WORKING-CLASS POLITICS IN THE BOHEMIAN LANDS 1918–1921: NATIONAL IDENTITY, CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

By Nancy M. Wingfield

In newly formed Czechoslovakia, national interests played as large a role as class interests in social democratic politics. The two largest social democratic parties, the Czechoslovak and the German Social Democrats, both of which drew their support mainly from the Bohemian lands, inveighed against the class biases of the nonworking-class parties and condemned one another for exhibiting the same national chauvinism as the other political parties of their respective nationality[1]. The informal alliance of the larger social democratic party, the Czechoslovak Social Democrats, with the Czech National Socialists[2], a nationally oriented, non-Marxist party, exemplified the

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[1] Useful surveys of Czechoslovak interwar politics include: Bosl, Karl (ed.): Die Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik als multinationaler Parteienstaat. München-Wien 1979. – Mamatey, Victor S./Luža, Radomír (eds.): A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918–1948. Princeton, 1973. – Peroutka, Ferdinand: Budování státu; československá politika v letech popřevratových [Building of the State: Czechoslovak Politics in the First Postwar Years]. 5 vols. Praha 1918–1936/38. – Alexander, Manfred (ed.): Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte aus Prag. Von der Staatsgründung bis zum ersten Kabinett Beneš 1918–1921. Vol. 1. München–Wien 1983 and Kocman, Alois et al. (eds.): Boj o směr vývoje československého státu [The Struggle for the Direction of the Development of the Czechoslovak State]. 2 vols. Praha 1965–1969, include documents concerning the division of the social democratic parties and the formation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

On the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, see: Kárník, Zdeněk: Socialisté na rozcestí. Habsburg, Masaryk či Šmeral? [The Socialists at the Corssroads. Habsburg, Masaryk or Šmeral?]. Praha 1968. – Galandauer, Jan: Od Hainfeldu ke vzniku KSČ. České dělnické hnutí v letech 1889–1921 [From Hainfeld to the Birth of the KSČ. The Czech Workers' Movement in the Year 1889–1921]. Praha 1986. – Czech-language literature on the origins of the Communist Party is vast. Recent work on the subject includes: Mejdrová, Hana: Kominterna a vznik KSČ [The Comintern and the Birth of the KSČ]. In: Z českých a slovenských dějin. Sborník [From Czech and Slovak History. Collection]. Praha 1982, 1–89. – Idem.: Komunistická internacionála a KSČ v letech 1921–1923 [The Communist International and the KSČ in the Years 1921–1923]. In: Sborník historický. Studie-prameny-diskuse-kritika [Historical Omnibus. Studies-Sources-Discussion-Criticism]. Praha 1987. 3–66.

On the the German Social Democratic Party of Czechoslovakia, see Zessner, Klaus: Josef Seliger und die nationale Frage in Böhmen. Stuttgart 1976. – Wingfield, Nancy Meriwether: Minority Politics in a Multinational State: the German Social Democrats in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1938. New York-Boulder 1989.

[2] While there is no scholarly history of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, the following literature adresses different aspects of that party's politics: Brandes, Detlef: Die

situation in which conflicting national interests sometimes overshadowed the shared class interests of these parties. The division of the respective social democratic parties into left and right wings during the immediate postwar period, however, was as dependent on the politics of the local party leaders and specific local conditions as on the traditional radicalism of different occupational groups or on their level of class consciousness. Moreover, in the case of the German Social Democrats (the DSAP), support for the internationalist policies of the left-wing social democrats and later the communists reflected particular grievances against the national structure of the new state, as well as against its socio-political form. This initial "protest" support did not necessarily translate into either party membership or long-term support, particularly when it became clear that the far left paid little more than lip service to German grievances.

Despite the important role nationality conflict played in the politics of the First Republic, most Czechs and Germans were relatively isolated from one another. The attitudes of both groups tended to be based on the unrepresentative types they had traditionally encountered: in the German case, poor Czech and Slovak migrant laborers; in the Czech case, petty-minded German bureaucrats, who seldom knew a word of Czech[3]. Although tension in the nationally mixed areas affected everyone, ethnic aggravation probably played a greater role in the daily life of the Germans than of the Czechs, because multinational Czechoslovakia was explicitly constituted as a national state of "Czechoslovaks". Thus, the Germans were regularly reminded of their minority status and of their loss of political power as a national group in Czechoslovakia as compared to that in the vanished Austria-Hungary. The situation was in many ways a reversal of the position of the two groups under the Habsburg Monarchy.

Although historically the Czech and German peoples living in the border districts of the former crownlands had intermingled, for the most part, until the nineteenth century, the Czechs had remained in their traditional home, the fertile heartland of Bohemia-Moravia. When they first began moving into industrializing German areas of the crownlands in search of employment during the early and mid-nineteenth century, many of them became Germanized. Those coming in the second half of the century, however, had a growing sense of national identity and a higher birthrate than their German counterparts, factors which inflamed national rivalries. Migrating Czechs

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tschechoslowakischen National-Sozialisten. In: Bosl (ed.): Die Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik als multinationaler Parteienstaat, 101–153. – Harna, Josef: Kritika ideologie a programu českého národního socialismu [Critical Ideology and the Program of Czech National Socialism]. Praha 1978. – Havlasová, Marie: Vznik, počátky a profil národně sociální strany. K dějinám českých politických stran v druhé polovině 19. a začátkem 20. století [The Birth, Beginning, and Profile of the National Socialist Party. On the History of the Czech Political Parties in the Second Half of the 19th Century and the Beginning of the 20th Century]. Acta UC, Studia Historica 25/3 (1982) 95–115.

[3] On how little the two groups knew each other, see Kern, Karl Richard: Heimat und Exil – von Böhmen nach Schweden: Erinnerungen und Bekenntnisse eines sudetendeutschen Sozialdemokraten. Nürnberg 1980, 87. – For a German characterization of the Czechs, see Franzel, Emil: Gegen den Wind der Zeit: Erinnerungen eines Unbequemen. München 1983, 14.

primarily moved into unskilled occupations. As the need for highly skilled labor decreased due to changes in the methods of production and to increased industrial concentration, the less skilled Czech workers began to relace the German master craftsmen who commanded higher salaries. Particularly the Germans of northwestern Bohemia felt the competition of the Czechs, who, used to a lower standard of living, accepted lower wages. Although Czechs and Germans labored side by side in factories, the management and ownership were almost exclusively German[4].

The growth of Czech national consciousness paralleled the growth of the nascent socialist movement. Although the Austrian Social Democratic Party[5] was reorganized on a federal basis in 1897, and the Brünn Party Congress of 1899 adopted a nationality program advocating the reorganization of Cisleithania as a federal state of nationalities, the Czechs, the second largest national group in the party, still felt threatened by what they regarded as the centralizing, Germanizing tendencies of Vienna. They also objected to continued German domination of the upper echelons of the party. Austro-German Social Democrats, however, did not consider bureaucratic centralization, which they supported, a threat to the other nationalities. More importantly, they were not prepared to yield their dominant position[6].

The conflicting demands of the Germans for centralization and the Czechs for autonomy within the party tested Austrian Social Democratic flexibility, particularly after the expansion of the franchise in 1897 and 1907, which facilitated the growth of mass political parties, as Austria moved toward limited democracy. The other political parties of Cisleithania were divided along national lines, and with the expansion of the franchise, they began to make nationalist overtures to the working class. The social democrats were only partially successful in combatting these appeals to their constituency. Social democratic policy on the nationality question alienated both Czech and German workers in the ethnically mixed regions of Bohemia: precepts of international solidarity and class struggle held little appeal for workers faced with what they considered a battle for their national survival. Furthermore, the varied national demands of the Czech and German Social Democrats sometimes conflicted. Nor did they always agree with Vienna's response to their demands: for example, the refusal of the party center in 1901 to provide funds for a Czech-language social democratic newspaper for the Czech-speaking workers of Vienna outraged the Czech Social Democrats.

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[4] On economic-national friction among the Czechs and the Germans in the border regions during the late nineteenth century, see Whiteside, Andrew Gladding: Austrian National Socialism Before 1918. The Hague 1962. – Ibid.: The Deutsche Arbeiterpartei. Austrian History Newsletter 4 (1963) 3–14. – Ibid.: Industrial Transformation, Population Movement and German Nationalism in Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Ostforschung 2 (1961) 261–71.

[5] For a history of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, see Ludwig Brügel's exhaustive study: Geschichte der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie. 5 vols. Wien 1922–1925. – See also Konrad, Helmut: Nationalismus und Internationalismus: Die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Wien 1976. – The best discussion of Austrian Social Democracy and the nationality question remains Mommsen, Hans: Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat. Wien 1963.

[6] On the attitudes of the Austro-German party leaders, see Rabinbach, Anton: The Crisis of Austrian Socialism: From Red Vienna to Civil War, 1927–1934. Chicago 1983, 16–18.

[7] Wheaton, Bernard: Radical Socialism in Czechoslovakia: Bohumír Šmeral, the Czech

The greatest challenge on the German side came from the German Workers' Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei,* the DAP), centered in northern Bohemia, the majority of whose leaders and members were workers. Founded in 1903 in Aussig (Ústí nad Labem), a region of pronounced Czech-German national rivalries, the DAP drew the bulk of its membership from former social democrats disgruntled with their party's failure to oppose the flow of Czechs into German-inhabited areas. The DAP, rejecting the concept of international solidarity, claimed that German workers could realize their "full potential" only within their own nationality[8].

Much of the working-class support for the Czech National Socialist Party, founded in 1897 by Václav Klofáč, was the result of social democratic failure to deal effectively with the nationality problem. Although conceived as a workers's party, many of its members in fact came from the ranks of the petit bourgeoisie. The party rejected the social democratic doctrine of proletarian internationalism, and called instead for a Czech front to fight for the removal of "foreign" [German] influence from the Bohemian lands. Czech National Socialists advocated Bohemian States rights, and the allure of the party's nationalist message for Czech workers was apparent in its gains at the expense of the Czech Social Democrats in the 1901 Reichsrath elections.

Czech-German Social Democratic friction was temporarily laid to rest at the outbreak of World War I when the social democrats of Cisleithania followed the policy of *Burgfrieden* up to the winter of 1917–1918. A small anti-war group around Friedrich Adler emerged as early as the autumn of 1914, but it remained weak until late in the war. Opponents to *Kriegsmarxismus* gained strength only when party leader Otto Bauer returned from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp in late 1917 and took over leadership of the anti-war left. He began developing the idea of complete self-determination of all peoples in the Monarchy. In January 1918, the Austrian Social Democrats announced a nationality program recognizing the right of non-Germans to self-determination and demanding the same for the Germans of Austria[9].

There was little unrest in the Monarchy during the war. Demonstrations throughout 1917 and much of 1918 were sparked more by shrinking food rations than by revolutionary fervor. While one of the objectives of the Czech Social Democrats and Czech National Socialists in organizing the 14 October 1918 strike was to get the jump on the *Národní výbor,* which was middle class in its outlook, Czech demonstrations also had clear national overtones. They were as much directed against the export of Bohemian foodstuffs to Vienna and for national independence as toward socialist goals. The Bohemian crownlands saw little revolutionary activity at the war's end. Together with Slovakia and Ruthenia, long integral parts of the Kingdom of Hungary, they became part of newly created Czechoslovakia. This successor state experienced a

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Road to Socialism and the Origins of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (1917–1921). New York-Boulder 1986, 38.

[8] On the DAP, see: Tutsch, Erich: Die Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei DAP-DSAP 1903–1933 (Diplomarbeit, Universität München 1984). – Whiteside, Andrew Gladding: The Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, 1904–1918: A Contribution to the Origins of Fascism. Austrian History Newsletter 4 (1963) 3–14.

[9] Kann, Robert A.: The Multi-National Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918. 2 vols. New York 1950, 2: 175–176.

democratic, national transformation as power passed peacefully from the Austrian government into the hands of the Czechoslovak National Council during the closing days of the war. Agrarian and Nationalist Socialist politicians held key positions in the council.

There had been dissension among the Czech Social Democrats during the last years of the war when men who stressed national-political goals were elected to the executive committee, prompting party chairman Bohumír Šmeral to resign in October 1917[10]. These differences were, however, temporarily eclipsed by the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state in October 1918. Czech Social Democrats participating in the constituent National Assembly joined politicians from non-working class parties in fashioning the new state's provisional constitution and government.

Contemporary reports suggest that in the immediate postwar period, the majority of the Czech and German Social Democratic leadership neither expected nor wanted a revolution following the Russian example[11]. German Social Democrats were concerned with joining the newly created German-Austria, while Czech Social Democrats rejected these asprirations, asserting that "legitimate" German claims were met by Czechoslovak compliance with the minority treaty signed at St. Germain in 1919.

The German members of the former Austrian Social Democratic regional organizations in the crownlands had become reluctant citizens of a country with borders based on economic, geographic, historic, and strategic claims, rather than on the right to self-determination. As the Czechs of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia celebrated their "liberation" from the Monarchy, their German neighbors demonstrated to protest their inclusion in Czechoslovakia. Czech soldiers began occupying the German border regions in November to unite them with the rest of the country and to strengthen Czech territorial claims at the peace conference. Tension between the Czechs and the Germans erupted into violence on 4 March 1919 during demonstrations throughout the German-populated regions led by the German Social Democrats to protest Prague's refusal to permit German participation in the German-Austrian parliamentary elections. These demonstrations were broken up by the Czech military, resulting in 54 deaths, and providing German nationalists with a rallying point that they would use throughout the interwar period.

In addition to interparty nationalist tensions, political problems were developing

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[10] On Bohumír Šmeral, see Galandauer, Jan: Bohumír Šmeral, 1880–1914. Praha 1981. – Idem: Bohumír Šmeral, 1914–1941. Praha 1986. – Wheaton: Radical Socialism. – For the prewar background on Czech Social Democratic differences, see Galandauer: Bohumír Šmeral, 1880–1914. – Urban, Otto: Bohumír Šmeral a František Modráček jako představitelé dvou ideologických linií v české sociální demokracii před první světovou válkou [Bohumír Šmeral and František Modráček as Representatives of Two Ideological Directions in Czech Social Democracy Before the First World War]. ČsČH 13 (1965) 432–444.

[11] See documents in Kocman et al. (eds.): Boj o směr 1: 70–72. – Speeches by František Modráček and other Czechoslovak Social Democrats in Protokol XII. sjezdu československého sociálně demokratické strany dělnické [Protocol of the XII Congress of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party]. Praha [1919]. – Numerous articles in the November and December 1918 editions of Právo lidu.

within both social democratic parties. The German Social Democratic left was centered in Reichenberg (Liberec), one of the largest crities in German-speaking Bohemia. Economically and politically important, Reichenberg and the small industrial villages adjacent to it were a traditional center of the Bohemian German workers' movement.

A left wing began to develop among the Czech Social Democrats soon after their fusion with the Slovak Social Democrats in December 1918 to form the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party. The left wing was neither concentrated in one geographic area, nor was its leadership ideologically unified. In addition, some Czech Social Democrats who had been part of the pacifist left during the war moved to the nationalist right wing of the party at the war's end. The textile factories of Brünn (Brno), the mines of Kladno, and the industrial suburbs of Prague provided the Czech left with much of its leadership and support. Not only the left wing within the party, led by Šmeral and journalist Josef Skalák, but also other groups, representing a variety of left-wing views, influenced the Czech left. There were anarchists and splinter communist parties, one of which had been founded in Russia during the war by Czech prisoners headed by the Czech Social Democrat Alois Muna of Kladno, later a leader of the social-democratic left wing.

The communal elections of June 1919, Czechoslovakia's first, resulted in victories for both the Czechoslovak and German Social Democrats. Support for the two parties was strongest in Bohemia, where the Czechoslovak Social Democrats won one-third and the German Social Democrats one-half of the votes cast by the members of their respective nationalities. The continuing antagonism between the German and the Czechoslovak Social Democrats was reflected in the former's decision to couple lists with other German parties in ethnically mixed areas to maintain German majorities in the town councils[12]. The victory of the DSAP was as much a reflection of the disarray of the other political parties as of its own strength.

Soon afterward, in August 1919, the German Social Democrats held their founding congress. They rejected radicalism in national and social questions, supported the democratic republic, and opposed government by worker councils. However, party chairman Josef Seliger still called for extensive autonomy for Czechoslovakia's national minorities[13]. The party program was important because in only ten months, by accepting the *status quo,* the DSAP had moved from demanding separation from Czechoslovakia to recognition of the state and calling for autonomy within it[14] – a demand the party would maintain throughout the existence of the First Republic. Although the growing tensions within the party were swept under the rug, there was some indication of future problems. Emil Strauss, a party jounalist and Seliger's son-in-law, attacked Karl Kreibich – who supported left-wing social democrats elsewhere and made no secret of his sympathy for the fledgling Soviet government – for using his position as editor of the party paper *Vorwärts* to voice his opinions[15].

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[12] Vorwärts (Reichenberg) 13 May 1919. – Freiheit (Teplitz) 17 May 1919.
[13] Protokoll des Parteitages (DSAP) Teplitz, 1919.
[14] Zessner: Josef Seliger 116.
[15] See, for example, Vorwärts (Reichenberg) 2 September 1919.

While the Czechoslovak Social Democrats accepted the theoretical portion of the DSAP's program, they rejected the notion of autonomy for the national minorities, characterizing Seliger's demand for the creation of an autonomous German region as something the German nationalist newspaper *Bohemia* would happily endorse. Moreover, Czechoslovak Social Democrats noted that the German Social Democrats were now demanding the same autonomy in Czechoslovakia that they had opposed granting the Czechs in the Monarchy. Their demands would be judged accordingly[16].

The Czechoslovak Social Democrats were united only in their opposition to German Social Democratic demands for autonomy. Complaints from the left wing became more vociferous with the formation of the second Czechoslovak government by party leader Vlastimil Tusar in July 1919. The Czechoslovak Social Democratic left as well as the DSAP attacked the right wing Czechoslovak Social Democrats both for governing with bourgeois parties and for their foreign policy. The party leadership had supported the anti-Bolshevik activities of the victorious powers, opposed Béla Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic, and aided by Allied troops had toppled the fledgling Slovak Soviet Republic. Czechoslovak Social Democratic coalition participants attempted to differentiate party goals from those of the governing coalition, noting that the party had to compromise on some of its socialist demands in order to assure the continued existence of the coalition. To be sure, the Tusar government had achieved some long-desired social democratic goals by enacting laws concerning child labor, land reform, and unemployment.

Disenchanted Czechoslovak Social Democrats formed an autonomous organization, the Marxist Left, in December 1919. The Marxist Left opposed continued participation in the government, demanding the recall of all social democratic ministers. They also demanded the development of joint policies with the minority Social Democratic Parties, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and membership in the Third International. Members of the Marxist Left claimed that the decision in December 1918 to participate in the government had been limited to the provisional National Assembly and the writing of the constitution. This period passed with the first parliamentary elections in April 1920. When, over the protests of the Marxist Left, the right-wing Czechoslovak Social Democrats chose to participate in the country's first representative government, 24 deputies and 5 senators from the Marxist Left announced their opposition to participation in the coalition. They argued that the national, bourgeois revolution that led to the formation of Czechoslovakia must develop into a social revolution, which would come through struggle against the bourgeois parties, rather than through cooperation with them: it was an ideological contradiction both to admire the tenets of the Bolshevik Revolution and to support the Czechoslovak government with its anti-Bolshevik policies.

German Social Democrats had initially welcomed the Marxist Left as a step toward the creation of a supranational social democratic party in Czechoslovakia. Later they became more cautious. Some DSAP members argued that nationalist feeling among the Czechoslovak Social Democrats ran so high that an "International" in Czechoslo-

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[16] Left-wing Czechoslovak Social Democrat Václav Vacek in Právo lidu 2 September 1919.

vakia could not be realized soon. Ad additional reason for caution was the possible effect of the Marxist Left's demands on the increasingly restive left wing of the DSAP. Indeed, German Social Democrats from Reichenberg had greeted the Marxist Left's manifesto with enthusiasm, though noting that it did not directly address the nationality question. There was good reason for DSAP suspicion of nationalist feeling within the Marxist Left. The desire to preserve the state tended to defuse radicalism. For example, Czechoslovak Social Democratic journalist Josef Stivín, whose commitment to revolution had been rewarded with honorary membership in the Soviet Hungarian government, renounced Šmeral when revolutionary problems in Slovakia put the republic's continued existence in doubt[17].

Although the DSAP was the third most popular party in the Republic, no real consideration was given on either side to its participation in the coalition. Nationalist feelings ran too high for the Czechs to offer the Germans a share in governing what they regarded as "their" republic, nor were the Germans prepared to play second fiddle to the Czechoslovak Social Democrats in coalition politics. Indeed, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic attitude toward their German fellow citizens appears to have been merely one of toleration. Stivín, who became one of the leaders of the party's right wing, spoke for many of his comrades when, at a meeting of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic right wing on the second anniversary of the republic, he commented that:

> our Republic has three-and-one-half million Germans, who are represented by a large number of deputies in the National Assembly, but I think we would be better off if we had a million fewer [Germans]. However, in the end, we are stuck with the Germans, we should work with them hand in hand, mainly the workers[18].

The political unrest that characterized postwar Central Europe was evident in Czechoslovakia during the spring of 1920. The Czechoslovak Social Democrats, who dominated the government coalition, were faced with the spectacle of Marxist left leader Muna, nominally one of their own, tried for high treason. In addition, there was worker unrest: strikes for higher wages and protests over food shortages, as well as scattered demands for revolution. When Prague remained studiously neutral in the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, social democratic rail workers prevented the shipment of Allied armaments from Austria to Poland. Social democrats staged anti-war rallies[19], and the DSAP and the Marxist Left berated the government for its failure to support the Soviet "workers'" state against the Polish "bourgeois" state.

Three decisive and related events occurred in mid-September 1920: the postponement of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party congress, the fall of the Tusar government, and the occupation of the party headquarters by the Marxist Left. Follo-

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[17] Wheaton: Radical Socialism 50, citing Právo lidu 7 June 1919.

[18] Státní ústřední archiv Praha [State Central Archive Prague], herafter, SÚA, presidium policejního ředitelství [Head of Police Administration], hereafter PP, 1916–20, sign. P/54/3, c. j. 13017/20.

[19] See SÚA, předsednictvo ministerské rady [Directorate of the Council of Ministers], hereafter PMR, carton 3189, sign. 704/II zprávy o schůzích politických stran v Čechách [Reports on the Meeting of the Political Parties in Bohemia], for reports of DSAP and social-democratic youth organization protest meetings in Krumau, Kaaden, Karlsbad, and Reichenberg.

wing a series of Marxist Left conferences, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic right wing, preparing for a likely party split, moved to salvage what it could of the original party. On 14 September, by a vote of 39 to 18, the party executiv postponed the coming congress, claiming that the Marxist Left, influenced by Moscow, was secretly trying to build a communist organization within the party. The following day the Tusar government resigned, an event precipitated by both foreign and domestic problems.

Infuriated by the preemptive action of the party executive, the Marxist Left rejected the postponement of the congress, held it as planned, and attracted some two-thirds of the original delegates. Claiming to be the true representative of the party, the Marxist Left took possession of the party press, its treasury, and the headquarters at *Lidový dům*. Both the headquarters and the press were legally owned by right-wing leaders of the party, however, and they went to court to prevent publication of *Právo lidu* by the Marxist Left and to force the return of *Lidový dům*. On 1 October, the party executive retaliated by expelling fifteen members of the Marxist Left, including Muna and Šmeral. The party executive condemned the appropriation of party property as a breach of discipline. The Marxist Left considered the postponement of the party congress a *Diktat* by the minority and attacked the party executive committee's recourse to legal action regarding the party headquarters.

At the same time, the DSAP was holding its second party congress in Karlsbad, where increasing internal conflict was the main topic of discussion. Dissension was both regional and generational: opposition leaders were ten to twenty years younger than other DSAP leaders. Seliger spoke for the majority and Kreibich for the opposition. Kreibich took the position that in a multinational state like Czechoslovakia, seizure of power by the proletariat could succeed only if proletarians of all nations were united. Advocating one of the most radical political programs of the time, he argued that the next battle should be for the destruction of the bourgeois state rather than for national autonomy. Implicit in Kreibich's program was the assumption that nationality problems would somehow be resolved in the "natural" course of events following the revolution. Seliger, on the contrary, argued that the methods employed in the class struggle depended on developments in each country, and that in any case, social democratic parties were obliged to win the majority over to socialism, because dictatorship in the sense of the *Communist Manifesto* meant dictatorship of the majority[20].

A short-lived compromise, which was not really much of a compromise at all, was adopted: the only concession to party dissidents was a provision allowing them to express their views. Kreibich was content to remain in the party for the time being. He believed that lopsided acceptance of the compromise was not an accurate reflection of party sentiment, because only a minority of delegates had actually been elected by party members. The others had been appointed by trade union and party officials. Party unity was destroyed three weeks later when the Reichenbergers declared that the only significance the Karlsbad compromise held for them was the provision for further activity within the party on behalf of the Third International. Thus, they maneuvered to win as many party members as possible over their point of view[21].

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[20] Protokoll des Parteitages (DSAP). Karlsbad, 1920, pp. 287–391.

[21] Chairman Seliger died shortly after the Karlsbad Congress. Deputy chairman Ludwig

The questions that the social democratic parties debated – workers' councils, methods of class struggle, and membership in the Third International – were also the subject of discussion by their affiliated youth groups. At congresses in the autumn of 1920, representatives of both the Czech and the German Social Democratic youth voted overwhelmingly to join the Communist Youth International. These socialist youth groups became the first social democratic organizations to make the division within the party final[22].

This occurred in a context of sporadic Czech-German conflict and anti-Semitic outbursts. On 15 November, Germans in the border town of Eger (Cheb) responded to the pulling down of statues of Josef II by Czech legionaires in town squares in Eger and Teplitz (Teplice) by replacing the statue in Eger after painting it German black, red, and gold[23], and damaging the Czech school there. Attacks on Czech citizens and soldiers were also reported. This resulted in Czech nationalist-led demonstrations in Prague on 16 November. German residents of the capital were beaten, German communal and university building occupied, German and Jewish stores damaged, and Jewish communal records in the Jewish town hall in the former ghetto destroyed[24]. There were reports of Czechs running down Meiselgasse in the ghetto shouting "String up any German or Jew on the next lamp post[25]."

Czech reaction was mixed. While some chauvinists, including the Czech National Democrats and National Socialists, blamed the Germans for the uproar, both the left – and right-wing – Czechoslovak Social Democratic leaders condemned the demonstrators.

As the excitement was dying down, the Marxist Left called a general strike on 10 December, in response to police attempts the previous evening to remove them from the party headquarters in Prague, which they still occupied. The Czechoslovak Social Democratic right, with a court order giving it possession of the building, relied on the police for the return of the party headquarters. Resistance to police efforts to clear the building resulted in bloodshed, and although the number of injured is unknown, it does not appear to have been the "massacre" Czechoslovak communists later claimed. The Marxist Left published an eight-point proclamation demanding the removal of police from the headquarters and its return to the workers, as well as the release of those arrested in the previous night's fracas. Not all of the demands were specifically Marxist; they expressed rather the heterogeneous nature of the leadership of the Marxist Left as well as its attempt to appeal to the widest possible audience for support.

Smíchov und Libeň, two industrial suburbs of Prague, as well als Brünn, Kladno,

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Czech, long-time leader of the German Social Democrats in Brünn, but a relative unknown in Bohemia, succeeded him.

[22] On the split that was occuring in the social democratic trade unions at this time, see Dubský, Vladimír: KSČ a odborové hnutí v Československu na počátku dvacátých let [The KSČ and the Trade-Union Movement at the Beginning of the 1920s]. Praha 1966. – McDermott, Kevin: The Czech Red Unions, 1918–1929: A Study of Their Relations With the Communist Party and the Moscow Internationals. New York-Boulder 1988.

[23] Volksrecht (Aussig) 16 November 1920.

[24] For a detailed report on the events in Prague, see SÚA, PP 1916–20, sign. D/6/30, čj. 4431/21.

[25] Bohemia 20 November 1920.

and Brüx (Most) responded to the call for a general strike. The Marxist Left mobilized factory workers in the capital who marched on the parliament building on the Old Town from the working-class suburbs. The most radical activities took place in Kladno and Brünn. Muna led a district-wide central revolutionary council in Kladno that confiscated local estates and occupied the railroad stations. Striking workers seized the municipal electric plant and waterworks and halted public transportation in Brünn.

The DSAP leadership rejected support for the general strike in its December meeting, interpreting the events in Prague as simply an intraparty struggle over control of the party headquarters, a matter of only local significance in which the German working class ought not become involved. German Social Democratic leaders supported neither the party leadership nor the Marxist Left in the strike[26]. On the one hand, DSAP leaders had consistently opposed what they considered the non-social-democratic coalition policies of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic right wing, and condemned its heavy-handed actions, not to mention the strong-arm tactics of the police that led to bloodshed. On the other hand, the DSAP stressed the Marxist Left's lack of clear goals, and accused it of absuing the weapon of the general strike. Thus, German support was limited to Reichenberg, where two-thirds of the German workers followed Kreibich, who interpreted the events in Prague as a prelude to the revolution and called for a strike. The Reichenberg organization, breaching party discipline, struck in support of the Marxist Left. On 14 December, the government took forceful action, and by 16 December, the strike was officially over. Civil liberties were restricted or rescinded in several districts, including Kladno. The toll was 13 dead, scores injured, and more than 3,000 arrested.

The failure of the government to crack down on the excesses of the Czech nationalists, particularly the Legionaires, during the demonstrations in Prague two weeks earlier had led many to underestimate its resolve. Indeed, the Marxist Left had interpreted the Czech-German conflict as a symptom of social unrest connected with the "revolutionary character of the time[27]." This misconception is a partial explanation of the call for a general strike by the weak, fragmented, and unprepared Marxist Left, which had assumed that the government would be too feeble to take action against it[28].

While the December general strike did not lead to the revolution hoped for in some quarters, it did have mass support: official estimates place the number of participants at some 160,000[29]. Revolution in Czechoslovakia was unlikely, however, because while strikers protested government policies and the actions of some government ministers, few opposed President Masaryk. As Stivín put it, "There are two people our workers love: Masaryk, our President, and Lenin, the President of the Soviet Russian Republic[30]."

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[26] Freiheit (Teplitz) 12 December 1920.

[27] Rudé právo, quoted in Vorwärts (Reichenberg) 18 November 1920.

[28] A detailed Austrian diplomatic report places the Prague demonstrations in the wider context of contemporary political and social situation: Archiv der Republik Österreich, Neues politisches Archiv, carton 747, fols. 491–498.

[29] Cited in Volksbote (Böhmerwald) 26 January 1921.

[30] Quoted in Wheaton: Radical Socialism 50. Wheaton cites SÚA, PMV, M 48, cj. 6098/20, zn. 235–127–9; cf. Kocman et al. (eds.): Boj o směr 2:244.

The response of the DSAP leadership to the strike was swift. The Reichenberg district organization was expelled *en masse* on 17 January 1921. This action left a legacy of distrust in the Reichenberg area among those who had remained loyal to the Karlsbad Compromise but had been expelled anyway. Moreover, the executive committee made the mistake of literally handing Kreibich the district organization with its political structure intact.

Throughout the winter and the spring of 1921, both the social democrats and the left-wingers/communists sent speakers to woo the rank and file with differing interpretations of the economic and political situation. Jan Doležal and Míla Grimichová were particularly active among the Czechs for the Marxist Left. No town or village in the border regions proved too small for the ubiquitous Kreibich and his Reichenberg colleagues, as they spoke to German workers throughout Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The Czechoslovak Social Democrats launched a major offensive in early February 1921, when party leaders spoke throughout Moravia and Silesia on the cost of living as well as on social revolution. The DSAP also sent its speakers into action[31].

Support for the communists among Czechs and Germans living in the same area did not necessarily correspond. For example, in Reichenberg, the stronghold of the DSAP left wing, the Czechoslovak Social Democrats backed their party's right wing[32]. Moreover, Bolshevik rhetoric could radicalize a group of Czech workers, while remaining unattractive to Germans in a similar occupation. It made both nationalities, however, among such traditionally radical groups as the textile workers. Social democratic losses varied regionally, from district to district (*Bezirk; okres*) and indeed within the district themselves. The influence of respected party activists – journalists, local leaders, and trade unionists – appears to have played a large role. If a popular local figure left the social democratic party, he often took other party members with him, as in the case of Krumau (Český Krumlov) in southern Bohemia. When the German Social Democratic mayor Ernst Hirsch crossed over to the Communist Party, he took with him, in addition to three of the other twelve DSAP city council representatives[33] most of the rank and file. Krumau would remain the communist stronghold in southern Bohemia throughout the interwar period[34].

Local circumstances were also important. While anti-Marxist, the Czech miners of the Brüx-Dux (Most-Duchcov) coalmines of northwestern Bohemia shared many of the social aims of the communists: "Their hearts beat for the revolution though their

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[31] SÚA, PMR, carton 3189, sign. 704, Presidium ministerstva vnitra [Directorate of the Ministry of Interior], 29 March 1921.

[32] "As concerns the Czech workers, we can not compare Reichenberg with Brünn. In Brünn, the Czech workers are no longer concerned with what the party conference will decide [concerning the demands of the Marxist Left]; here, the situation is the opposite." A Czechoslovak Social Democrat from Reichenberg quoted in the Volksrecht (Aussig) 6 September 1920. – See also Vorwärts (Reichenberg) 10 November 1920.

[33] See Volksbote (Böhmerwald) 2 February 1921.

[34] There was a large drop in support for the DSAP in Krumau between the 1919 and 1923 communal elections. The party went from the second largest (behind the joint German list) in 1919, to the fourth largest of six parties (behind the joint German list, the communists, and the joint Czech list). See Volksbote (Böhmerwald) 29 June 1919 and Trautenauer Echo 28 September 1923.

reason was for the state[35]." These men had early come under the influence of anarchists and considered Communist Party discipline anathema. The Czech and German Social Democrats in Brüx both supported their parties' left wings. The Marxist Left and DSAP left voted at a joint meeting to support the December general strike and the city was the scene of violence[36].

Especially in German areas, national as well as economic and social factors played a role in political radicalization. There had been strikes and other unrest in Aussig since the war's end[37], and in December 1918, 6,000 persons demonstrated in protest over the occupation of German areas of Bohemia by Czech troops[38]. The leaders of the Aussig district organization of the DSAP were early supporters of Kreibich and the party left wing. Many of them later joined the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Československa*; the KSČ). The arrest and deportation to Germany by Czechoslovak state polices of Marxist Left sympathizer Rudolf Franke, the editor of the DSAP newspaper, *Volksrecht*, in mid-September 1920 led to a 24-hour protest strike in Aussig[39]. Some communist sympathy there appears to have been as much a protest against the Prague government and the DSAP's lack of effective action against it, as support for particular communist doctrine.

Sometimes, as in the western Bohemian town of Kaaden (Kadaň), women took the lead in the march toward communism. Johanna Baier, the wife of a warehouse clerk, called a meeting on 10 April 1921, attended by about 200 people, half of whom were women. The main topics of discussion could be called feminist: the significance of Women's Day and women's rights. The organizers of this meeting believed their goals could be best met by realization of communist ideals. Reichenberg activist Anna Joska-Schiff spoke, demanding equal rights for women in practice and equal pay for equal work, as well as seizure of the homes of the wealthy and placing them at the disposal of "prolific proletarian families[40]."

Beginning in January 1921, Kreibich tried to pressure the Marxist Left into forming a communist party, sometimes polemicizing as much against Šmeral as against the "opportunists" in the DSAP. He attacked the Marxist Left for failing to accept Lenin's 21 Points and to join the Third International at its conference earlier that month, during which it was decided to delay consideration of the issue until May to give local organizations a chance to discuss it. Kreibich asserted that the delay was actually due

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[35] Wheaton: Radical Socialism 53.

[36] Freiheit (Teplitz) 15 December 1920.

[37] "In some cities, there was regrettable looting as on 2 November 1918 in Aussig, where a crowd of people ransacked the Bergestelle [a warehouse] with its huge store of shoes, furs, leather, uniforms, and clothing ..." Lug, Viktor: Die Stadt Reichenberg im Weltkriege. Reichenberg 1930, 74.

[38] Bohemia 6 December 1918.

[39] See Volksrecht (Aussig) 21 September – 16 October 1920. – The Czechoslovak Communist historian Paul [Pavel] Reimann considered that worker reaction to the expulsion of Franke marked the point at which worker protest became political. See his Geschichte der Kommunistischen Partei der Tschechoslowakei. Hamburg 1931; reprint ed.: Munich 1975.

[40] SÚA, PMR, carton 3189, no.704, Okresní správa politická v Kadani [District Political Administration in Kaaden], 12 April 1921.

to descriptions of communism as an enemy of the Czechoslovak state in the "bourgeois-patriotic press," which made the Marxist Left apprehensive about taking decisive action. Czech revolutionary ardor had in fact cooled in the aftermath of the general strike.

In March 1921, Kreibich formed the German section of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. This small, disciplined organization attempted to force Šmeral's group to the left and then unite with it. Šmeral, moving within a larger political milieu than Kreibich, continued to work to win as many Czechoslovak Social Democrats as possible to his point of view, leading Kreibich to accuse the Marxist Left of harboring centrists and opportunists. The Marxist Left, a far larger, more mixed, and less radical group than Kreibich's, probably did include "centrists." There were several reasons for Šmeral's behavior. First, although his political ideas were evolving, he hesitated to place his organization in the hands of the Comintern. Second, the leaders of the Marxist Left felt less internal pressure than did the DSAP left wing to form another political party quickly, because it was already a separate organization. Nor did the Marxist Left need the support of the German Communists to be an effective political force. This is not to imply, however, that Šmeral was immune to the pressure exerted by the diverse members of the Marxist Left, or the small, independent communist parties clamoring for Comintern recognition, and by Moscow itself, for he was not. Finally, his trade union colleagues did not want to move so fast as to alienate their own, sometime, more conservative, supporters.

At its conference in mid-May 1921, the Marxist Left voted to form a communist party and join the Third International. Šmeral rejected Kreibich's demand for immediate unification of the Czech and German wings of the party because of national sensitivities. He also cautioned Kreibich not to be too zealous in his calls for purification of the party. Disagreements between the two continued until the Third Congress of the Communist International in late June. Lenin himself attempted to solve the Czechoslovak question, calling for the unification to the two sections of the party. He advised Šmeral to take two steps to the left and Kreibich one step to the right in order to form a unified Czechoslovak Communist Party[41].

At the Third Congress, the Czechoslovak and German Communist Parties were instructed to form a Committee of Six to coordinate the formation of a single party, but unification was more easily demanded than achieved. There were still differences of opinion among the Communists of different nationalities, particularly between the Czechs and Germans. Many Czech Communists remained wary of their German comrades, whom Šmeral characterized as "aggressive and as having a taste for leadership[42]."

National tensions continued to afflict the Czech and German communists up to the foundation of a unified party. The initial draft of party statutes by the Czech-German committee envisioned bridging the two parties through a joint central committee. After Moscow's sharp criticism this plan, another draft, much influenced by Moscow,

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[41] Rudé právo 17 July 1921.

[42] Archiv Ústavu marxismu-leninismu ÚV KSČ [Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism ÚV KSČ], hereafter AÚML ÚV KSČ, sb. 1, inv. no. 1, fol. 2.

which called for a completely united and strongly centralized party, was adopted, not without infighting, at the founding party congress in November 1921[43].

Czechoslovak Social Democratic losses to the Communists were quickly apparent, because the left wing had been well represented in parliament. Losses were much smaller among the DSAP deputies and senators, among whom the left had been weak. KSČ membership was initially large: estimates for mid-1921 vary between 350,000 and 400,000[44], including 41,054 German dues-paying members, 9,200 of whom were female[45]. The attractiveness of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which had support in both rural and urban areas as well as a supranational appeal, became clear with the results of the communal elections of 1923 and was confirmed by the 1925 parliamentary elections. The Czechoslovak Communist Party attracted about one half of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic constituency and about a third of the German Social Democratic Party's membership, while decimating the Ruthenian and Slovak branches of the organization.

Many German Social Democrats viewed the division of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party as the reasonable result of rank-and-file opposition to what they considered the non-social-democratic behavior of the right wing. Initially, party leaders did not equate the Marxist Left with the Bolsheviks, correctly arguing that their politics were neither entirely free of the chauvinism of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic right nor more radical than those of left-wing social democrats elsewhere. German Social Democrats viewed the division within their own party differently, as an attempt by renegade party members under the influence of Moscow to destroy the DSAP from within and then construct a communist party. Like the Czechs, the German Social Democrats were pressured from the right. Indeed, DSAP electoral losses after 1921 were far more often to parties of the right than to the communists, because the German worker, recognizing "that the international parties can bring him neither national nor economic help, due to the chauvinism of the Czechs, has turned his back on the Marxist parties altogether[46]." Appreciating the attractiveness of other parties' nationalist appeals to their constituency, the German Social Democrats were reluctant to seek closer ties with the Czechoslovak Social Democrats, who were in any case unsympathetic to German national aspirations. National autonomy remained the primary issue on the German Social Democratic political agenda, and the Germans in the Czechoslovak Communist Party accused the DSAP leadership of having followed an essentially national, not to say ... nationalist, policy from the time of the division of the party[47].

The rump Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, influenced by the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, moved further to the right, participating int he increasingly

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[43] AÚML ÚV KSČ, sb. 2, iv. no. 21, fols. 7–9, no date.

[44] The higher figure comes from W e n d e, Frank (ed.): Lexikon zur Geschichte der Parteien in Europa. Stuttgart 1981, 688. – Paul Z i n n e r has taken the lower figure from communist sources, but argues that it is too high. See his study Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1948. London 1963, 60.

[45] AÚML ÚV KSČ, sb 2, inv. no. 18, fol. 11.

[46] Bohemia 18 September 1923.

[47] AÚML ÚV KSČ, sb 2, inv. no. 18, fol. 11.

moderate all-national coalition until 1926. Although additional social reforms were legislated, the party's losses prevented it from playing a decisive role in the government. Nothing in the political situation encouraged the Czechoslovak Social Democrats to seek closer ties with the German Social Democrats, as long as they persisted in their demands for national autonomy. Cooperation with the DSAP would have gained the Czechoslovak Social Democrats few supporters from the political left so long as they remained in the coalition, and would have alienated the party's nationalist majority.

Although some Czechoslovak Communist leaders, including Šmeral, were clearly attuned to the nationalist concerns of the rank and file, these questions soon took a back seat on the communist political agenda. Moscow increasingly dominated the party, first with its Bolshevization during the 1920s, and later with its Stalinization. Most of the original leaders of the KSČ, former social democrats sensitive to the particular ethnic problems of the working class of Czechoslovakia, were replaced by men strictly loyal to the Moscow line. The KSČ paid the price for Soviet domination: factional strife and purges insured that it, the largest working-class party in the country during the early 1920s, became little more than a Stalinist sect by the early 1930s[48]. Moreover, failure to address adequately the demands of the national minorities meant that rank-and-file German Communists were only a little more immune to the attraction of Konrad Henlein and the Sudeten German Party than were the Germans of the other political parties, as the elections of 1935 and 1938 would reveal[49].

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[48] As with other political parties in Czechoslovakia, there was a large disparity between the number of KSČ members, which Zinner claims never exceeded 1/3 million, and was only that high initially, and the much higher number of people who voted for the KSČ. The number of supporters was relatively stable at 3/4 million. See Communist Strategy.

[49] In the 1935 parliamentary elections, the Sudeten German Party (SdP) received 1,249,530 votes, two-thirds of all of the votes cast for German political parties and more than 15.2% of the entire vote. The SdP gained about 85% of the entire German vote in the 1938 municipal elections.