

ON THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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In the year 1958 every sixth Czech or Slovak over twenty years of age was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS). In relation to the population of the country the CPCS is thus one of the strongest Communist parties of the world, since in the Soviet Union, for example, only every thirty-fifth inhabitant is a member of the party (CPSU).

Before the Second World War the relative strength of the CPCS was quite different: The Communists played a considerable, but by no means outstanding, role in the political life of Czechoslovakia. This has changed fundamentally since 1945.

However, the focus in this investigation is not on the history of how the Bolshevization of Czechoslovakia came about after 1945, but on the social

background — the political sociology of the CPCS as a social and political-psychological phenomenon. The investigation is based on the CPCS's own data on the social structure of its members made public from its foundation to the present. The investigation as well as the analysis of the results had to be carried out in two separate sections: up to 1938 and after 1945. Up to 1938 relatively numerous data of the CPCS on this group of questions were published: for the Communists themselves this period already represents a development which has become history. Only very few pre-war members play a role in the Party today, although many of the leading positions are still held by Party veterans. Ever stronger, however, a new group is pushing its way toward power: new Communists who joined the Party only 1945 or later. Tracing the social-critical phenomena of the members of the CPCS in their historical course thus also means showing in a scientific analysis the possibilities of future developments and methods.

Though this method is unable to explain the phenomenon of the growth of the Party from 47,000 members in the year 1947 to 2½ million in the year 1949, conclusions can still be drawn, by means of certain criteria, as to the classes and circles out of which the Party of today is composed. Such criteria are the length of Party membership, the age stratification, the social position in professional life, the participation of women, and the participation of the national minorities.

The investigation itself is only a part of a comprehensive study by the author devoted to the history, policy, and structure of Communism in Czechoslovakia, and is taken from the section on the sociology of the CPCS.