

INTERNAL POLITICAL PRECONDITIONS FOR THE  
ASSUMPTION OF POWER BY THE COMMUNIST  
PARTY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1938—1948

*Eva Hartmann*

The main purpose of the present enquiry is to analyse the internal political conditions which confronted the Communist Party during its attempt to achieve total power in Czechoslovakia, in the period 1938—48.

First, it has proved necessary to elucidate the nature of the dilemma of the nationalistic justification of the Czechoslovak state, the ideological roots of the non-Communist parties, and the traditions of political conduct, in order to provide a standard for measuring the continuity of politics in Czechoslovakia during the period under investigation.

Second, the impact of the international situation and the politics of the government in exile were of decisive importance for the Czechoslovak state after the war. Yet detailed studies of these two factors would indicate that the first became effective before 1947 largely through the perceptions and concepts of the politicians in exile — who, being mainly drawn from the centre to the left, were not themselves representative of the Czechoslovak population as the study of their political background shows. In these conditions, a political system came about which was not subject to any correction or questioning by the population after 1945.

Finally, an analysis of this political system shows that it was its own structure, along with the political behaviour of the actors involved in it, which can be seen to a great extent as consistent with pre-war traditions, and which enabled the Communist Party to gain total power without breaking the legal framework of the system itself.