

ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND "NATIONAL CONDITIONS":
THE SIEMENS SUBSIDIARY ELEKTROTECHNA IN THE
FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC

Christoph Boyer

As the First Czechoslovak Republic feared economic dominance by the German Reich as a stepping stone to its political hegemony, the activities of Czech subsidiaries of Reich-based firms, and especially German engineering and management staff holding key positions, met with suspicion. However, a nationalist view on economic questions, often coinciding with efforts to get rid of the competition, was not the only driving force behind the economic policies of the Prague government. Elektrotechna, a subsidiary of the Siemens corporation, furnishes ample proof that vested interests of local banks, the workforce and mostly governmental bulk purchasers conspired to alleviate overly radical interference and its impact on output and economic performance of the firm. Here, and more generally in German-Czechoslovak economic relations as a whole, the consequences of conflicting national policies were often alleviated by a dose of pragmatism.