

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND THE POLICY
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY
OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1945 — 1948

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In the development of formerly democratically-governed states into a Communist regime, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR since June 11, 1960) represents a special case. This was, to be sure, frequently recognized and was especially emphasized in the literature of the emigration, but for the supplementation and completion of the picture the representative Marxist Czech voice was missing. In the last years Czech Marxist historical science and Party philosophy has now to an increasing degree taken interest in this subject, published sources on it, and attempted to incorporate it into the Marxist-Leninist pattern of history.

Jan Kozák, Professor of Philosophy and contributor to the central organ

of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, *Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ* (Contributions to the History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) has published a series of articles on the policy of the Czech Communist Party from 1945 to 1948. In his article „Possibilities of the Revolutionary Utilization of the Parliament in the Transition to Socialism and the Task of the Popular Masses“ he deals in particular with the methodological bases of the political activity of the Party and the practical consequences resulting from this program. This article served as the basis of the present work's critical examination. According to it the policy of the Communist Party was based above all on the two Leninist principles of „pressure from below“: infiltration of the machinery of state, control of the formal democratic parliamentarism and mobilization of the masses, as well as active exertion of influence and direction of political life from the semi-political level of trade-unions, peasant groups, and youth organizations, and the suppression of opposing views at these levels. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia thus knew how to fill the key ministries, to carry through popular demands of the immediate post-war period as its own program, to maneuver out political opponents, etc.

Kozák substantiates his examples with numerous facts. Of great importance, however, are his philosophy and his conclusions with respect to the Czech precedent, according to which evolutionary developments — as in Sweden or Great Britain — are only injurious to socialism; the only correct course is the revolutionary utilization of the parliament with the help of the formal weaknesses characteristic of a democratic regime.

To be sure, Kozák does not mention the special historical-political prerequisites aiding the Communist Party in 1945: only the Communists had a firm program and an organization that had already been clearly developed in Moscow during the war, and they organized first at the lowest administrative level of the towns and villages the self-administration after 1st May, 1945 — in most cases with a neutral man at the head —; they developed the initiative for the so-called „Kaschau (Košice) Program.“

In the present work, which particularly takes into consideration present-day Marxist literature, methodological questions are dealt with in especially great detail, as well as the problem of nationalism and its skillful manipulation for political purposes after 1945. For the first time longer excerpts are reproduced from speeches which Gottwald, the state president who died in 1953 and an old Communist from the First Czechoslovak Republic, made over Moscow Radio during the War to his countrymen.