic victories in the history of Czech-German relations, and as such it threw Europe into a devastating six-year war conflict, in which the Sudeten Germans ended up becoming victims. This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the external or internal politics, or of moral, legal or economic aspects of the Munich agreement. However, what does speak volumes is the fact that when the Czechoslovak (Czech) society reflects on the Munich Agreement, it uses its official name much less frequently than its synonyms, i.e. the Munich Dictate or the Munich Betrayal. The legal interpretation that the agreement was not an international legal act, since it was imposed upon Czechoslovakia against its will, prevailed in Czechoslovakia in as early as 1946. The Czech public still perceives the Munich Agreement through the apt motto: "about us without us" and through the view, asserted by the Communist propaganda, that it was a case of international law being broken, of the western allies (Great Britain and France) betraying Czechoslovakia, and that it was invalid. However, getting such a standpoint to be accepted internationally was far from easy. It was related to restoring the Czechoslovak statehood during WWII, based on Benes' theory of legal continuity. According to this, while occupation of Czechoslovakia, creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and declaration of an independent Slovak State meant that Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in factual terms, but not in legal terms.

British Prime Minister W. Churchill referred to the agreement as dead already in September 1940 – it was concluded lawfully but Hitler invalidated it by invading Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939. The British stance did not change even after recognising the Czechoslovak exile government on 18 July 1941. On the other hand, in a letter by Charles de Gaulle in 1942 France declared the agreement void from the very beginning. The same declaration was made by the Italian government in September 1944. Germany, the last of the ones who had signed the Munich Agreement, never recognised its non-validity.

The Munich Agreement led to the destruction of the whole concept of Czechoslovakia, as envisaged by Masaryk. It changed the country's territorial, economic and political situation. 34% of its inhabitants and 30% of its land were lost to Germany, Hungary and Poland, and 150-160 thousand refugees of both Czech and German nationality fled from these areas, heading inland. The change in the national composition of post-Munich Czechoslovakia was sudden. The Agreement gave way to the truncated country's 6-month-long existence, strategically enclosed by Nazi Germany. During that time, 33% of Czechoslovak exports and 37.3% of its imports were to and from Germany. Political

changes were soon to follow. President Benes abdicated in October, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus became autonomous in November, the whole of state administration was reorganised. Those members of the National Assembly who were not properly resident in the Czechoslovak Republic lost their mandates.

The Second Republic met its fate on 15 March 1939. The occupation of what had remained of the Czech lands, and the creation of an independent Slovak State led to a further shift in political and economic parameters. Like in other occupied countries, these were mainly shaped by germanisation and aryanisation. The Czech lands were also made, in all aspects, a part of the German economic area – foreign trade of the Protectorate was Germany-oriented in 70% of its exports and 80% of its imports. The Czech economy was of great importance to the Nazi economy, amounting to 9-12% of the industry of Greater Germany. A commonly presented image of the Protectorate is that of a regime of occupation, backed up by the German minority within the Czech society, who mostly welcome the Nazis as the liberators, the Czechs being second-class citizens. No one asks the question, though, what the nature of this protectoral regime was, given that the structure of the society was of a similar level of development to that of Germany itself. It was this economic reality that created a barrier against the apparent terror, which took place in other occupied countries. Even in the everyday life of the Protectorate we can find a number of unknowns. For example, 3,000 Czechs are known to have died in forced labour service in the Reich but we do not know how many Czechs headed for the Reich voluntarily, seeking better wages and social security, and therefore profited from the Reich and, in fact, actively supported the German wartime boom. We know that the Nazi protectoral regime was run by 2,000 German civil servants, together with 140,000 Czech employees but we it is unknown to us what role they played in killing the Jews or in persecuting their own people. We do not know how many Czechs profited economically from aryanisation.

Period 1918 – 1938

We have seen that, in the minds of the Czechs, the Munich Agreement and the transfer of the Germans, to this day, mark the beginning and the end of WWII. For the Germans living in the Czech lands the war meant the fulfilment of a hundred-year-long political struggle. Both the Sudeten-German and the Nazi propagandas claimed that the war was the only possible solution to the oppression of the Germans in Czechoslovakia. Yet, in hindsight, historiography evaluates Czechoslovakia as one of the most liberal countries in Europe with regards to its minority legislation. During the Peace Conference in Paris in September 1919 Czechoslovakia signed an international

agreement on protection of minorities. Despite this the Czech Germans kept making complaints to the League of Nations. Unsuccessfully. However, in matters of minorities the administration of the League Council suffered from a great deal of formalism – petitions were usually dealt with by means of a letter from the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Council did not carry out its own investigation.

Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918 as a multinational state, where 33% of the citizens belonged to a minority. The German minority amounted to 25% of the population. German politicians with decisive influence displayed a negativistic attitude towards this state from the very beginning. They repeatedly rejected President Masaryk's offers of government posts. On the other hand, the German MPs were not invited to join the first sessions of the Revolutionary National Assembly, whose composition should have reflected the results of the last pre-war elections. In response to the creation of Czechoslovakia the Sudeten Germans had declared the formation of four German provinces, where most of the population was German, but which were inhabited by some Czechs too. Czechoslovakia repressed this attempt militarily without it causing any international protest and the Peace Conference in Paris, which followed, confirmed Czechoslovakia's borders, copying those of the Bohemian Crown.

By the 1930s, the Sudeten-German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei – SdP*) had become the decisive force of the Germans in Czechoslovakia, and the situation started to get complicated at the 1935 parliamentary elections. The election outcome was absolutely devastating for the Czechoslovak politicians – the winner of the parliamentary elections in a country, which had boasted its Czechoslovak unity, was the SdP, a party of a minority, with 15.2% of the votes! It was only thanks to a recount during the second and third vote counts that the runner-up party, the Agrarians, secured one more mandate than SdP in the Parliament. German activist parties experienced a bitter defeat and the number of votes in favour of other parties, i.e. parties in power until then, went down as well. 67% German voters voted for SdP and the party first publically espoused the German Reich in June 1936. In spring 1938 the SdP received 88.9% German votes in the local elections and the party had 1.2 million members (out of 3.2 million German population). It needs to be said, however, that up until then, between 1926 and 1938, there were two to four German politicians in every Czechoslovak government. The German Democrats helped considerably in maintaining Czechoslovak democracy until the very last months of the first Czechoslovak Republic's existence. The coexistence of the Czechs and Germans within multinational Czechoslovakia tends to be labelled “a contentious partnership”. When observing the Czech-German relations through political processes, this image is largely correct. Focusing on the economic aspects, or those of civic participation, brings the discovery

that although we can determine divisions among individual nationalities within post-war Czechoslovakia in the process of party polarisation, it is not the case in the field of economics. When economic entities of different nationalities crossed paths, pragmatism prevailed, totally unambiguously. Initially, the Germans did not participate in creating and approving new economic laws, nor did they have any influence on the economic policy of the state. This manifested itself in the process of approbation of important companies dating back to the times of the monarchy, in repatriation of capital, and in the marked national subtext of the land reform. All these steps strengthened Czech and Slovak economic entities at the expense of the German (but also Hungarian and Polish) ones. However, cooperation gradually started to take place – at first within the Association of Czechoslovak banks and the Association of Czechoslovak Industry. This is because rivalry proved to be detrimental to the ability of the business lobby to assert itself. Czechoslovakia had inherited almost 70% of the Austro-Hungarian industry, and foreign trade accounted for up to 30% of its domestic production. Inevitably, Germany soon became the biggest business partner, accounting for as much as 40% of Czechoslovakia's exports and around 30% of its imports. However, the Munich Agreement brought Czech-German cooperation to an end.

Prior to 1918

For long centuries, the Czechs had been “sentenced” to sharing mutual space with other nationalities. The creation of the Czechoslovak Republic changed radically only one aspect of this sharing. Prior to 1918 it was the Czechs who were in the position of a subjected ethnic group (a rising nation) with all its social and political consequences. The year 1918 did not bring any dramatic transformation of the society's national composition but the Czechs gained their own nationally determined state, in which the Germans became the largest minority, whose own nationally determined state was in the immediate vicinity. Comparing each other's successes in the colourful areas of the society's life in the long 19th century had affected the way of thinking and the value criteria of both the Czechs and the Germans. It gave rise to the cliché about the contentious partnership between them, which is often inferred from the political scene, which in the 19th century witnessed a battle of two conflicting tendencies. It there was a chance to create a society, where Czech and Czech-German populations could co-exist, it ceased to exist at the beginning of the 1848 revolution at the latest, when the hope that all German-speaking people might be united quickly prevailed even among the Germans living in the Czech lands. From that moment on, the Czech politics sought to restore the statehood of the Czech Crown within a federalised monarchy, while the Germans strived to make the Czech lands part of the German Empire. The process that followed the Austro-Hungarian reconciliation in 1867 also displayed political rivalry. Whereas the Czech political representation was against this reconciliation

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as it did not meet their demands, the German counterpart accepted and supported it. Until WWI the political rivalry between the Czechs and the Germans was reflected in the attempts by the German population to form purely German territories (*Deutschböhmen*) within the Czech lands and in the Czech population's opposition to them.

In the course of the second half of the 19th century, two civic societies gradually formed alongside each other in the Czech lands. They cooperated in areas of everyday life, to a large extent culturally, and above all economically. Without thorough research, one cannot reject the thesis that a degree of economic rivalry between the Czech and German business sections of the society may have accelerated the Czech economic revival in the second half of the 19th century.

Conclusion

Who are then the actors behind the process of reconciliation with WWII, exactly what does the term mean and what dangers do these questions pose? If we take into account that the process of reconciliation involves dealing with political, moral, economic but also individual (civil) issues, we have to acknowledge that the political ones are decisive in their importance. Even after 65 years the reconciliation still remains in the hands of the political representation. Economic and civic issues are almost completely absent but without them the picture of Czech-German relations is incomplete, if not impossible to comprehend. In comparison with Germany and Austria, the recovery of the Czech civic society in the border regions was slow and in terms of the level of development of the civic society, the areas of Czech Sudetenland are the most backward. History experts have only recently begun to address this matter but it has fallen on deaf ears in public discourse, where the whole of the WWII history has been narrowed down to the "Munich betrayal" and Benes' decrees.

Moreover, the process of reconciliation is defined by two factors: by the Communist ideology and by the nature of the Czechoslovak regime in 1945-48.

Through the media and school education, the Communist propaganda explained the transfer as a necessary and just step – from the moral as well as legal point of view. It was presented as a revenge for Munich, revenge for the hardships of the war, the only solution to the "German" problem in Czechoslovakia. In their speeches immediately after the war, all Czechoslovak politicians made references not to war but to fascism. They did not speak about the consequences of the war and reconciliation with them, but about the national and democratic, or social revolution. They also mentioned the need for continuity with the First Republic. The phrase "social and national revolution" gradually became very popular and the Communist ideology made use of it for the next 40 years. The

term even survived the fall of Communism. In both post-war Czechoslovak historiography and in public discourse the Sudeten Germans are stigmatised as an ethnic and social group, which bears collective guilt. The basis of this guilt does not lie in unleashing the war but in the disintegration of interwar Czechoslovakia and the transfer is a punishment for this. And yet, simultaneously, post-1945 Czechoslovakia severed ties with the interwar past - with its political and economic elites, and its political and economic system. In historiography before 1989 the topic of the First Republic was taboo. The period post 1989 witnessed the publication of a whole range of books, often almost hagiographic in their nature, and Czech historiography as well as the public presented a whole number of stereotypical interpretations.

The second factor needs to be explained at this stage, i.e. the nature of the Czechoslovakian regime in 1945-48. Closer examination reveals that post-1945 Czechoslovakia and interwar Czechoslovakia had little in common. They did not have the same borders, national or social composition, political system or the same economic order. Even the constitution, valid from 1920, was not upheld in all its points. What is more, all system changes enjoyed visible approval by the public.

Czechoslovakia's experiences post 1945 show clearly what a double-edged sword democracy can be. The first tragedy of the Czechoslovak democracy after 1945 was that it became the people's democracy; people's in the sense of "for the people". Not only is this clearly nonsensical – translating as people's power of the people, it also invariably evoked the idea that the previous democracy had only been there for a part of the society. This pleonasm fitted perfectly in with the Communist interpretation framework – just as, initially, political democracy stemmed from the struggle against feudalism, now democracy fought against capitalism and, as such, it could only evolve into a people's democracy. In a number of his declarations, even Edvard Benes implied that with the end of the war he expected a social revolution and, within it, a necessary destruction of the German bourgeoisie, pangermanic intelligentsia and fascism-espousing proletariat. Benes tended to use the phrase socialising democracy, by which he meant a democracy socially and economically more developed than the existing one. If based on this, he reasoned, post-war cooperation between old-fashioned democracies and soviet socialism should be possible. The second tragedy of Czechoslovak democracy was that the word liberal came to mean fascistic. A mere three years were enough for Czechoslovakia to start building a socialist state instead of a people's democracy. A mere three years were enough for the existing elites to be pushed aside and replaced by new elites. The wealth and social positions of some evaporated while, almost unnoticed, the wealth and positions of others came into being.

Thus, without exaggeration, the process of the Czechs' reconciliation with the Germans should rather be understood as their reconciliation with themselves and their own past. The society's point of view

will not change until Czech school books and public discussions contain at least a description of these post-war events, alongside the Munich Agreement and the recounting of the horrors of the Nazi occupation. It will also not change until the legal and political aspects of the transfer are accompanied by economic factors and the issue of lost civil solidarity. Until then, reconciliation cannot take place either, as the majority of the nation is convinced that the Czechs do not need to do so.

Therefore, reconciliation with the war is primarily a question of the use and/or misuse of the historical memory. It is not about reconciling oneself with the others but with oneself, with one's own historical memory, with collective consciousness and/or collective unconscious. 65 years after the war, it might seem obvious that WWII is a thing of the past; a closed chapter in history. Both this conference and the reality of Czech attitudes show that such a notion is premature.

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