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"It is a Question of Tactics":
Cooperation among Czech and Sudeten German
Social Democrats in Interwar Czechoslovakia

by

Herman Louis Kopecek

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

"It is a Question of Tactics":
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by Herman Louis Kopecek

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:
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This study explores how and why the leadership of two working-class parties defused long-standing national enmities in order to forge a program that promoted solidarity at all levels of the Social Democratic movement, from cooperation in parliament down to the leisure-time activities of the rank and file. It examines the nexus of socialist tenets, national relations, and the realities of the domestic and international political landscapes. Although the focus is on leaders, every attempt is made to portray the attitude of ordinary workers toward the program of national harmony.

The dissertation charts the process of cooperation through a period when the Social Democratic movement endured the dual problems of economic depression and burgeoning Nazism among disaffected members of Czechoslovakia's German-speaking population. The narrative ends shortly after the Munich Agreement, when the parties disbanded in deference to the Reich's hegemony over the rump state.

Some authors have remarked that solidarity was a basic response to the politics of the republic's right-wing parties. However, my dissertation concludes that throughout most of this period the fundamental consideration for Social Democratic leaders was a perceived threat to democracy, and to their own hold on power, from forces on their left. The danger chiefly emanated from a left-wing opposition within each party that clamored for an anti-fascist united front with the Communists. Party leaders depended upon the program for cooperation largely as a means to undercut these detractors and prevent an alliance with the Communists, who always had pledged to infiltrate and take over Social Democratic organizations.

Archival sources delineate party executives' decision-making processes, and the political and fraternal activities that manifested the unity program. The dissertation draws heavily on documentation found in government, police, and party archives in the Czech Republic. Publications of the Social Democratic parties also are used. The "voice" of the rank and file is discernible from sources such as police reports and working-class periodicals.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|---|
| AKPR | <i>Archív kancelář prezidenta republiky, Archive of the Office of the President of the Republic</i> |
| Archív ČSDS | <i>Archív České sociálně-demokratické strany, Archive of the Czech Social Democratic Party</i> |
| ČNS | <i>Československá strana národně socialistické, Czechoslovak National Socialist Party</i> |
| ČSDS | <i>Československá sociálně demokratické strana, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party</i> |
| DSAP | <i>Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, German Social Democratic Workers' Party in Czechoslovakia</i> |
| KSC | <i>Komunistická strana Československa, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia</i> |
| SdP | <i>Sudetendeutsche Partei, Sudeten German Party</i> |
| SÚA | <i>Státní ústřední archiv, State Central Archive</i> |

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Introduction

This study examines one, twentieth-century episode in the long course of Czech and German coexistence within the historic provinces of the Bohemian Crownlands: Bohemia itself, Moravia, and Silesia.¹ It discusses why and how German and Czech labor leaders, specifically within the Social Democratic movement, decided to overcome long-standing enmities and develop a program for cooperation. The leadership intended to unify the two nations at all levels of the movement, from political endeavors in parliament down to the leisure-time activities of workers who belonged to Social Democratic associational clubs and organizations. In effect, the aim of the program was to construct a new identity for Social Democrats, one that would supersede conventional, divisive national feelings. The leaders hoped that this solidarity would enhance their political power, helping them to promote the interests of their constituencies.

A watershed in the relations among all classes of Czechs and Germans occurred after the end of the First World War. For centuries the two peoples had been linked as subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy. This affiliation to Vienna meant that the Germans traditionally had a sense of

¹ For the sake of brevity the adjective "Sudeten" is not used in the text as a general reference for the Germans who lived in the western provinces of interwar Czechoslovakia. See *Nationalities Papers* 24/1 (March 1996) for analyses of the past, present, and future of Czech-Sudeten German relations.

superiority, due to their nation's dominant status within the Monarchy's political, military, and economic structures, as well as to Germandom's immense achievements in cultural and scientific areas. With the breakup of Austria-Hungary and the creation of independent Czechoslovakia as one of the successor states, the Germans were no longer powerful enough to influence major political and administrative decisions. They found that their interests were of lesser importance within the power centers of a republic that was supposed to effect the Wilsonian principle of self-determination for the "Czechoslovaks," the designated "state-forming nation" (*státotvorný národ*) comprised of the kindred Slovaks and Czechs.²

In the 1990s the aspirations of those Czechs and Slovaks who wished to live together in one state have ended in rejection. On the other hand, in 1997 Germany and the Czech Republic are enjoying closer relations after accepting statements in which each side acknowledges certain inimical past behavior: Nazi atrocities perpetrated during the Second World War, and the inhumane treatment of the German

² The term *Czechoslovak* was a political construct that indicated a belief in the idea that Slovaks and Czechs were two branches of the same nation. This notion was central to the state-forming ideology of the republic. See Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia, the Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), for a discussion of the ideology's failure to overcome the historical differences between Slovaks and Czechs that contributed to their sometimes difficult relationship in the interwar period.

population that the Czechoslovak government expelled after 1945. This effort to atone for the past embodies the character of the Czech-German existence in Central Europe: numerous historical instances of conflict, struggle, and reconciliation. Compared to this saga, Czechs and Slovaks have shared only a brief relationship within the same state. Therefore this dissertation is concerned only with the two long-term cohabitants of the Crownlands, and not Slovaks.

Furthermore, Slovaks are not integral within the context of studying Slav-German affairs because the relatively small German minority in Slovakia meant that a chronic conflict between the two races did not preoccupy society there. As this project is concerned with Social Democracy, it largely bypasses events in interwar Slovakia, because the province's lack of a significant industrial base resulted in its relative unimportance for the movement. Yet the state-wide Czechoslovak Social Democratic party did have some Slovak members, including the prominent cabinet minister Ivan Dérer.

This dissertation examines why and when Czechs and Germans attempted to cooperate during the Czechoslovak First Republic, a period which ended with the Munich Agreement of September 1938 and the subsequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. It explains why in 1928, after years of antagonism, the leaders of the republic's two major Social Democratic parties, the Czechoslovak (Československá

sociálně demokratické strana, ČSDS) and the German (*Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, DSAP*), declared their mutual hostilities to be over, while proclaiming a new era of solidarity for the benefit of the working class.

While some scholars have called this unity a basic response to the policies of that period's conservative governing coalition, this dissertation points to the threat from the Czechoslovak Communists as being paramount in the eyes of the Social Democratic leaders during the 1920s. The top echelon of the parties felt that the program for cooperation would counteract Communist propaganda for a united working-class front; and the program seemed to achieve the desired results. Successful joint efforts against the Communists had important implications for the maintenance of cooperation, which continued through the fateful year of 1938, despite the dual catastrophes of economic depression and the rise of bellicose pan-German nationalism in Czechoslovakia. This policy included participation in the government, which party leaders promoted as a tactical decision that did not betray their basic Marxist principles.

A goal of the dissertation is to provide a greater understanding of the way that, in this particular case, the tenets of socialism interacted with national issues. Party leaders were concerned not only with leftist impulses; they also were mindful of those segments of the working class

that focused on national questions and were not enthusiastic about solidarity. To them, party leaders also regularly advertised the tactical advantages of cooperation. This staple of Social Democratic rhetoric thus was an assurance to workers that they were not being sold out on national issues. Conflicts between Czech and German workers were a legacy of their common experience in the labor movement in Austria-Hungary, dating from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Compared to other labor ideologies, the choice of Social Democracy as a vehicle for this study is the most appropriate. Because the movement's domestic leadership directed policies, political activity was more representative of local conditions, in contrast to the situation of the Communists, upon whom Moscow imposed directives. Furthermore, the internationalist aspect of Social Democratic ideology established a goal of solidarity toward which nationalities could work, in a way that the chauvinistic National Socialist parties in the republic could not. Through tracking the process by which Germans and Czechs finally cultivated and then maintained this ideal, the dissertation is able to provide insights into the character of the relations among the working-class population. Of the various levels of the movement, the political leadership receives the bulk of the attention.

Archival sources for the dissertation include the minutes of meetings of party executives, supplemented by reports on internal decision-making processes that some party leaders supplied to the president of the republic. Police observers officially attended all public political functions, and their reports comprise a record of the joint meetings, rallies, speeches and other activities that Czech and German Social Democrats planned and attended. Party publications are also important. They include newspapers, books and pamphlets, and protocols of party congresses. Printed sources also include the joint activities of deputies and senators in parliament.

For a variety of reasons, during the 1930s the threat from opponents on their left still commanded a great deal of attention from the Social Democratic leadership, even though the growth of fascism was a major political factor at that time. The dissertation thus deals with issues such as: if party leaders were prone to engaging in "tactics," why did they refuse to consider joint political maneuvers with Communists? France and Spain provided examples of the Popular Front, which invigorated (for a time) the labor movement there. Also, what was the effect of international politics, especially the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933 and the civil war in Austria the following year, on the relations among Czechs and Germans in the movement? My findings help clarify the struggle against dictatorship that

Social Democrats in Czechoslovakia carried out during the 1930s, a fight waged against both authoritarian Czech and German forces, and against Communists.

There exist numerous studies of the Social Democratic movement in the neighboring states of Germany and Austria, but almost no objective literature on the Czechoslovak case. Scholars in fact are able to find a well-developed picture of all levels of the movement in many other countries, from the operations of party executives down to the organized leisure activities of working men and women and their families. The more recent social histories of the movement and studies of "everyday life" expanded upon older works that focused upon the political parties as institutions. As there are almost no such informative and unbiased precursors for the study of the movement in Czechoslovakia, it falls to this dissertation to provide a foundation through its examination of the motivations and decisions of the parties' leadership. Due to forty years of Communist control of the archives, and the tendentious campaign carried out by Communist historians against the Social Democrats, no detailed and objective works are available for this topic. Additional research is necessary to amplify the "voice" of the rank and file in order to discover whether ordinary Social Democratic Germans and Czechs were developing the new identity that was the goal of the program for cooperation.

Ironically, the leader of the German party throughout most of the interwar period was Ludwig Czech. In order to avoid confusion, most references to him in the text use both his first name and surname. A parallel of sorts existed on the other side, as one of the executives of the Czechoslovak party was named "Němec" (German).

The narrative ends shortly after the Munich Agreement of 1938. This catastrophic event resulted not only in Czechoslovakia's loss of territory to Nazi Germany, but in the end of the Social Democratic parties as well. The dissertation examines the course of relations among these anti-fascist Germans and Czechs during the interwar period. Because its findings explore the nature of the bonds formed between the two groups, they are of value not only to historians of this period, but perhaps also to those who focus upon the post-War era, when Czechoslovak authorities expelled virtually the entire German population from the country.

Chapter I: From Hostility to Cooperation

A legacy of national differences and accusations of chauvinism resulted from the experience that Czechs and Germans underwent as participants in the Austrian labor movement, beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The essential contrast between them at that time was the German tendency to centralize control of the movement in Vienna, versus the Czech desire to counteract this effort through autonomy.¹

After both sides participated in the founding of the Austrian Social Democratic Party in 1874, it was only a few years before nationally-minded Czechs constituted an independent faction within the framework of the Austrian party. After a decade of anti-socialist laws, which stifled further development of the movement, Czechs and German came together once again in a reconstituted Austrian party (1888-89); in 1893 however the mood of nationalist decentralization provided the impulse for the foundation of an autonomous "Czechoslav"² Social Democratic Party. The national question also was apparent in the socialist trade unions: the Austrian union center, formed in 1893 and

¹ For the history of this period see Čestmír Ješina, "Czech Social Democracy: Its Origins and Nature," Ph.D. Diss., The George Washington University, 1970; Hans Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1963); Jaroslav G. Polach, "The Beginnings of Trade Unionism among the Slavs of the Austrian Empire," in *American Slavic and East European Review* 14/2 (1955): 239-59.

² This term referred to the Czech-speaking population of Bohemia and Moravia. The faction was recognized as an independent party in 1896.

headquartered in Vienna, could not find a way to mollify the complaints of Czech unionists, who founded their own association (*Odborové sdružení československé*, Czechoslovak Trade Union Association) in 1897.

The desire for autonomy arose from complaints that the top positions in the federal party and the unions were all held by Germans, which resulted, the Czechs insisted, in a lack of understanding of the problems and desires of Czech workers. They argued that the strength and importance of their place in the labor movement were thus being slighted.

Despite these differences Social Democratic politicians tended to work together in the Austrian parliament, although the Czech deputies sometimes broke ranks with their German counterparts to vote with the other Czech political parties on nationality issues. When the First World War broke out, most Social Democrats, including the Czechs, supported their government. The situation among Czechs and Germans at the War's end, of course, was vastly different.

Most Czech Social Democrats placed themselves squarely in the ranks of the efforts to establish an independent successor state to the Monarchy. This included their unified actions with the Czech National Socialists, a non-Marxist party, founded in 1897, that rejected internationalism and the doctrine of class struggle. This party, of course, had no links with the later National Socialist movement in Germany.

As these Czechs celebrated the Allied recognition of their independence, Germans who were settled mainly in the border areas of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia protested their involuntary inclusion in the Czechoslovak state. In October 1918 German Social Democrats in these areas had a hand in the formation of political entities that they intended to incorporate within a newly-created German Austria.³ The life of these provinces was brief, for Czech troops soon began to occupy them in order to unite the border districts with the rest of Czechoslovakia before the opening of the Paris Peace Conference. This German desire for self-determination met with a complete lack of sympathy on the part of Czechs, including the Social Democrats. They regarded these efforts and the later demands for autonomy for German citizens of Czechoslovakia to be expressions of disloyalty and irredentism.⁴

Besides nationalist friction, the other significant dimension that shaped interparty relations in the 1920s was the splitting away of the Radical Left wing of each party and their subsequent reformation in 1921 as the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*,

³ See Johann W. Brügel, *Tschechen und Deutsche 1918-1938* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1967), chapters 1-2.

⁴ At ČSDS meetings in the early 1920s party leaders often voiced their mistrust of the German Social Democrats, stating for example that "it's necessary to be on guard and carefully monitor" their allegedly disloyal movements. *Státní ústřední Archiv* (hereafter SÚA, State Central Archive) PZÚ carton 207-417, 12.1.1923.

KSČ). Before the division each party was strongest within its ethnic category. In the April 1920 parliamentary elections the ČSDS commanded 1.6 million votes, 25.7 per cent of the statewide total; while the DSAP scored almost 700,000 votes, or 11.1 per cent of all ballots. The next parliamentary elections, held in November 1925, confirmed a trend of precipitous Social Democratic losses that had already been expressed in the 1923 municipal and county elections. ČSDS votes dropped to 631,000, or 9 per cent of the total; and the DSAP's total was down to 411,000, or 6 per cent. The KSČ made a strong showing, receiving 934,000 votes, 13.2 per cent of all cast.⁵

Almost a year after the Social Democrats suffered huge losses in the parliamentary elections of November 1925, the leaders of the DSAP and the ČSDS still had very little inclination to work together. Relations in fact had improved only in the sense that constant attacks on the other side in party organs had stopped. Observers of the political scene such as the adviser (*důvěrník*) from President Masaryk's office reported that at the time, as well as for the foreseeable future, it was not possible to

⁵ Election totals are cited in Victor S. Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy, 1920-1938", in Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, eds., *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973) p. 128.

speak of sympathetic cooperation between these Czechs and Germans.⁶

Within a few months, however, the leadership of both parties began laying the groundwork for a grand meeting, the watershed first joint congress of all Social Democratic parties in the Republic, in Prague's working-class Smíchov district. Why the reversal? What factors prompted the leadership to embrace a program of cooperation? It is easy enough, but insufficient to declare that the entry of Germans into the government in 1926 to form the "gentlemen's coalition" (*panská koalice*), which socialists called a "united bourgeois front" geared toward wiping out social achievements, was responsible for this.⁷ The leaders of the parties, in fact, also had other causes for concern.

⁶ *Ústav TGM Archív* (Thomas G. Masaryk Institute Archive), carton 4, *Politické strany: "Situace v sociální demokracii"*, 19.6.1926. The *Kancelář prezidenta republiky* (KPR, Office of the President of the Republic) supplied information so that the president would be well informed of political developments. The authors of many of these reports did not sign them, or supplied only initials. The cited report probably came from either Přemysl Šámal or Emil Sobota, members of the KPR staff at this time.

⁷ Authors who essentially categorize the rapprochement as a response to the cooperation of the bourgeois parties are Johann W. Brügel, *Tschechen und Deutsche*, pp. 80-81; Joseph Rothschild, in his chapter on Czechoslovakia in *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988); and Nancy M. Wingfield, in *Minority Politics in a Multinational State. The German Social Democrats in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1938* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1989), p. 89. Similarly, my article in the *Nationalities Papers* special issue devoted to Czech-Sudeten German relations (cited above, in the Introduction) discusses Social Democratic harmony as a result of opposition to the government. The

A certain confluence of factors exerted pressure on the Social Democratic leadership and fostered the birth of cooperation. The perceived bourgeois offensive was important for the Social Democratic belief that a program for cooperation was prudent, but it alone was not enough to compel the leaders to overcome their differences. Their essential plan was to gain strength and influence through electoral successes and also, naturally, to avoid losses in statewide parliamentary, regional, and municipal elections. Since workers would not turn to bourgeois parties, the only real danger to the Social Democrats was that their followers would abandon the party in favor of another working-class group.⁸ Pressure from the Left, and from "below", was at this time more compelling than was any threat from the anti-socialist bourgeois coalition.

Despite the establishment of the *panská koalice* and its portent, in 1926 efforts toward cooperation still encountered great resistance from the leadership of both Social Democratic parties. These functionaries all condemned the alleged selfish and unjust behavior of the bourgeois politicians, but Social Democrats were also highly critical of their brother socialists. Each side felt that the other's national self-interest determined political

dissertation supersedes this earlier research, which was conducted without benefit of archival sources.

⁸ This situation held true for the Czechoslovak party, but disaffected German workers had nationalist parties to turn to.

activity, barricading the path toward the higher objective of socialist solidarity. Each side furthermore felt that close cooperation would be an endorsement of the other nationality's selfishness, leading to strong disapproval from party members. At this time party leaders felt that nationalism reigned among the rank and file, although certain contrary signals were apparent.⁹

The sectarian nature of Social Democratic politics in 1926 was evident in the DSAP's continued attacks on the ČSDS for participation in the coalition government. In numerous public appearances DSAP chairman Ludwig Czech called for proletarian solidarity, but said that coalition politics was detrimental to workers. Josef Stivín, editor of his party's organ, *Právo lidu* (The people's right), rebutted with remarks that were unfriendly toward the DSAP.¹⁰

The parties were adversarial in all matters that touched upon nationality. The DSAP advocated autonomy for the Sudeten areas, and the Czechoslovak side disapproved of such a move, calling it an unnecessary policy that threatened the stability of the republic. The ČSDS leadership felt that the Czechoslovak constitution allowed German citizens their rights, and thoroughly resented DSAP

⁹ For example, the unification of the trade union centers affiliated with both parties took place at the beginning of 1927. The prelude to this very significant event was a period when talk of national cooperation was prominent in union publications.

¹⁰ *Sozialdemokrat*, 27.7.1926, *Právo lidu*, 28.7.1926.

efforts to draw attention to alleged shortcomings of the system and the disadvantages suffered by Germans. When the DSAP put the matter before the Socialist International, the Czechoslovak side considered it to be a hostile act.

On 20 April 1926 the ČSDS's executive committee reacted strongly to the International's call for a meeting of its minorities commission, to be held in June in Dresden. The party executives contended that such a meeting, intended to mediate relations between the nationalities in Czechoslovakia, could not take place abroad. Furthermore, the party leaders asserted that as long as Ludwig Czech was in charge of DSAP affairs they would accept no plan emanating from that office, for they were completely estranged from Czech's demands for Sudeten autonomy,¹¹ and only a program with which all Social Democratic parties could agree would work. Party leaders resolved to inform the International that it should not count on the ČSDS to participate in discussions on the matter of autonomy for minorities in Czechoslovakia. They allowed that an international conference could perhaps lead to only two areas of agreement: contacts between the parties' parliamentary clubs, and a restriction on polemics in party

¹¹ Ludwig Czech's outline of the national problem and his solution for it, as set forth in his speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 11 March 1926, is reprinted in the DSAP pamphlet "Der Ausweg aus dem nationalistischen Chaos".

organs. "It's not possible to agree on anything else," they concluded.¹²

The ČSDS was prone to lay the blame directly in Ludwig Czech's lap. Members of the party's directorate, discussing a recent meeting with their German counterparts, judged that there were no meaningful results because the German party members "submit (*podléhají*) to Czech's influence." There was some sentiment within the committee that the situation could improve, that a majority of DSAP followers did not agree with their leader's politics. Gustav Habrman reported that dissatisfaction with Czech's authority was circulating among the Germans and they were patiently assessing political developments. He added that Czech "relies upon the mood in the International, where the German position is strong." This notion of bias in favor of German-speaking members was a long-standing complaint of the ČSDS.¹³

¹² *Archív České sociálně-demokratické strany* (Hereafter *Archív ČSDS*, Archive of the [present-day] Czech Social Democratic Party), Fond 71/19, carton 2, 20.4.1926.

¹³ Czechoslovak reaction to the 1923 meeting in Marseilles was harsh: "The International is oriented toward Germany, and it was painful and embarrassing to see the behavior of France and England toward the Germans." *Archív ČSDS*, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 2.9.1925.

For a discussion of Polish and Czech resistance to the aspirations of Germans to dominate this body in the interwar period see William Lee Blackwood, "The Response of Czechoslovak and Polish Social Democrats to 'the German Question' in the Socialist International 1918-33," in *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 30/4 (December 1994):513-34.

In contrast to Habrman's report, party chairman Antonin Hampl's view was that Social Democracy had to deal with much more than just a one-man problem; he was convinced that among their "German comrades" the influence of nationalism was stronger than any other force. Ludwig Czech's politics exacerbated this tendency, he warned, leading toward hatred of the republic and to irredentism.¹⁴ Among members of the party's directorate a grim attitude prevailed: "The experience of several years destroys hopes within our ranks for cooperation with our German comrades."¹⁵

Despite enmity and personal animosities there was acknowledgment of the fact that the movement's fortunes would improve through solidarity, and even during the period of chilly relations in 1926 the Social Democratic parties took some steps in unison. It is noteworthy that these were attacks upon the KSC¹. Communist leaders attempted to secure an expression of working-class solidarity for the general strike then taking place in England. Twice during the month of April representatives of both parties jointly negated this effort, agreeing that the formation of such a united front meant the strengthening of Communist influence within Social Democratic ranks.¹⁶

In light of the harsh ČSDS reaction to Ludwig Czech's speech at the July DSAP district assembly in Děčín, in which

¹⁴ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 27.4.1926.

¹⁵ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 10.8.1926.

¹⁶ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 4.5.1926, 25.5.1926.

he criticized his "comrades" for coalition participation, it fell to DSAP senator Carl Heller to moderate tensions. A long-time advocate of cooperation, Heller put a better spin on the speech in an article in his party's organ, avowing that the chairman's intent was to "liquidate the past" and forge a new future of cooperation between the Czechoslovak and German parties. The article avoided mention of any contentious points; instead it enumerated the many areas that the two sides had in common as proletarian parties and championed a unified struggle against the offensive launched by the bourgeois government.

Heller's article also raised the issue of whether it would not be wise to conduct unified action outside of parliament, as well as for legislative matters. By this he meant an extension, clear down through the ranks of the movement, of the fight against "threats to democracy." The fight was ostensibly aimed at the bourgeois threat. Yet the intent of this project probably was to ward off the danger of a proletarian drift to the left, for Heller then declared that he could not consider the KSC^Ě to be a participant in an active and efficient class struggle. He dismissed the KSC^Ě as a "prisoner of un-Marxist utopias. It is materially, spiritually, and politically dependent upon foreign agents and thus excludes itself" from the fight. *Právo lidu* found favor with this article, praising the senator's decision to take up the "most pressing" political questions of the day.

At the same time the ČSDS paper explained to its readers that Heller's perspicacious views were frequently received with "little understanding" within his party.¹⁷ This presumably referred to the top level of the DSAP.

When Heller chaired a meeting of leaders of the two parties on 11 September 1926, it was clear that they desired a breakthrough to the "new future", but they could not so easily erase the past. As the opening speaker, Ludwig Czech emphasized the German position that cooperation would require agreement on the question of national autonomy, which was most definitely still a tender spot for the Czechoslovak side.¹⁸ Czech probed the extent of his brother party's national consciousness by insisting that his comrades define their relationship to the Czechoslovak National Socialists (ČNS),¹⁹ adding that the DSAP could not tolerate an inferior status vis-à-vis this party. As a signal that he himself remained resolute in any interparty dealings, Czech then reminded his counterparts that

¹⁷ *Právo lidu*, 4.8.1926; Heller's article is reprinted here.

¹⁸ Party functionaries such as Josef Stivín at this time continued to publicly criticize DSAP demands for minority autonomy. See Jaroslav César and Bohumil Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran v Československu v letech 1918-1938* (The politics of the German bourgeois parties in Czechoslovakia) (Prague: Nakladatelství ČSAV, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 385-86.

¹⁹ A non-Marxist party whose constituency was mainly intellectuals and white-collar professionals. Its working-class component was minor.

participation in the government ran contrary to socialist principles and theirs had been cause for great dismay.²⁰

Later in this meeting ČSDS chairman Antonín Hampl coldly refuted Ludwig Czech's standpoint. In a speech highly critical of the German leader, Hampl declared directly to him, "you still have a pre-War mentality." Emphasizing the benefits to be gained from the politics of practicality, Hampl added:

Czech knows only negativity and attacks. He's no tactician. [From him] the masses learned to attack. But we must proceed on the basis of the present situation. We are thus condemned to go together, or in the opposite case provide the most valuable of services to the Communists . . . Social Democrats must go from negation to political reality.²¹

The Czechoslovak party's leader thereby expressed his side's view that a disunited Social Democratic movement helped the KSČ, and that regardless of any lack of comradely harmony the parties were "condemned to go together." Hampl also stressed the basic effect of unity when he affirmed, in response to Czech's query as to the possibility of cooperation both inside and outside of parliament, that this

²⁰ SÚA, Fond D-II, C 1-2, carton 16, *Protokoll der 11.9.26 Besprechung zwischen den Vertretern der deutschen sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei und den tschechischen Sozialdemokraten*, p.1. On numerous occasions in the 1920s Czechoslovak Social Democrats rebutted this charge by pointing to the government participation of the German and the Austrian Social Democratic parties in their respective states. The ČSDS was in the government until March 1926, when internal tension caused the resignation of the premier, Antonín Švehla, and the breakup of the cabinet. An interim group of nonparty officials filled in for several months, until the *panská koalice* was formed that October.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

was highly desirable and "would be extremely important for the paralysis of Communist actions."

At this meeting the Czech leader Rudolf Bechyně expressed his fear that the authoritarian-minded Right was the greatest danger to democracy in Czechoslovakia.²² Warning the Germans about a purported fascist threat, he told them that "we can't fight it through demonstrations." Fascism would become stronger, he declared, without a Social Democratic presence in the government. Ludwig Czech obviously did not have faith in this scenario, for he interjected that Bechyně had become "already really hysterical" from his fear of fascism.²³ Despite this rebuff Bechyně continued to protest that fascism was a consequence of misguided socialist politics.

When Ludwig Czech downplayed Bechyně's warning, he signaled the German viewpoint that the danger from the extreme Right was not so severe, thus the threat from the Left must have been uppermost. The need to combine strength to offset losses to the Communists²⁴ was the reason that

²² Newspaper reports in the spring of 1926 indicated that Czech fascists were planning to establish a fascist dictatorship. The alleged head of the new régime was to be General Rudolf Gajda, army Chief of Staff. President Masaryk ordered Gajda to be relieved of his command, and no coup transpired. The plotters, however, did not pose a serious threat to the constitution and the legitimate government. See Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," in *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 130; and Ferdinand Peroutka, *Budování státu* (The building of the state) (Prague: Čín, 1936), vol. 5, pp. 2821-25.

²³ *Protokoll der 11.9.26 Besprechung*, pp. 11-12.

²⁴ See above, p. 12.

the parties began consultations to improve their relations, despite nationalism's centrifugal effect.

The Communists aimed to exploit the nationality question among Germans. During the 1920s the "bolshevizing" faction of the KSČ, headed by Klement Gottwald, agitated for a greater application of Leninist principles to the issue. Therefore Gottwald demanded that the party should follow the Comintern line, which held that all of the republic's nationalities (Czech, Slovak, German, Hungarian, Ruthenian, and Polish) had the right of national self-determination, including, if necessary, the right to secede from the state. This policy prompted Communists to make dramatic calls for autonomy for German areas, as well as for Slovakia.²⁵

Early in 1927 the Social Democratic parties were still antagonistic in matters relating to national interests. The directorate of the ČSDS, meeting on 11 January 1927, discussed a complaint from the DSAP regarding the closing of a German secondary school in Hodonín, in southeastern Moravia. ČSDS members there had not supported their German comrades in the proceedings on this matter, taken in accordance with the provisions that enabled municipalities to shut down schools when the percentage of a region's

²⁵ For more information on the KSČ's policies see H. Gordon Skilling, "Gottwald and the Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1929-1939)," in *Slavic Review* 20/4 (December 1961).

minority population fell below a specified level.²⁶ Chairman Hampl characterized the ČSDS response as being understandable, since in the recent elections for municipal board positions the DSAP joined forces with German bourgeois parties and with (presumably German-speaking) Communists against ČSDS candidates, in order to maximize German representation on these local boards.²⁷

This attitude resulted in the directorate's dismissal of DSAP party secretary Siegfried Taub's request for joint Social Democratic intervention with the Ministry of Schooling,²⁸ but the committee resolved to do this "nicely," and to respectfully indicate to Taub that German-speaking facilities were not the only ones affected, for the law was also used against Czechs in areas where they constituted a minority.²⁹ As a further demonstration of the nationalist mindset in which the Social Democratic leadership was currently entrenched, ČSDS functionary Alfred Meissner went on to recommend that the directorate should

²⁶ See Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans: a Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), chapter 15, for information on the state's regulation of education.

²⁷ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 11.1.1927.

²⁸ The minister at this time was Milan Hodža, a Slovak member of the Czechoslovak Agrarian party, and an enemy of the Social Democrats for his part in establishing the bourgeois coalition. See Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy", in *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 133.

²⁹ The Czechoslovak side seems to have had a much greater rapport with Taub than with Ludwig Czech. The directorate perhaps wished to soften the news for Taub, himself a native of Moravia, that he was losing this battle on his home turf.

write to "our German comrades" and declare that "they themselves are to blame for our position, due to their standpoint toward our party in Hodonín." To protect the party's image in the Social Democratic movement, Josef Stivín recommended giving František Soukup, ČSDS delegate to the Socialist International, an explanatory letter in case the Germans carried their complaint to the minorities section of that body.³⁰

Although Stivín in recent months had criticized the Germans for their autonomy demands and their denunciation of coalition participation, by early 1927 his focus had become the urgent need to improve relations with the DSAP. The gravity of this situation for Social Democrats such as Stivín resulted from the growing realization that popular sentiment for a united front of working-class parties was strong. Workers had for several months heard all about the bourgeois coalition's offensive against their interests. They quite naturally reasoned that if the enemy was united, then so should they be. With no great evidence that Social Democratic parties were marching in step, the very vocal and noticeable Communist agitation for a united front meant that the KSC profited the most from popular feeling.³¹

³⁰ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 11.1.1927.

³¹ For the activities and the impact of the KSC at this time see Zdeněk Suda, *Zealots and Rebels: A History of the Ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), Chapter 2, and Paul E. Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-48* (New York and London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), Chapters

Only two weeks after the discussion about the complaint of the Germans in Hodonín, the ČSDS directorate again convened and entered into a lengthy debate over a communiqué from the DSAP. The minutes of this meeting demonstrate that some party leaders still reacted negatively toward cooperation. Others, however, seemingly animated by the realization that the need for unity among the parties was becoming critical, argued for the means to implement such a policy, thereby staving off the threat from the Left.

The ČSDS directorate considered several issues raised in a message tendered to the party from the club of DSAP parliamentary deputies. The first two matters, relating to the Socialist International, were treated quickly and in a rigidly nationalist fashion: the German comrades should be informed that the ČSDS insisted on taking half of the votes that the International allocated to Social Democratic parties in Czechoslovakia; secondly, the party "from basic principles" could not take part in any conference which would be held abroad and intended to deal with a revision of the minorities question in the republic.³² The principle mentioned was an unwillingness to foster any weakening of Czechoslovak sovereignty. The committee agreed that the best

2-4. For a survey of the dealings between the ČSDS and the KSČ at this time see James Felak, "Social Democratic - Communist Relations in Interwar Czechoslovakia", in *East Central Europe* 18/2 (1991): 155-76.

³² See above, p. 15. This conference also was to take place in Dresden.

means by which to notify their comrades was through a letter, indicating the overall scarcity of personal contacts between the "comrades."³³

The major issue under discussion at this meeting was the DSAP's call for a proletarian congress, which all socialist parties in Czechoslovakia would attend. Its purpose would be to work out appropriate action against the government's "reaction" to socialist-inspired legislation. The German party realistically could not have supposed that the other socialists would have agreed to a joint meeting with Communists, so their proposal must have been made for propaganda purposes.

Because the DSAP intended to also include the KSC^Ě and the ČNS, some committee members found the idea easy to dismiss. František Soukup, for instance, declared that such a congress would be ineffective, "because you can't expect serious efforts from Communists, plus the National Socialists won't attend" any council at which Germans would participate. This was certainly a legitimate statement, but Soukup's viewpoint seems more likely to have been formed from an attitude that was essentially unfriendly and critical toward the Germans. He was indignant about the actions of Ludwig Czech, revealing that the DSAP leader had drafted a proclamation which the party would publish in the event that the Czechoslovak side refused to participate in

³³ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 25.1.1927.

the proletarian congress, and in disgust added that "there is no analogy to the German viewpoint in any other land."³⁴

Other members of the party executive were likewise critical of the Germans and their suggested plan. Jaroslav Marek lamented that with one hand the Germans held high the standard of the Socialist International, but with the other contravened its spirit by attempting to traffic with non-member parties. Marek thought that the Germans' suggestion was an example of their unclear thinking, and arose from the embarrassment and perplexity (*rozpaky*) in which they found themselves due to their political stance.

Some party leaders opined that the congress could not take place because the sentiment for cooperation within the German Social Democratic camp was not strong. Antonín Srba illustrated this by pointing out that in certain trade union elections, such as for the health insurance office for railroad employees, German Social Democrats joined forces with Communists. This was not a widespread phenomenon, but the fact that it occurred at all was enough to substantiate the innate feeling among some party leaders that the Germans would never transmute their nationalist core to become trustworthy supporters of a sovereign Czechoslovak state.

Although there were no takers for the DSAP's proposal at this meeting, the concept of organizing and managing Social Democratic cooperation found support among a

³⁴ *Ibid.*

different cadre of party leaders, those who did not speak of German affronts against the movement or the state but of the need for Social Democrats to address the working-class desire for unification. This faction of the leadership wanted to shepherd the movement for cooperation from above, for it feared that if the initiative for a united front rose from below, it would go too far left.

Josef Stivín, already in tune with the mood of his party's constituency, suggested to his colleagues that although the proletarian congress was not a good idea, it would be feasible to create a united committee from parties belonging to the Amsterdam (Socialist) International. Others seconded this idea, such as Josef Nosek, who brought up the fact that the idea of the congress "is appealing to the masses."

When chairman Hampl weighed in with his opinion, it was clear that the party would soon be on its way to a new phase, that of overcoming the Czech-German freeze in favor of finding a suitable way to effect cooperation. Hampl's statements do not feature the problem of the bourgeois coalition's reaction to socialism, but instead clearly express the danger to the movement posed by the KSČ. He agreed with the criticism of the Germans so far put forth, but did not think that it was wise to bypass the DSAP's suggestion in general,

for it is not possible to ignore that we have the disadvantage of the Communists. It's a question of

high tactics, for we must go from defense onto the attack. This is possible on one hand with enlightenment and guidance [of the workers], and on the other with tactical maneuvering....I recommend thus an internal agreement [with the Germans], which would allow us to strike the propaganda weapon from the hands of the Communists.³⁵

The emphasis on tactics instead of principles reveals the difficulty of bringing together the two groups. The ČSDS leadership had no illusions that solidarity was inherent to the Social Democratic parties. Implicit in Hampl's statement is the view that after they had dispatched the Communist threat, the parties might someday drift apart.

Backing the efficacy of Hampl's strategy, Vojtěch Dundr stated that the DSAP, with its call for a proletarian congress, wanted to blunt Communist propaganda that agitated for a united front. An agreement between the Social Democratic parties and perhaps even the ČNS, Dundr reckoned, would be a "workable" tactical maneuver. From those party leaders who supported Hampl there was praise for the chairman's desire to "actively follow the path of work and struggle." To those who remained unconvinced and unwilling, Hampl offered his sympathy. He did not, he told them, truly anticipate any positive developments as a result of a "narrower" Social Democratic conference. It would only be a tactical maneuver, he repeated, for it was not possible to overlook that the desire of the masses for unity was great. This closed debate on the matter and the assembled

³⁵ *Ibid.*

leadership resolved to implement Stivín's suggestion for the creation of a unification committee based on membership in the Socialist International.

With this decision made, the leadership seems to have been more mindful of the benefits of cooperation. It rather easily accepted the club of DSAP deputies' request for a standing agreement to implement a unified position for Social Democratic deputies in parliament, acknowledging that there would always be business dealings and agreements worked out for the safeguarding of this desideratum. Additionally, the committee resolved to exchange opinions on a nationalities program with their "German comrades."³⁶

With a policy of "tactical maneuvering" the leadership of the party hoped to control and oversee the momentum that was building in favor of working-class unity. This popular feeling was directed not only against the bourgeois coalition and its seemingly anti-socialist program, but also against those aspects of the capitalist system that seemed ruinous to workers. Public expressions of discontent vigorously conveyed this message to the leading strata of society and politics in Czechoslovakia.

In March 1927, for example, a large demonstration of about 15,000 German and Czech glass-products workers took place in the northern Bohemian city of Jablonec, a center for this industry. Functionaries from the glass workers'

³⁶ *Ibid.*

trade unions that were associated with the ČSDS, the DSAP, and the KSČ addressed this political rally (*tábor lidu*). It was a mass meeting apparently instigated by organized labor in an attempt to deal with the ground swell of dissatisfaction flowing through the area's working population.

Workers at this rally protested against the industry's recent introduction of technological innovations, changes that produced a different kind of product. This led to significantly increased unemployment and also served to lower the wages of those who did have a job.³⁷ The workers damned the new glassware as "the brainchild (*výplod*) of greedy producers and the result of absolute commercial anarchy."³⁸ Because most of the finishing work was now done by machine there was a lowering of the quality of the glass products as well as a great loss of jobs, and the workers vehemently pointed out how both of these aspects of the new process were detrimental to the Czechoslovak economy. They castigated the factory owners for their shortsightedness and indifference to the ramifications of their decisions; and they certainly were not pacified by the

³⁷ The new type of glass products (*nebroušené* or *smirkové zboží*) required much less labor before they reached the market. They were produced in molds, smoothed only by an emery wheel (*smirkový brus*), and sent off without being finished in the old manner, by hand.

³⁸ SÚA, MSP carton 801, 31.3.1927.

owners' response that they had to follow along with the technical progress thus far achieved in the trade.

The assembly of workers "unanimously" accepted a resolution of demands to be presented to the government; heading the list was the necessity to ban the production of the new glass products. As the workers added more points to the list,³⁹ they eventually superseded the original demand with the call for a law against any type of commercial or industrial process that proved to be "injurious to the working population."⁴⁰

This type of blunt, unsophisticated action from below, directed against the deleterious effects of capitalism, was prevalent in this period when the bourgeois coalition, which the workers called the protector and defender of the system, sought to roll back the legislative gains that the Social Democrats had worked out when they were in the government. Simply put, the rank and file felt that a united front increased their leverage. Just as the German and Czech Social Democratic glass workers in Jablonec had prodded their union leaders to participate in a rally which included Communists, on other occasions in 1927 joint meetings, with the prospects for forging unity in mind, took place between functionaries of the trade union centers that represented

³⁹ Among them was the demand for "severe prosecution" of employers who did not adhere to the legislated eight-hour working period, and for greater aid for the unemployed.

⁴⁰ SÚA, MSP carton 801, 31.3.1927.

Social Democrats, Communists, and also Czechoslovak National Socialists. The stimulus for these meetings was the workers' intense anger over government attempts to reduce social benefits.⁴¹ Given the degree of hostility and unwillingness to compromise among Communist and non-Communist union leaders,⁴² and the Social Democrats' usual jaundiced view of the united front, these attempts must be seen as a result of pressure from below for united action against the government.

The minutes of meetings of the directorate of the executive committee of the ČSDS show that the seriousness of the Communist threat had preoccupied the minds of party leaders for some time. At a meeting in June 1926, for example, the directorate heard a report that the Communists had instituted a new tactic in their constant effort to draw followers away from the Social Democratic camp. Corresponding to the Leninist thesis of infiltration and agitation from below,⁴³ local Communist organizations were establishing direct contacts with their corresponding Social

⁴¹ Kevin McDermott, *The Czech Red Unions, 1918-1929* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1988), p. 150. Meetings took place in April and at the end of November.

⁴² See McDermott, Chapter 5, for the general refusal of Social Democratic union officials to consider the Communist proposals for a united front that were tendered at this time.

⁴³ The KSC was supposed to place strong support on this action after the Fifth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, held in Moscow 21 March through 6 April 1925, adopted such Bolshevik theses. See Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, pp. 75-80.

Democratic groups, such as the *Dělnická tělocvičná jednota* (DTJ, workers' gymnastic association).⁴⁴ The DTJ had already recently undergone a schism; in January 1926 its revolutionary-minded left wing had merged with Communist-affiliated sporting and scouting organizations to create the *Federace proletarské tělovýchovy* (federation of proletarian physical education).⁴⁵ Now it must have appeared to the Social Democratic leaders that the renegades would agitate and eventually capture more of the DTJ, as well as members of other groups.

The directorate heard troubling reports on local conditions, such as in Kladno, west of Prague, where the union situation in the mining industry was "to the detriment of the growth of our movement, and instead in favor of the Communists." Accompanying this sobering news was a report of a "large" meeting held jointly between Czech and German Social Democrats in Louny, northwest of Kladno, where cooperation between the two Social Democratic parties "was very vigorously acclaimed."⁴⁶ At this same meeting the party leaders must have been upset with the report from the great Social Democratic stronghold of Plzeň in southwest Bohemia, where despite the overall health of the movement "centrifugal tendencies [were] apparent within the young

⁴⁴ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 8.6.1926.

⁴⁵ See Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, pp. 93-94.

⁴⁶ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 26.10.1926.

members, noticeably under the influence of Communist cells."⁴⁷

The Communist tactic of the united front constituted a threat to the well-being of the Social Democratic movement. The Communists used this procedure to advance their cause in a situation where the greatest proportion of the working class belonged to organizations that were beyond their control. According to the theory behind this action, the class would achieve unity both from "below," as Communists who had infiltrated Social Democratic unions would influence and win over workers to the KSČ, and from "above," by means of agreements between party and union leaders. A basic assumption of the united front policy was that Communists would make more headway by taking over the much stronger Social Democratic unions from within than by directly competing with them for members.⁴⁸ An awareness of these tactics prompted Social Democratic leaders to be alert to signs of ferment within the movement.

From the party's standpoint the most threatening news was of the loss of voters. The directorate faced reports of Communist gains following the November 1926 municipal elections with the acknowledgment that these successes were at the expense of the ČSDS. The report attributed Social Democratic losses in the countryside around Plzeň to

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Felak, "Social Democratic-Communist Relations," p. 168.

economic conditions, and declared that the KSC⁵ made gains in northern Bohemia with the united front slogan.⁴⁹ The party leadership undoubtedly realized that troubling conditions dictated action.

By the time of the statewide ČSDS conference, held in Prague from 15-18 April 1927, party leaders had decided that they had to break down the barriers between themselves and the DSAP, and that they dared not delay the establishment of a policy of political cooperation. The seriousness of the situation compelled the party to publicly announce this goal at the conference and laud it as a major success for the movement and the working class, even though concrete steps for its implementation had not yet been drafted in consultations between the two parties. The fact that the cautious ČSDS leadership embraced and annointed a new working relationship with the Germans, with whom they had so recently been at odds, is testimony to the urgency for action.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 16.11.1926.

⁵⁰ An important credo of the party leaders was to avoid going out on a limb. At a meeting of the directorate of the executive committee before the crucial 1925 parliamentary elections, they decided that even though "our main attack can [only] be against the KSC⁵, it's the only place from where we can gain votes....", they should not advertise a rapprochement with their German counterparts. "It's better not to say anything about the DSAP," they reasoned, as the Germans pressed for government concessions in the realm of minority languages, education, and cultural affairs. The Czechoslovak politicians knew that the overall mood of the electorate was unsympathetic to such measures. Chairman Hampl summed up his party's inherently conservative policy by stating: "It's not possible to suggest and adumbrate

From the protocol of its 1927 congress it is apparent that the party had not had much time to draft a comprehensive statement on its desire for cooperation. The most it could do was to include a rather general approbation of the overall principle in the official party program, including some preliminary ideas in support of German national desires. The section of the newly-revised program entitled "For Further Building of the Republic" supported:

...modification of relations with national minorities in such a form so that they are not reason for complaints. Let the principle of cultural autonomy be accepted in such a way that fixed bodies, elected by all citizens of a certain nation, would be entrusted with appropriate control of the cultural and cultural-social institutes of that nation.⁵¹

The program made an acknowledgment that minorities sometimes had a basis for grievances against the laws and bureaucratic procedures that best served the needs of Czechs and Slovaks:

Blunders of bureaus carrying the stamp of national prejudice or the intention to incite or provoke should be punished as the grossest offenses of public service.⁵²

something (national concessions) that we're not able to carry out, because if we don't deliver on results, we look bad." Hampl concluded that it would be incorrect to offer false hope for help, thus "in the meantime it will be good not to speak with the Germans." Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/19, carton 2, 2.9.1925. Instead of Social Democratic solidarity for the election, the ČSDS leadership's strategy focused on a patriotic defense of the republic and attacked the Communists and the Czechoslovak People's Party as servants of foreign power centers.

⁵¹ *Protokol XV řádného sjezdu československé sociálně demokratické strany dělnické* (Protocol of the fifteenth regular congress of the ČSDS) (Prague, 1927), p. 141.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Abuse, by nationalist Czechs, of the laws that expanded the mandate of "Czechoslovak" as the official state language also received some mention:

As for the languages in use in state administration and home rule, let this be considered as a question of usefulness, flexibility, and economy of administration, never as a matter of national prestige.⁵³

The party thus signaled to its German comrades that it would be willing to promote national cultural autonomy.

In the report of the committee for the revision of the party program, delivered to the assembled delegates, Josef Stivín "owned up" (*přiznat se*) to the fact that prior to the conference the party had maintained "a certain reserve" in the matter of modifying the conditions of the national minorities. It was only from today, Stivín said, that the party was leaving that reserve behind.

Our reserve was not dictated by some kind of consideration for our (Czech) nationalist parties, let alone for the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, [it] was dictated by the fact that...we are of the opinion that it was not good for each of the Social Democratic parties in this state to conceive of a nationalities program independently. It would be far better to wait for the time, which perhaps is not far off, when we will be ready and able to sit down and agree, mainly with our German comrades, on a common program for the nationalities question.⁵⁴

The protocol indicates that the delegates greeted this declaration enthusiastically, with "noisy" applause and cries of "Excellent!" These members of the party clearly expected their leaders to effect cooperation with the

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Germans, and had no stake in avoiding a settlement of the nationalities problem that was such a vital issue for the DSAP. Stivín's speech indicates that the party's negotiations with the Germans were still tenuous, for the Czechoslovak side could not yet determine how far to go in matters such as national autonomy.

The German side was no doubt at this point satisfied with the trend toward reconciliation and the anticipated ČSDS support of German desires. Siegfried Taub, secretary of the DSAP, greeted the conference delegates (in Czech) and welcomed the prospects for cooperation. The bourgeois threat to the well-being of the working class, Taub stated, received a boost after the Social Democrats lost strength as a result of the 1923 municipal election.⁵⁵ Since this was basically due to losses to the KSC^Ě, Taub's message intended to underscore the magnitude of the Communist danger. He went on to emphasize that the class struggle against the bourgeois parties had to be sanctioned by, and under the control of, the Social Democratic parties:

We welcome the creation of a class front. The coalition of the international bourgeoisie must be faced by a militant, aggressive workers' front [founded] on a Social Democratic basis....Our main and most exalted task consists of widening class awareness among the workers and of educating them as Social DemocratsThe [working] population has now realized the

⁵⁵ For election results see Věra Olivová, *Politika československé buržoazie v letech 1921-1923* (The politics of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie) (Prague: NCAV, 1961), pp. 13-16; Peroutka, *Budování státu*, vol. 5, pp. 2839-44.

mistakes it committed in the 1925 election.⁵⁶

Taub went on to speak of Social Democratic electoral achievements in other countries, such as Belgium, Holland, and England, before admiring the movement's biggest success story to date, that of the Austrian Social Democrats. That party's battle against a united bourgeois front, he exclaimed, will end victoriously.⁵⁷ "The day will arrive here too," Taub cried, "when the red banner of Social Democracy will proclaim victory." Cries of approval and "noisy, long-lasting" applause followed these exhortations.⁵⁸

Taub's words laid stress upon the parliamentary, evolutionary path to working-class victory advocated by Social Democracy, in contrast to Communism's disruptive call for revolution. His speech was also noticeable for its homage to the prominent status of (Austrian) Germans in the Social Democratic movement; he perhaps wished to subtly

⁵⁶ *Protokol XV řádného sjezdu*, p. 14. The ČSDS fell from first to fourth among all parties in the 1925 election, gaining only 29 mandates in the Chamber of Deputies, compared with 74 in 1920. See Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy", in *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 128. The DSAP won only 17 seats, down from 31. See Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, p. 110.

⁵⁷ For the Social Democratic movement in Austria see Julius Deutsch, *Geschichte der österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1947); Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919-1934* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991); Anson Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism. From Red Vienna to Civil War, 1927-1934* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁵⁸ *Protokol XV řádného sjezdu*, p. 14.

remind the Czechs and Slovaks present that they really had no alternative to a policy of cooperation with their German counterparts. This would mean, as the Germans well knew, a ČSDS inevitably more mindful of the totality represented by the Socialist International and the pressure that body exerted for the benefit of minority Social Democratic parties in Czechoslovakia. The Czech delegates present seemingly were willing to accommodate this situation but no doubt still wished to maintain some of their own national pride. Vojtěch Dundr, for example, in his report from the party secretariat alluded to a portion of Taub's speech with an affirmation of the ČSDS's patriotic support of the state created to effect the self-determination of the Czechs and Slovaks:

We love our republic, and to us its flag is truly as dear as the red banner under which we fought for a republic for half a century, and which flew over the heads of our Legionaires.⁵⁹

No one needed to remind the Czechs present at the conference that Dundr referred to battles in which the adversaries were Germans.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ For information on the Czech Legions and battles against the Central Powers in WWI see Věra Olivová, *The Doomed Democracy. Czechoslovakia in a Disrupted Europe, 1914-38* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1972), pp. 61-69; František Steidler, "Československé zahraniční vojsko (legie)" (The Czechoslovak foreign legions), in *Československá vlastivěda* (A study of Czechoslovakia) (Prague: Sfinx, 1931), vol. 5, pp. 556-80. Elizabeth Wiskemann, in *Czechs & Germans*, p. 77, discusses how most Sudeten Germans, among the most loyal proponents of the Monarchy, viewed these Czechs as "traitors, deserters, gangsters, and thieves, a rabble with

Dundr's report also blamed the problems of the working class on the diminished strength of the Social Democratic position as a result of the "confused" (*nezříděny*) attacks on the party perpetrated by "the shatterers of the unity of the workers' political movement and exponents of foreign ambitions."⁶¹ Speaking of course about the party's Communist rivals, Dundr added that these "muddled" efforts carried out under the direction of Moscow crippled the Social Democratic program for winning new legislation to improve the lives of the working class. The patriotic support of the Republic was meant not only to appeal to the pride of the Czech worker, but also to provide as great a contrast with the KSČ as possible. It would prove to be a staple of the ČSDS's anti-Communist strategy.

Dundr's report also implied that the "weak" were susceptible to Communist demagoguery. He advocated that agitation and organizational work among women must be increased,

in order that a great percentage of working women would be freed not only from the influence of black reaction (the Church), but also from those whose fruitless radicalism entices members of the working class onto an aberrant and harmful path.⁶²

nothing to lose, who betrayed the State to whom they owed allegiance." To the Sudeten Social Democrats, who never wished for the breakup of the Monarchy, the Legionaires were not heroes, thus Dundr's evocation of the glory they achieved was a determined, perhaps defiant affirmation of "Czech power."

⁶¹ *Protokol XV řádného sjezdu*, p. 22.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

This *mea culpa* exemplified the party's new willingness to adjust old attitudes that had sustained the breach between the nationalities and, the party leaders supposed, had allowed the KSC to gain too much leverage in the organized labor movement.

The German party held its statewide congress less than a month later, from 6-9 May, in Teplice (northwest Bohemia). Ludwig Czech, and others who addressed this assembly, saluted the results of the recent ČSDS conference insofar as they supported the desire for cooperation both in parliament and outside of it, and also because it was obvious that the Czechoslovak party would devote its attention to the nationalities question. For the Germans this was a question of the utmost concern. The DSAP conference settled on guidelines for a "program of democratic autonomy" in Czechoslovakia. It adopted the statement of the party's executive committee, "Our Fight for Self-Rule and National Self-Administration."⁶³

Editorials in *Právo lidu* expressed the general approval of the Czechoslovak side for the Germans' desire to attain a program of unity. The party organ praised the political leadership's efforts to satisfy the "powerful calls for

⁶³ *Sozialdemokrat*, 9-10.5.1927, César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 1, p. 395. For the membership of the party's executive committee elected at the 1927 congress, as well as those of the other major committees, see Friedrich G. Kürbis, *Chronik der sudetendeutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1863-1938* (Stuttgart: Seliger-Archiv, 1982), pp. 61-62.

cooperation and joint action that appear in all Social Democratic parties in our state," calls that were "natural" after the formation of the "anti-socialist governing coalition."⁶⁴

The editorials indicate that, despite the rhetoric of the party conferences, Czechoslovak and German leaders still had to span a wide chasm before they could achieve the program that would serve the interests of the working class. *Právo lidu* pointed out to its readers that their "will and desire" for unity was "in no way simple or easy." Negotiations between the parties, in fact, had to proceed not only diligently and patiently, but also guardedly (*obezřetně*). This was necessary, according to the editorial, so that it would be possible to establish unification not temporarily, "but forever."⁶⁵

Thus party members and followers of the movement received the message that what to their minds was quite simple was actually a complicated, laborious, and even somewhat hazardous undertaking. *Právo lidu* implied that workers should be patient and unquestioning as their political leaders worked out everything. The problems "of a most difficult and delicate nature" that remained were no doubt related to the extent of national autonomy that the Czechoslovak side could support, and to participation in the

⁶⁴ *Právo lidu*, 10.5.1927.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

government. As another writer in *Právo lidu* pointed out, "For us Social Democrats it is not just opposition only for its own sake. Opposition is to us only the means to attain political power."⁶⁶ The Czech side apparently saw wisdom in re-entering the coalition. The German leaders, however, were leery about becoming linked with coalition politics, when they always had been outsiders to the governing process.

In a friendly response to the Czechoslovak side's general approbation of the DSAP conference, *Sozialdemokrat* welcomed the prospects for unity. Articles published at this time offered words to heal the hard feelings of the past, pointing out that it was senseless to seek to blame one side or the other for past differences that separated the Social Democratic parties,

that on the one hand helped the united international bourgeoisie to an easy victory and to absolute domination, and on the other hand was good for the Communists, whose perverse (*widernatürlich*) growth all the more leads to the powerlessness and loss of political influence of the working class.⁶⁷

To its readers *Sozialdemokrat* at this time advertised two reasons why the working class should give its approval to the efforts of the movement's leaders. First, the proposed program was a boon to the working population, insofar as it would prevent workers from entering the blind alley proffered by the Communists. Additionally, the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Sozialdemokrat*, 11.5.1927.

parties were mindful of the rank and file and intended to fulfill the workers' desire for unity:

The proletarian united front! Each worker is conscious of it, or instinctively feels that this can save us from the danger threatening us, and free us from stagnation and defenselessness. Nobody nevertheless can consider the Communists as long as for them the united front is only a harmful ploy (*Manöver*) unworthy of mention, and as long as their united front shall serve the purposes of Soviet Russian imperialism.

The party organ informed its readers that the united front would occur when Czech and German Social Democrats brokered it,

also then will come the beginning of the end of the Communist nightmare (*Spuk*), which until now has paralyzed the strength of the workers' movement.⁶⁸

German satisfaction with interparty relations undoubtedly helped party leaders to form a position in the matter of re-electing Thomas Masaryk as president of the Republic. Only a few days after their conference and the friendly response from the Czechoslovak side, the executive directorate of the DSAP met and decided to instruct its deputies in parliament to vote for Masaryk.⁶⁹ This affirmation and acknowledgment of the party's support of the republic was in marked contrast to the previous parliamentary voting for president in 1920, when the recalcitrant German Social Democrats turned in blank ballots.⁷⁰ This must have been reassuring to those Czechs

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 12.5.1927.

⁷⁰ For the situation in 1920 see J. W. Brügel, *Tschechen und Deutsche, 1918-1938*, pp. 150-51; César and Černý,

in the Social Democratic movement who doubted the Germans' loyalty. *Právo lidu* immediately began to publicize the German vote for Masaryk, highlighting its "great moral and political meaning."⁷¹

The parties promoted their campaign to achieve cooperation not only to ease the pressure from below for a united front, but also to help change the mindset of Czech and German workers who were accustomed to viewing the other side as adversaries. It is not surprising that the newspapers would have to do much to relieve the doubts of the more nationally-centered workers, after several years of mostly negative coverage of their counterparts.

Reversing their previous mistrust and unfriendliness, Social Democratic leaders were now warm in their expressions of good will. For instance, when speaking to the assembled masses at the Workers' Olympics, an international Social Democratic athletic event held that year in Prague, František Soukup expressed no trace of the weariness and dismay he had come to expect when dealing with the Germans as a delegate to the Socialist International.⁷² Soukup, in fact, even tried to make national harmony appear retroactive; he managed to do so by thanking the visitors from Germany and Austria for their participation and

Politika německých buržoazních stran, vol. 1, pp. 214-18; Peroutka, *Budování státu*, vol. 3, pp. 1732-35.

⁷¹ *Právo lidu*, 7.6.1927.

⁷² See above, p. 17, for Soukup's critical view of Germans.

emphasizing the good times that Czech workers enjoyed as guests at similar Olympics held the previous year in Frankfurt and Vienna.⁷³ With extensive coverage of joint events such as the Workers' Olympics, the matter of Czech-German unity became more prominent in the organs of both Social Democratic parties.⁷⁴ Readers of the newspapers thus were treated to increasingly flattering views of their comrades from the other nationality. Throughout the remainder of 1927 Social Democratic publications espoused the benefits of political cooperation. They naturally touted the advantage of unity for defense against bourgeois "class warfare", and also attacked the Communists as enablers of bourgeois hegemony.⁷⁵ From official publications it is apparent that the struggle to forge bonds was arduous but that the parties would ultimately deliver what the workers desired:

We certainly must guard against illusions and may in no way overlook [the fact] that a complete programmatic and tactical agreement between Czech[oslovak] and German Social Democracy is not established, not by a long shot (*noch lange nicht*). But development goes in this direction, although too slowly for our burning impatience. Also, the danger of a setback

⁷³ *Právo lidu*, 7.7.1927. See Soukup's *Revoluce práce. Dějinný vývoj socialismu a československé sociálně demokratické strany dělnické* (The revolution of labor. The historic development of socialism and the ČSDS) (Prague: Ústřední dělnické knihkupectví a nakladatelství, 1938), vol. 2, pp. 1277-1305, for an official view of national cooperation as manifested in the Workers' Olympics of the 1920s and 1930s.

⁷⁴ *Sozialdemokrat*, 3.7.1927.

⁷⁵ The Communists damned their Social Democratic rivals for exactly the same reason.

cannot be excluded. It is correct that the front of the Czech and German proletariat does not yet exist, but likewise it's correct that relations improve and develop sincerely.⁷⁶

The German side appreciated the help that the Czechoslovak party was extending to German cultural aspirations, such as support for greater language rights. The DSAP took pains to inform its constituency that the ČSDS had included plans for cultural autonomy for minorities in its program.⁷⁷

Publications from the Czechoslovak side extolled the leadership's probity in its dedication to addressing the needs and desires of the workers, while they skewered the detrimental results of Communist treachery. Party theorist Evžen Stern, for example, publicized the "greatest achievement" for workers since the end of the War, the attainment of social insurance.⁷⁸ He lamented the fact, however, that to secure passage of the Insurance Act in 1924

⁷⁶ See the DSAP publication, "Selbstverwaltung oder Fremdherrschaft" (Prague: Verlag der DSAP, 1927), p. 29.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Evžen Stern, *Sociální vymoženosti a břemena u nás a v cizině* (Social achievements and burdens here and abroad) (Prague: Executive Committee of the ČSDS, 1927). Stern was general secretary of the National Social Insurance Office (*Ústřední sociální pojišťovna*), a domain of the Social Democrats. For the mandate, composition, and operations of this bureau see Em. Schoenbaum, "Sociální pojištění" in *Československá vlastivěda*, vol. 6, pp. 118-35. For social developments see Čestmír Ješina, "Social Progress in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1938", in Miloslav Rechcigl, ed., *Czechoslovakia Past and Present* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 190-202; Jaromír Nečas, *Twenty Years of Social Welfare in the Czechoslovak Republic* (Prague: Ministry of Social Welfare, 1938); Wiskemann, *Czechs & Germans*, p. 189.

ČSDS leaders had had to compromise with other members of the coalition, for "the strength of the working class in the government was already disrupted, as the election of 1925 showed." Stern thus defended the party against a typical Communist charge, that Social Democrats compromised and worked with the bourgeois parties, and went on the offensive by pointing out the sad consequences that were inevitable following the Communist split of the working-class vote.

Stern then declared to workers that they should count on democracy and the ČSDS to provide a better deal, "because the history of all industrialized states shows that once in place social insurance never worsened, but always only gradually improved."⁷⁹ Intended to counter Communist insistence that revolutionary action was necessary, Stern's message assured workers that all would be well if they stood behind their leaders, who would not let the bourgeois coalition establish a "disgraceful exception" to the cited historical fact.

Interparty consultations and collaboration toward unification went on for the next several months, culminating in a ground-breaking joint congress of all Social Democratic parties based in Czechoslovakia, held in the Prague working-class district of Smíchov on 28-29 January 1928.⁸⁰ At a

⁷⁹ Stern, *Sociální vymoženosti a břemena*, p. 15.

⁸⁰ Participating besides the ČSDS and the DSAP were two tiny parties serving other minorities: the Social Democratic Party of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, and the Polish Socialist Workers' Party in Czechoslovakia. The Social Democratic

DSAP meeting convened the day before the opening of the congress, chairman Ludwig Czech enunciated to all German delegates how important the issue of cooperation had become. He fielded some complaints from delegates, who protested that the leadership had concluded an agreement without input from party members, and that during the congress it would not be possible for them to submit their opinions and suggestions. Czech suppressed this dissent, invoking the rigid strictures of party discipline to ensure that no voices against unity would come from the German side. The party leaders clearly wanted the movement to appear unified.⁸¹

As delegates such as Carl Heller stressed the point that a lack of Social Democratic unity would strengthen the Communists, Ludwig Czech related the three main points of the congress. The first was to "separate ourselves from the bourgeois bloc." He meant to distinguish his party from the German activist parties of the coalition that were trying to

party of the Hungarian minority had disbanded in 1926; its Magyar part merged with the ČSDS and its German members with the DSAP. Within its framework the ČSDS established a Magyar section and allotted one mandate for a Magyar deputy to parliament. This section sent a few delegates to the Smíchov congress. See Jiří Horák, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, 1938-1945," Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1960, p. 58n3; and Ladislav Lipscher, "Die magyarischen, polnischen, ruthenischen und jüdischen Parteien in der ČSR" in Karl Bosl, ed., *Die Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik als multinationaler Parteienstaat* (Munich and Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1979).

⁸¹ SUA, PMV-X, S-41, 225-558-7, 27.1.1928.

rescind socialist-inspired legislation. This led him into the second objective, the protection of social achievements, certainly an important task and one that ultimately was an homage to the accomplishments of the Czechoslovak party. The third point to be tackled: the common fight of all Social Democrats against the Third International (Comintern).⁸²

The report of this DSAP conference indicates that despite months of negotiations and numerous public expressions of solidarity and optimism, the two main Social Democratic parties were at odds over "cultural questions", so that national differences still preoccupied the thoughts of the leadership. Ludwig Czech acknowledged that the ČSDS comrades would not be able to agree to German solutions to these questions, yet told his delegates that "all the same it is certain that this coming together never will be snuffed out from the history of this state's workers' movement."⁸³ The leaders of the DSAP obviously felt that cooperation was imperative and that they could pare down some of their cultural demands in order to secure it. This would allow the Smíchov congress to proceed, the aim of which was to attain the all-important objectives stated by the party chairman.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

The rhetoric at the Smíchov congress touched upon the obstacles related to nationalism; some speakers declared that the correction of relations between national groups in Czechoslovakia was in the forefront of the business of socialists.⁸⁴ The purpose of the congress, however, was not introspection but to celebrate the achievement of unity and to excoriate the movement's antagonists. The speakers at the congress certainly devoted much of their attention to the bourgeois parties, analyzing and delineating how they operated in their quest to roll back the legislated gains of the working class. They took pains to "expose" the worthlessness of the Czech and the German clerical parties, for example, that they said did nothing for the workers.⁸⁵

The greater proportion of rhetoric denounced the KSČ. The threat posed by the Communists, according to the voices

⁸⁴ For example, ČSDS functionary Alfred Meissner announced that "the problems in our movement consist of the national problems of the Republic...our duty is to solve [them]." *Stenografický protokol první kongres sociálně demokratických stran Československa* (Stenographic protocol of the first congress of Social Democratic parties in Czechoslovakia) (Prague: Ústřední dělnické knihkupectví a nakladatelství, 1928), pp. 76-77.

⁸⁵ The ČSDS did not consider the Czechoslovak People's Party, led by Msgr. Jan Šrámek, to be a significant threat to its constituency. Nonetheless, this Catholic party did not escape Social Democratic efforts to "unmask" its alleged hypocrisy toward the interests of workers. Rudolf Bechyně castigated Šrámek's willingness to boast of social achievements, secured when Social Democrats were in the government, to Catholic workers. Now that Šrámek was Minister of Social Welfare, Bechyně said, his true spirit was apparent, for he had instigated no new programs to aid workers. The German Christian Socialists, according to Bechyně, could be put into the same category. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

from the podium, was their propaganda that attacked Social Democracy and misled workers into escaping into a harmful and fruitless "romanticism." Sometimes speakers called the effect deadly, like "heavy artillery that aims not at the bourgeoisie, but at the proletariat." In other cases they compared the Communists to lowly creatures such as croaking frogs, unintelligent, undignified, unworthy of legitimate and rational discourse, yet still pernicious if their noise deafened their intended target.⁸⁶

Social Democratic women at the congress followed the litany of their party leaders in condemning the propaganda of revolution. Picking up on the theme of destruction, they noted that working women were usually the biggest victims of social disruption and violence. As wives and mothers they wished to secure a better future for their families. The key to this goal, declared the female speakers, was to follow the prescribed Social Democratic method. This included parliamentary gains, agitation for higher wages, and participation in Social Democratic associational life, such as in educational and physical fitness groups, and consumer cooperatives.⁸⁷

The congress heard emissaries of the Social Democratic youth groups from both major parties. The organizers of this meeting must have carefully selected these speakers and

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 45, 48.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-67.

reviewed their material beforehand to prevent a revolutionist outburst. No manifestations of rebellion, the forte of youth, disrupted the cohesiveness of the assemblage. The representative from the Czechoslovak Social Democratic youth proudly emphasized that cooperation was nothing new for them, since youth groups from both nationalities had united as far back as 1920, when they also had requested a statewide congress of all Social Democrats.⁸⁸

The speaker for the German group admitted that young members had played the leading role in the 1920 schism between Social Democrats and Communists, but that many of them now recognized their mistake. It was only with "pain, shame, and bitterness" that they remembered how their enthusiasm led them to being enticed by Communist slogans, and the more "immature" the slogan, the more they "fell for it." Ranks of "unscrupulous" Bolshevik emissaries misused the Social Democratic youth, as the speaker told it, but now they had "lived through their Golgotha"⁸⁹ and were returning to the movement. The program for the unification of the parties aided this process, according to the speaker.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

⁸⁹ It is remarkable how popular Biblical allusions seem to have been for nominally Marxist Social Democratic writers and speakers.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-31.

The assembled delegates must have been satisfied with these reports from the parties' youth. They seemed to indicate that through tactical maneuvering the movement could contain, and perhaps even reverse the damage caused by Communist demagoguery. In order to further distinguish themselves from Communist sloganeers the party leaders stressed action, saying that "we don't want to just talk."⁹¹

The political resolutions adopted on the first day of the Smíchov congress were a form of action against the government and the Communists; they essentially followed the objectives Ludwig Czech demarcated at the recent DSAP meeting. The first two resolutions thus condemned the government as a "naked" anti-worker régime, a vehicle for the exploitation of the working class and all consumers by property and factory owners.⁹² The third resolution declared that if the working class was to stop this bourgeois reaction and increase its political and economic influence it had to build a unified proletariat, but this must incorporate the basic ideas of democracy and socialism. It said that "thinking" workers refused the Communist united front because, as the leading Communists themselves repeatedly admitted, it was only a maneuver aiming to destroy the other socialist parties "and above all else to

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 83-85.

the enticement (*lákání*) of their members." The great task of the parties, concluded the resolution, was brotherly cooperation, despite the obstacles still blocking the way.⁹³

Resolutions approved on the second day of the congress specified improvements in economic and working conditions. They began with a call for a fight against the government's attempts to reform the social insurance laws, to be replaced with measures that enhanced these social benefits. Another resolution demanded better laws to create more powerful factory committees and mining councils, so that workers could attain basic influence on industrial production and pricing.⁹⁴ Industry would also be regulated so that the rationalization of production could not be implemented at the expense of workers. Because the government had revamped tax policies in 1926 and many public employees suffered as a result, the congress demanded relief from this stricture.⁹⁵

In order for these demands to pass from "just talk" to the realm of action, the congress also directed the major party leaders to establish a joint committee. Its purpose would be to coordinate the activities of Social Democratic

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

⁹⁴ For the circumstances of the laws dealing with factory councils see Vladimír Dubský, *Závodní výbory a rady v předmnichovském Československu* (Factory committees and councils in pre-Munich Czechoslovakia) (Prague: Práce, 1984); McDermott, *The Czech Red Unions*, pp. 28-30; Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy", p. 107.

⁹⁵ *Protokol první kongres*, pp. 140-45.

deputies in parliament, and propaganda work outside of parliament.⁹⁶

Antonín Hampl's concluding speech closed the congress with the message that, in contrast to the policy of the KSČ, the Social Democrats did not wish to destroy any other socialist party. "We only want the workers who are mistakenly oriented to [escape] from this bondage and come over to us. That's what this is all about." The protocol indicates that healthy agreement followed this simple declaration.⁹⁷

Social Democratic commentators judged the Smíchov congress to be a success. They based this evaluation on the unanimity of the delegates' response to the proposed resolutions, the firm resolve to increase the political and economic clout of the working class by undercutting its enemies, and the realistic acknowledgment that a mentality ordered by national differences still presented some impediments to success.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Unfortunately I found no documents or published material relating to the activities of this committee.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁹⁸ References to different national consciousnesses cropped up at various times during the congress. For example, Gustav Habrman, an old ČSDS war-horse, stated that "our German comrades believe that we are staying faithful sons of our nation, just as we know they are doing the same." Antonín Hampl baldly expressed the idea that in the past Social Democracy in Czechoslovakia had had to contend with the "psychology of the German people", which prompted them to shun cooperation with the state and with their Czech counterparts. He went on to state that Czechs themselves were not free of nationalism. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

An immediate result of the congress was that it launched a spate of activities, such as public meetings, that the parties conducted jointly. The congress was a good forum for the display of unity that the movement's leaders reckoned would satisfy the impulses from below for a united front; and a great deal of working-class attention focused on the Social Democrats.⁹⁹ Yet as far as matters of substance go, relating to an increase of fortunes for the working class, the congress did not produce much that went beyond what routinely would be expected from a gathering of Social Democrats. The purpose of the congress was to address the threats to the movement, not to the workers themselves. From the many references to the KSC's deleterious effect, especially regarding the desire to "entice" workers away from the Social Democratic camp, it is clear that the Communists were a serious threat to the leadership of the parties. To dispatch this threat they first named it, then forbade contact with it, and finally promoted their alternative of a unified proletariat progressing on the basis of democracy within the framework of the Republic.

⁹⁹ Perhaps this contributed to the notorious failure of "Red Day", a mass rally called by the KSC for June 1928. Although 120,000 were expected to march through Prague, only about 6,000 participated. Most studies of this period attribute the failure to the internecine struggle of the KSC leadership. See Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, pp. 107-13.

Nationalism proved to be an insurmountable problem for the solidarity of the German and Czechoslovak parties during most of the 1920s. Czechs doubted German loyalty to the Republic, believing that irredentism was endemic to their political designs. Thus they would not support German demands for autonomy because they supposed this was only the first step toward separation.¹⁰⁰ They furthermore resented DSAP criticism of their participation in the government; this led to intense personal enmity between some functionaries, further decreasing the chances for cooperation between the parties. Even after the Czechoslovak party left the government the German side found occasions to blame it for dealing with the bourgeois system.

The impetus for Social Democratic cooperation indirectly originated with the coalition of bourgeois parties of both nationalities and its concomitant policies, which the socialist parties called "anti-worker." The essential motivation for the eventual cooperation between

¹⁰⁰ Of course, Slovak demands for autonomy complicated this issue. Politicians who were geared toward centralization of the state could hardly offer their support for German autonomy after denying this status to Slovakia. For interwar political developments in Slovakia see Juraj Kramer, *Slovenské autonomistické hnutie v rokoch 1918-1929* (The Slovak autonomist movement 1918-1929) (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 1962); Ladislav Lipscher, *K vyvinu politickej správy na Slovensku, 1918-1938* (The development of political administration in Slovakia, 1918-1938) (Bratislava, 1966); Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy", in *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, pp. 120-26; Peroutka, *Budování státu*, vol. 3, pp. 1595-97.

the parties that became manifest with the Smíchov congress in early 1928 was Communist united front propaganda in conjunction with a widespread popular consciousness of the apparent wisdom of working-class solidarity. The leadership considered the possibility that impulses from below could go too far Left, and wished to shepherd the movement for solidarity from above.

The leaders of the DSAP and the ČSDS sought to effect a program for cooperation both inside parliament, with coordinated legislative activities, and without, in the form of joint speeches and other public meetings. They made the most of common Social Democratic assemblies such as the workers' physical fitness groups' convocations; they considered this to be highly visible and effective propaganda, suitable to undercut that of the Communists.

Social Democratic rhetoric promoted democracy as the greatest ally of socialism. Through elections, said party leaders, workers would secure all.¹⁰¹ This served a twofold purpose for the leadership: It focused the workers' attention on Social Democracy, an ideology which provided the assurance of an eventual victory over the bourgeoisie. Also, this emphasis created as great a distinction as was possible between themselves and the Communists. Support of

¹⁰¹ "[Our bourgeoisie] sees that the democratic form of government and democracy in an industrialized state in general is very dangerous for them." *Protokol první kongres*, p. 31.

the Czechoslovak Republic as the vehicle for democracy naturally dovetailed with this method of operation; because there were still national differences apparent within the movement it seems certain that Czechs were more enthusiastic about supporting this aspect of the anti-Communist rhetoric than were Germans. During periods when the republic underwent great economic and social shocks this reality was certain to affect the German party differently than it did the Czechoslovak.

Chapter II: Successes of the Program for Cooperation

Both Social Democratic parties began 1928 in agreement that they faced a common threat, one serious enough to compel them to overcome national enmities and forge the program for cooperation established at the Smíchov congress. This threat emanated from the KSC¹. The program served the parties well, carrying them through a vigorous campaign that party leaders felt went a long way toward disabling the propaganda of the Communist party, so that it suffered considerable losses in the 1929 general election. Besides the efforts of the Social Democrats, severe shocks assaulted the KSC¹ from within and helped turn voters away. A fierce struggle for leadership climaxed in the victory of the "bolshevist" faction, which then drummed out the losers.¹ The Communists appeared to be in disarray.

This silver lining brought with it a cloud, however, for as the KSC¹ deflated, the Social Democratic ranks increased with a cohort of these ousted party members. Some of them were labor activists who could have influenced their new party's politics, causing a leftward tilt. If moderate Social Democratic leaders were to maintain their command,

¹ For the intraparty warfare in the KSC¹ see Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, chapter 2; Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics*, chapter 3. For a typical Communist treatment of this episode see Lubomír Vejnar, "Reformismus v období konsolidace buržoazního režimu (1921-1932)" (Reformism in the consolidation period of the bourgeois régime), in František Červinka et al., *O reformismu v českém dělnickém hnutí* (On reformism in the Czech labor movement) (Prague: Nakladatelství politické literatury, 1964), pp. 157-61.

they had to require their party's full commitment to the moderate, or reformist tenet of parliamentarism. This impetus strongly influenced their decision to enter a new governing coalition. It was more difficult for the DSAP leaders to arrive at this decision, because naturally there was less sentiment for supporting the "Czechoslovak government" within the ranks of their party. The fact that the German leadership enforced the decision, despite opposition from the Left and from members harboring nationalist feelings, is testimony to rigorous party discipline and to the attractiveness that the idea of cooperation had for party leaders.

The Smíchov congress led to the immediate pursuit of the desired policy of cooperation both inside and out of parliament. The parties quickly coordinated their representatives in the Chamber of Deputies to instigate legislation deemed beneficial to workers. These laws typically featured some form of protection for the working class against the vagaries of capitalism.

A united phalanx of Social Democratic deputies in 1928 thus sponsored bills such as one which proposed the establishment of a special inspectorate, with the participation of workers, for their safety in the building trades. This bureau would operate in Prague and Brno, where building activity in the 1920s was brisk and the regular corps of inspectors could not keep up with timely visits to

the sites within their jurisdiction.² Accidents at the workplace were happening too frequently, the Social Democratic deputies charged in the debate on the bill; it was necessary to maintain vigilance to insure the presence of new railings, scaffolding, fencing, and other safety measures.³

From the standpoint of the parties' leadership it was very important to establish a new phase of coordinated events outside of parliament, in order to present tangible evidence to the working class that the parties intended to succeed in the creation of the Social Democratic united front. One aspect of the new unity was joint public meetings organized by both parties in areas with a mixed population of Czechs and Germans. At them, workers of both nationalities heard rhetoric that celebrated the newly-wrought unity of the movement and outlined the charges against the forces of the Left and the Right that party leaders said worked in combination to erase the working class population's hopes for a secure life.

Because these were public assemblies an official police observer (*četník*) was in attendance, ostensibly to maintain

² *SÚA Ministerstvo sociální péče (MSP, Ministry of Social Welfare), 1920-29, D/carton 547.*

³ *Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích Národního shromáždění republiky Československé (Stenographic reports on sessions of the Czechoslovak National Assembly), 10.10.1928.*

restrictions against disorderly conduct.⁴ The observer's report of a meeting provides details of who organized the meeting, its stated purpose, who spoke, and what was said, as well as the number of people attending the event. Of course, he also noted if any disturbance occurred, such as disruptions by Communist agitators.

The effect of coordination by the leadership of the parties is noticeable from the uniform agenda for virtually all such meetings throughout the Czech Lands. Thus the course of meetings in Brno, the Ostrava region, northern Bohemia, or in Cheb was the same; speakers used the same litany of condemnation against the allegedly harmful behavior of the bourgeois coalition and Communist perfidy that enabled it to proceed.

At these joint meetings Social Democrats of both nationalities publicly tried to reconcile their past differences as they launched the attack on their adversaries. For example, in Brno just a few days after the Smíchov congress František Soukup spoke openly about the many times he and the man with whom he was now sharing the platform, the DSAP senator Johann Polach, had "skirmished". The times had changed, Soukup declared, and with them the opinions of both parties' leaders.⁵ Past disasters, such

⁴ As were so many procedures and laws of the new republic, the presence of these officials was a practice carried over from the old Monarchy.

⁵ SUA PMV (Ministry of the Interior) X225-558-7, p. 1, 7.2.1928.

as the interparty squabble at the 1923 meeting of the Socialist International in Hamburg, would fade in the light of a newly-found harmony.⁶ After a candid acknowledgment of their previous inattention to the matter of cooperation, the speakers then focused on how vital this matter was for the protection of the working class against its purported enemies. At this meeting in Brno, typical of many held in 1928, the rhetoric drew attention to the perceived destruction preached by Communist revolutionary propaganda.

Soukup thus dismissed force as a method suitable for creating a long-term government, and as a perfect example pointed to the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic led by Béla Kun. To his audience of about 500 Soukup recounted a conversation Kun supposedly had with Vavro Šrobár, one of the leading Slovak politicians at the time of the creation of the independent Czechoslovak republic,⁷ when Kun was still in power. Šrobár wanted to know how Kun had managed to take control of Budapest and the Hungarian reportedly

⁶ See Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 66-8, for details of party divisiveness evident at the 1923 meeting. In August 1928 Ludwig Czech and Gustav Habrman jointly presided over the meeting of the International in Brussels. See Johann W. Brügel, *Ludwig Czech. Arbeiterführer und Staatsmann* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1960), p. 100.

⁷ Šrobár had attended a Hungarian *gymnasium* and studied medicine in Prague. As one of the staunchest advocates of the "Czechoslovakist" political idea, Prague naturally favored him regarding Slovak affairs. In late 1918 he was named head of the ministry created for the administration of Slovakia. As a member of the Agrarian party, he held a senate seat from 1925-35.

replied, "Give me 300 well-armed and determined people and I could seize any city in the world!"⁸ By pointing to this episode in a neighboring country, Soukup emphasized both the fanaticism of the Bolsheviks and the transience of their efforts. The observer's report indicates that the speech received enthusiastic applause, especially when Soukup mentioned his movement's work for building the future and the "senselessness" of Communism.⁹

Johann Polach's speech also blasted the Communists. The German pursued this line after acknowledging the historical importance of the Smíchov congress, stressing that for the first time all domestic Social Democratic parties had met and pledged to work loyally on the basis of the republic. This message, of course, both pleased the Czechoslovak side and emphasized the fundamental difference with the revolutionaries.

Polach continued with the declaration that a majority of the workers who gave the Communists such success in the 1925 election now realized that the KSČ was a "blind alley." The united front of Social Democrats, Polach said, aimed to gain back those lost votes by opening the eyes of workers "deceived" by Communist propaganda.¹⁰

⁸ SÚA PMV X225-558-7, p. 2, 7.2.1928.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Polach's speech asserted that there was still value in Marxism, but that Social Democracy reserved the right of interpretation of the doctrine:

...Smíchov coincided with another meaningful socialist jubilee, the 80th anniversary of the proclamation of the Communist Manifesto. It must be implemented with enthusiasm. In no way, however, as the Bolsheviks have done in Russia.

Polach then employed the Marxist notion that the world was entering the final phase of the struggle between capitalism and socialism. The Social Democratic unification congress thus was in line with the theory that expressed the inevitable victory for the working class.¹¹ Continuing to advertise Marxism as their grounding philosophy provided some advantages for the parties. It allowed them to maintain the allegiance of workers who, for the most part, had no grasp of economic theory other than a rudimentary awareness that Marx had "scientifically proven" the eventual socialist victory. Also, the international aspect of Marxism provided an answer for those Czech and German workers who wondered why they should not support a national socialist movement.

The Social Democrats' anti-Communist message would have been incomplete without an explicit condemnation of the manner in which the bourgeois coalition was, according to party leaders, carrying out a war against the working class. The public meetings called jointly by both parties were a

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

forum in which workers in areas such as Ostrava heard, as ČSDS speaker Bohuslav Sída put it, that the government was caught up in a "dance around the golden calf."¹² This led him to state that the agricultural tariffs supported by the coalition meant that the Republic had become "an agrarian colony." DSAP senator Hans Jokl then elaborated, in case any workers present did not realize that this policy resulted in higher food costs. In their campaign against the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, the state's biggest and the leader of the coalition, Social Democrats demanded to know why social institutions were being obliterated but those devoted to the health and care of livestock received financing. Were animals, they asked, more important now than humans?¹³

Social Democratic speakers at numerous joint rallies presented further examples of action against the interests of the laboring class: above all, the efforts to rescind provisions for social insurance meant hardship for workers. Speakers protested that the proposed changes would cut off benefits for those who most needed help, such as young apprentices, seasonal workers, and those who worked at home - as many as one million people, about 25 percent of all covered, they said.¹⁴

¹² SÚA PMV X225-604-16, p. 25, 24.2.1928.

¹³ SÚA PMV X225-604-14, p. 93, 4.4.1928.

¹⁴ SÚA PMV X225-604-16, p. 92, 15.4.1928 in Most (northern Bohemia).

Another claim was that the government was "perpetrating a deep violation of the constitution" in the matter of voting rights, for it had withdrawn the privileges of soldiers and police officials (*četníci*) to participate in local elections. The German bourgeois coalition members favored this action, as it negated the presence of Czech and Slovak personnel stationed in German-speaking areas. Despite its potentially divisive national aspect, both Social Democratic parties were in accord on this issue because it was assumed that young army recruits would be most likely to vote for a party on the left. Another military matter that both parties attacked was the government's proposal to raise the pensions for generals, more than doubling their annual benefits. This was abominable, Social Democrats cried, because these retired generals had led the Austrian army during the War and their mission had been to preserve the Monarchy. To make matters worse, pensions awarded to soldiers who suffered crippling injuries in the conflict, a category essentially comprised of the proletariat, were threatened by a cut of up to 35 percent.¹⁵

Social Democrats from both parties heaped shame on the government by pointing out that this action was proposed in the republic's "jubilee" tenth anniversary year. Significantly, the German side also expressed its dismay

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104, 14.3.1928 in the Ostrava region.

with this measure that seemed to dishonor the national revolution of the Czechs and Slovaks.¹⁶ In keeping with the spirit of the new united front the Germans appeared to have no regrets over the downfall of Austria-Hungary; this was a real honeymoon period when both partners willingly pledged their troth to the republic.

The government's tax reform proposal, which it claimed was a popular measure, also came under attack. Social Democratic rhetoric charged that this claim was false, that "the tax screw pushes mainly onto the unpropertied classes," whose taxes would climb by 20 percent.¹⁷ Similarly, the government's desire to abolish many forms of rent control received abuse as being anti-worker. The Social Democrats also condemned the influence of the Catholic parties on government affairs. They decried state salaries for priests (*congrua*) and Church involvement in public education. Hans Jokl went so far as to say that Msgr. Šrámek had sold out the Catholic workers, "as Jesus Christ was betrayed by Judas."¹⁸

Besides the coalition's efforts to revamp social insurance, the measure that the parties fought hardest was the reform of self-administration for local government (*samospráva, Selbstverwaltung*). This was a complicated

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26, 24.2.1928 in Ostrava.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55, 22.2.1928 in the Brno area; p. 133, 15.3.1928 in Jihlava (Moravia).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140, 8.3.1928 in Novy Jičín (Moravia). This area had a substantial Catholic population.

issue, within which national and class interests converged.¹⁹

The government instigated a bill covering administrative reform in 1927. Its backers called it a rational effort to update and standardize administration through the establishment of provincial units, removing inequities that had remained from the Habsburg period. Proponents of autonomy for Slovakia welcomed the reform, as it created provincial assemblies that decentralizers believed would lead to self-rule. Msgr. Andrej Hlinka, leader of the Slovak People's Party, in fact had demanded this arrangement as a condition for joining the coalition in October 1926.²⁰

However, the assemblies had few actual powers and the reform became, as its designers fully intended, a means to further centralize local government. This effect provided a measure of safety against any possible ordinances or policies enacted in German areas that might have an anti-state intent.²¹

¹⁹ For details on local self-government see *Československá vlastivěda*, vol. 5, pp. 143-48, 676-80; Marta Kadlecová et al., *Dějiny československého státu a práva (1918 - 1945)* (History of the Czechoslovak state's legal code), (Brno: Masaryk University, 1992) pp. 53-63; Táborsky, *Czechoslovak Democracy at Work*, pp. 115-25.

²⁰ For details see Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," p. 134.

²¹ Táborsky, *Czechoslovak Democracy at Work*, *ibid.*, Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, pp. 132-33.

To achieve this process, first the state was divided into four provinces. Silesia lost its historic status as a discrete unit through merger with Moravia, effectively controlling a potential German majority in Silesia by submerging it in the predominantly Czech population of Moravia. Furthermore, all members of the new provincial assemblies were not elected locally; government ministers nominated one-third of them from a pool of specialists in fields such as finance and business. The same situation applied to the next-highest local government bodies, the district councils. In this way Prague could keep local government "safe," and could even give representation to parties that had not garnered enough votes for a single mandate. The official explanation and rationale (*zdůvodnění*) for this practice came from the authoritarian Karel Kramář, leader of the chauvinistic Czech National Democratic party, who wrote that it was in the people's interest to have the cooperation and expertise of these specialists.²² Needless to say, the Social Democrats viewed such remarks as being part of the bourgeois enterprise dedicated to minimizing the strength of socialists in local affairs.

The provisions of the administrative reform bill came into effect in 1928, just as the two Social Democratic parties were coordinating their attacks against the

²² *Dějiny československého státu a práva*, p. 59.

coalition. The program of their joint public speeches featured attacks on the underlying effects of the reform. Social Democrats informed their constituencies that the Ministry of the Interior, a stronghold of the Czechoslovak Agrarians, now had tighter control of local police forces. This situation, they said grimly, returned Czech and German workers to the "good old days" of Austria. According to Matthias Wellan, a DSAP district secretary from Brno, the *panská koalice* had created a police state "that neither Bach nor Metternich would have been ashamed of."²³

Understandably, the Germans decried administrative reform, declaring that it had given unlimited power to the bureaucracy and ended democracy in the state. Yet Czech Social Democrats fought the reform just as hard, denouncing the government for "perpetrating a deep violation of the constitution."²⁴ The Czechs intended to demonstrate that they supported the German desire for home rule, in contrast to the ČSDS anti-autonomy stance of the past. The class aspect of the reform made this even easier for the Czech side to support, for no Social Democrat wished to allow a conservative bureaucracy to undercut the democratic electoral process. The Czech side furthermore thought that the government would, whenever possible, redraw boundaries to create voting districts in which Communists would defeat

²³ SÚA PMV 225-604-16, p. 149, 5.3.1928 in Znojmo.

²⁴ SÚA PMV 225-604-16, p. 105, 14.3.1928 in Nový Bohumín (Ostrava).

Social Democrats. They anticipated that the bureaucracy would then complete the conservative plan to shut out the Social Democrats by assigning one-third membership of local boards to members of bourgeois parties.²⁵

The women's sections of the parties echoed these anti-government diatribes, as they also began to conduct joint public speeches and meetings. Besides the familiar course followed by male speakers, the program for these occasions featured the family-oriented issues that fell within the Social Democratic women's purview. Speakers at a typical women's meeting thus condemned the rising cost of living, the attempt of the clerical parties to secure a greater role for the Church in their children's schools, and the state's alleged militarism. Workers were only *Kanonfutter*, they charged, and they had not borne and raised their children only to have them killed on the battlefield.²⁶

The Social Democratic youth cadres also played their part in the movement's coordinated public pronouncements. Czech and German youth groups were long-time advocates of cooperation. Their 1928 meetings and congresses reprised the standard line against Social Democratic adversaries at both ends of the political spectrum. The leadership of the parties no doubt felt assured by the participation of their youth groups in the official program. This would have been

²⁵ SÚA PMV X-S-41, 225-558-8, p.97, 30.6.1927.

²⁶ SÚA PMV 225-604-16, p. 108, 18.3.1928 in Ústí nad Labem; PMV X-S-41, 225-558-6, 18.3.1928 in Prague.

so particularly in view of the Communist problem, for younger members were most likely to follow revolutionary propaganda.

The leadership had to contend with the restlessness and dissatisfaction of young workers. A heartfelt essay by an anonymous young Czech Social Democrat, published in the weekly liberal journal *Přítomnost* (The present), expressed the malaise common among those youthful Czechs and Germans who felt they had no genuine political outlets.

The author of the essay (presumably male, according to the Czech title) called himself "Nobody" (in English). He related that the "mistakes of the old-guard leadership," that led to the debilitating 1920 schism of the party's Radical Left, "filled the hearts of the younger generation with skepticism." The party grew more and more "hidebound," he said, and in fact "had no [true] leaders." He avowed that "the Marxism of Communism was more attractive" for youth than was "the bankrupt [spirit] of the International." If the KSČ were not controlled by Moscow, he added, the Communists would have a considerable superiority in recruiting, thanks to its organizational apparatus, "which looks to youth as the future of the movement." It was necessary for younger people to hold decision-making positions, he asserted, because the party leaders were too

conservative to devise solutions to the upcoming problems that the working class would have to face.²⁷

This one example of youthful disillusionment does not, of course, establish that a serious rebellion was going on. It does seem clear, however, that the leadership of both parties undervalued the potential contribution of youth. For example, party leaders relegated the youth cadres to a minor role during the campaigning period of the vital December 1928 provincial election.

The leadership considered the election to be a crucial test of the new strategy of cooperation; and accordingly planned a campaign for which no detail seemed to be overlooked. The headquarters of the ČSDS in Prague provided the party's local political organizations with precise instructions and materials for the pre-election period.²⁸ They issued commands outlining the "proper and efficient" manner for carrying out grass roots-level efforts (*drobná agitační práce*) to recruit uncommitted voters. Officials in Prague sent different versions of election posters and flyers that were tailored specifically for towns, the countryside, for men, women, and for different categories of workers. They ordered local party officials to ensure that none of this material was "uselessly wasted." Yet despite the party's zeal for exploiting every resource, how did it

²⁷ *Přítomnost*, no. 5 (1928), pp. 326-28.

²⁸ Archív ČSDS, Fond 71/22-1, p. 92.

envision the role of its young members? "Our youth, who have been exhorted (*vyzvána*) to collaborate, may be used mainly for carrying and distributing the flyers."²⁹ Never given a chance to share responsibility, it is hard to imagine that Social Democratic youth responded willingly to the call for collaboration.

The 1928 provincial election offered the parties an opportunity for a payoff of their program for cooperation in the form of unified electoral lists of German and Czech candidates. Thus in areas with mixed populations, instead of dividing the Social Democratic vote one list of candidates would receive all, increasing the movement's representation on local administrative boards. The party leaders in Prague sanctioned this practice, but left it up to local functionaries to decide if the strategy would be feasible in their area.³⁰ In some cases the ČSDS had unified lists with the National Socialists, or with other Czechoslovak parties.

The Prague leadership of the ČSDS asked its local officials to report on the efficacy of unified lists, for it wished to monitor how well its program for cooperation served to offset vestiges of nationalism among Czech workers. Party leaders knew that solidarity with the Germans was a weapon which Czech national groups, such as

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

the National Union of Northern Bohemia (*Národní jednota severočeská*), would use against them. They were concerned that "we are being inundated (*zahrnováni*) with the most coarse, rude attacks from all Czech parties and their papers."³¹ The fear of and distaste for being labeled traitors to the Czech nation receded for party leaders, however, with the successes that the party achieved in local elections. They continued to promote unified lists for the next decade.

Both parties achieved noteworthy successes in the 1928 election, promoting the feeling among leaders that their tactics were appropriate for the times. The ČSDS got almost 730,000 votes, nearly 100,000 more than in the 1925 general election.³² The DSAP made the biggest gain of any German party, and received twenty-seven percent of the German votes cast in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia.³³ The party picked up votes from the German Christian Socialists, since that coalition member had supported legislation deemed unfriendly to workers. The Christian Socialists and the German Agrarians appear to have suffered as a result of coalition politics; German voters in general were unhappy with the effects of administrative reform. Of course, not all disaffected voters flocked to the DSAP. The German National

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Horák, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party," p. 61.

³³ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 86.

Socialist Workers Party (DNSAP, *Deutsche nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*) increased its total compared to 1925.³⁴

Since the DNSAP picked up some of the protest vote, some of the substantial gains for the DSAP must be attributed to Germans who switched their votes from the KSĊ. It does not seem possible to precisely determine how many German workers did this. The 1928 election revealed, however, that the Communist party, although stronger in some German areas, took a beating in other German and in many Czech districts, losing more than 110,000 votes compared to 1925.³⁵

The election results pleased both Social Democratic parties. The German leaders immediately began to prepare for the next parliamentary election by denigrating their main enemies, declaring in their newspaper that the results would have been even better if that portion of the working class that continued to support the Communists would not do so. The ČSDS soon published its findings on the election, reporting with satisfaction that in many Czech districts that had been "bastions" of the KSĊ, Communist superiority was now gone. This indicated to the Czechs that their

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Horák, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party," p. 61.

program had the desired effect upon workers, and had failed to reach only the most radical.³⁶

At the end of 1928 the leaders of both parties could look back upon the year, note the instances of cooperation, and conclude that the Social Democratic united front had made an impact on the working class. On the First of May, Czech and German workers had come together for their first joint celebration of the international socialist holiday. In April, both parties and their affiliated trade union centers successfully organized a huge anti-government rally in Prague. Soon after the Smíchov congress in January, Social Democratic organizations of miners in northwest Bohemia carried out a successful strike, with the backing of both parties.

In late January 1929, Antonín Hampl expressed his outlook on the state of Social Democratic affairs, one year after Smíchov. He said that cooperation among Czechs and Germans was not an illusion. It was manifested in the rallies, and accompanying political resolutions, that created a united defense against government policies. Workers of both nationalities "had greeted the congress joyfully," but Hampl indicated that optimum results for the movement still lay ahead:

The undeniable fact remains that these results must be recognized as stages [in the course of things]. The proper task, which is to bind ourselves more closely

³⁶ *Sozialdemokrat*, 15.12.1928; *Právo lidu*, 23.2.1929.

in our lives as well as in parliamentary activities, awaits both parties.³⁷

The effort to develop and promote leisure-time activities for Social Democrats, in effect constructing an entire Social Democratic milieu, would promote closer bonds to the movement and help insulate workers from Communist propaganda. The desire for closer ties in parliament seems to have been a signal that a crucial time was approaching, when the major fault line that did exist between the parties might separate them. This divisive issue was the matter of participation in government.

Even before the success they found in the December election Hampl and his party were discussing re-entry into the government.³⁸ As he commemorated the anniversary of Smíchov, Hampl thought that the Germans would inevitably join them in a common political policy, and seek to participate in the coalition. He acknowledged that the Germans had "difficulties" with the concept, but offered that "mathematical reality will convince [them], that two are more than one."³⁹ The message to the Germans was that their phase as an opposition party had waned; it was time to share power and enjoy greater control of the fortunes of the working class.

³⁷ *Prager Presse*, 27.1.1929.

³⁸ *Archív kancelář presidenta republiky* (AKPR, Archive of the office of the president of the republic) 994/21, 16.11.1928 report by Přemysl Šámal of his conversation with Hampl.

³⁹ *Prager Presse*, 27.1.1929.

At this time the German side was considering the issue. Ludwig Czech's rhetoric promoted cooperation between the parties as an antidote against the bourgeois nemesis, and did not try to obscure the difficulties inherent to the task. However, because the workers of both nations had drawn together since Smíchov,

...we have faith that the last barriers will fall and that we, joined in the closest ranks, will fight for the entire working class.⁴⁰

By this Czech seemed to acknowledge that his party's fundamental objection to government participation was not in the best interest of the movement, and was not immutable.

Ludwig Czech also did not fail to strongly condemn the Communists, indicating that the Germans' consideration of joining the government was not solely for the purpose of fighting the class enemy. He declared that workers would inevitably be disappointed by the emptiness and sterility of the Communist ideology, which he said would become apparent even to KSC̣ stalwarts. Czech frequently expressed the common Social Democratic opinion that the Communists were misguided and needed his leadership to steer them in the proper direction. Their immaturity and ineffective ways caused them to think that merely yearning for a socialist victory could achieve it, Czech said. He also ridiculed their capriciousness, pointing out that workers could not

⁴⁰ *Právo lidu*, 31.1.1929. Czech's speech was in Falknov (today Sokolov) in western Bohemia.

comprehend the KSČ's "flip-flops" on issues such as the bolshevization of the party and the united workers' front.⁴¹ Ironically, Czech and his cohorts within the DSAP were at this time seeking to reverse one of the party's elemental principles.

Some voices within the party rejected the idea of participation due to the concomitant necessity for compromise with the bourgeois parties. It was basically their opposition status, they argued, that had allowed the Social Democrats to counteract the KSČ's anti-government propaganda. On the other hand, many party leaders had been impressed with the results of interparty cooperation and felt that a united Social Democratic bloc could extend the movement's influence. Social Democratic rhetoric therefore attacked the "ineffectiveness" of attempting to fight the system from outside. This would serve to offset criticism and marginalize the attacks from the Left and the Right that were sure to accompany a German entry into government.

The spokesman for this opinion was Carl Heller, who for several years had supported closer relations between the two parties. At the DSAP district conference in Podmokly (northern Bohemia) on 20 January 1929, Heller expressed the tenor of the debate on coalition participation. He reassured the delegates that the foremost reason why the

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Oscillations in the KSČ's official line resulted from the struggle between its left and right wing.

party would proceed with cooperation was to further the interest of German workers. The chauvinism of the Czechoslovak National Socialists, he said, prevented the DSAP from combining with them. With this statement he no doubt also intended to feature the party's vigilance against the nationalist element lurking within the ČSDS.

Regarding the threat from the Left, Heller put forth a strong condemnation of the Communists. It would not be possible to cooperate with them, he said, and

...we must realize that no longer are they our "wayward brothers," but enemies of the working class...The danger of the Communist movement is not only the schism [that they have perpetrated], which can only be a temporary handicap. A much greater danger is that the working class, or a considerable part of it, will turn away from socialism, that this symptom can become a mass phenomenon. We must defend ourselves against it! ...in the future we won't find an ally in this party, but rather an enemy, who stabbed us in the back in the battle against the bourgeoisie.⁴²

Heller no doubt had borrowed this metaphor from the conservative forces in Germany who damned the Communists there (all socialists, in fact) for supposedly disabling the German military's capacity to keep fighting the War in 1918.

Heller went on to discuss coalition politics, after first declaring that "only a united Social Democratic working class can achieve success." He warned the Czech side, however, that the Germans would shrewdly evaluate any proposal for joining the government:

We will not go into a coalition in a careless way....

⁴² *Sozialdemokrat*, 23.1.1929.

to participate is not a principle but a tactical question. Our difficulties lie particularly in our national cleavage (*Zerklüftung*) and in the attitude toward the state, which we did not help to establish. It is not possible to create a program so long as the relationship between us and the Czech comrades is not completely clarified. We all want this alliance but a hasty, premature program could only disrupt this union.⁴³

While debate over coalition politics went on within the parties during 1929, cooperation among Czechs and Germans continued in the form of unity in parliament and coordinated public activities. When a Polish minority was also present, as in the area around Těšín (northeastern Moravia), Polish Social Democrats joined in the public expressions of solidarity.⁴⁴ In the area around Hlučín (northern Moravia), where nationality problems among Czechs and Germans were particularly complex, the local police bureau reported that party loyalty was preventing Social Democrats from their customary attacks upon their comrades from the other side.⁴⁵

For the First of May socialist holiday the executive committees of both parties coordinated the announcements that were published in party newspapers, exhorting workers to march and celebrate the movement's achievements. Both nations, they said, were working to fight the reaction that

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Právo lidu*, 10.2.1929.

⁴⁵ SÚA PMR-5 (*Prezidium ministerský ráde*) sign. 1135, carton 499. See Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, pp. 231-34, for the tangled nationality problems in Hlučín.

sought to "entrap the working class in economic slavery."

The announcements also proclaimed that:

Communist parties everywhere are in an unstoppable decline. The hypotheses of Communism have not been fulfilled...In the history of the fight for the liberation of the working class, the idea of the Bolshevik dictatorship will be only a transient episode.⁴⁶

In a probable reference to the provincial election, these calls to action reminded members of the labor movement that the united front was newly invigorated; it could only go forth, however, "under the banner of Social Democracy."

Both parties displayed their anti-war solidarity on the occasion of the anniversary of the 26 July 1914 mobilization of Austria-Hungary's military, prior to the commencement of hostilities. Joint speeches appealed for an end to militarism, the bane of the working class. Party newspapers coordinated their statements favoring peace and disarmament.

The Social Democratic debate over government participation took place at the same time as disputes within the coalition parties that could not be solved by negotiation. These problems eventually resulted in the decision to hold new parliamentary elections on 27 October 1929.⁴⁷ The ČSDS was keen to take advantage of what it perceived to be a strong position: the KSC had been weakened by the Social Democratic united front and by its own

⁴⁶ See for example *Právo lidu*, 27.4.1929.

⁴⁷ For details see Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," pp. 135-40.

internal warfare; also, the voters were apt to punish the government parties for their squabbling and for recent policies. The Czech side was confident that they would not remain in opposition. Germans must have also felt this mood, for during the pre-election campaign several party leaders advertised their desire to join the Czechs in the government. Thus at a statewide DSAP conference three weeks before the voting, Ludwig Czech said that the party favored participation with the ČSDS. The anticipation was that in this way problems important to Germans, namely those of national and cultural autonomy, would be solved.⁴⁸

This viewpoint was of course not universal among the Germans, with some deputies and senators concerned about how such a policy would affect the party in the election. Due to their objections, the DSAP could not issue an official affirmation of the intent to enter the coalition until after the election passed.

Even though the DSAP enjoyed a substantial increase in its totals over the previous general election, and indeed with over thirty percent of the German vote had again become the biggest German party,⁴⁹ a faction within the party

⁴⁸ *Sozialdemokrat*, 5.10.1929. The conference was in Ústí nad Labem.

⁴⁹ The party received over 500,000 votes and increased its parliamentary delegation by six over the 1925 totals. The German Agrarian-Work and Economy Association grouping was the next most successful ticket, followed by the German Christian Socials and their allies. The nationalist vote was split between the German Nationalist and the Nazi party.

continued to oppose entering the government. Some members of parliament continued to register their protests, certain that the recent results demonstrated that government parties would lose support in the next election.⁵⁰ The left wing of the party also opposed the coalition as a violation of the Marxist spirit of working-class politics.

The party leaders recognized that the sentiment of the left wing had considerable strength. When the DSAP held a special congress one month after the election, and the official approval of participation was secured, Ludwig Czech addressed this concern by affirming that the party would not forget the basic class struggle and would not be, in his words, a slave to government politics. The resolutions adopted at this congress first of all stressed that participation had not become now a basic tenet for the party; it was necessary to consider it "primarily as a question of political tactics." The congress also saluted cooperation with its brother party, empowering DSAP leaders to continue joint discussions and other operations with the ČSDS.⁵¹ Leaders such as Czech sanctioned the opinion that the party meant to obtain greater influence for the improvement of living conditions for Germans. They said they were determined to get a ministerial post important

See César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 1, p. 421; Rothschild, *East Central Europe*, p. 116.

⁵⁰ *Sozialdemokrat*, 19.11.1929.

⁵¹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 3.12.1929.

enough to secure economic protection for German areas that they said Prague neglected. They also announced that the party would be better able to implement the management of the republic's agreements for minority protection and cultural life.⁵²

The noteworthy success of the ČSDS on 27 October capped the Social Democratic comeback in the election; among all parties in the republic it was now second only to the Czechoslovak Agrarians in terms of strength.⁵³ Most party leaders saw no reason why they should not use their parliamentary delegation, in conjunction with that of their German comrades, to secure powerful cabinet ministries and thus play a major role in shaping future policies.

Yet there evidently was dissension over following this policy. Functionaries from all areas of the state attended a congress in Prague on 23 November 1929, for the purpose of establishing a course of action. Josef Stivín's report of the meeting indicates that while all delegates were happy over election successes, some were "in awkward procrastination" over the form of the new government.

Stivín wrote that socialists had to enter the coalition to confront directly the reaction of the bourgeois parties. He argued that the bourgeoisie enjoyed solidarity among its

⁵² See Kurbisch, *Chronik der sudetendeutschen Sozialdemokratie*, p. 64.

⁵³ For election totals see Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," p. 140.

"urban, rural, and clerical parts" and seemed to imply that those Social Democrats who were not standing with their leaders over the issue of participation were aiding the enemy:

The bourgeoisie is better aware of what the participation of socialists means than that part of the working class that, with its pseudorevolutionary passivity, gives away to the bourgeoisie its numerical strength and parliamentary representation.⁵⁴

Even more so than in the German party, the protests against taking part in the government came from the left wing of the ČSDS. Stivín's statement deriding the efficacy of remaining in opposition virtually placed the opponents of participation in the same category as the Communists. It reflected the moderate, reformist line of thought that dominated the leadership of the ČSDS. And similarly to Ludwig Czech, Stivín was mindful of stating to the left-wing opposition that "we cannot go into the coalition just to be there, without helping the working class. And we cannot waste our strength." This indicated that party leaders were engaged in strenuous negotiations with the Agrarians and other bourgeois parties over the important ministries that they coveted. They would not accept anything less than their due, and they would not join the coalition without their German comrades.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Právo lidu*, 24.11.1929.

⁵⁵ Stivín said that the bourgeoisie realized that it could not form a government without socialists, but it was fighting the inclusion of the DSAP, "trying to peel away

Soon after this conference leaders of both parties met in Prague. They worked out an arrangement whereby the important Ministry of Social Welfare, originally designated for Rudolf Bechyně of the ČSDS, went to Ludwig Czech. With this the German side had gained its objective of providing for the care of German (and of course other) workers in distress. The party newspaper approvingly stated that "it certainly provides evidence of the greater solidarity between both Social Democratic brother parties," that their Czech comrades had agreed to the ministerial switch "without making a big fuss" (*ohne viel Aufhebens zu machen*).⁵⁶

As one scholar has pointed out, the most influential leaders of the DSAP chose the option of coalition participation for a variety of reasons. They recognized that the bourgeois parties were losing strength, and wished to take advantage of this while they could. Economic developments, whereby high tariffs and rationalization caused higher unemployment, required effective intervention. The Social Democratic Party in Germany had joined the government after its election success in 1928, so international events influenced the decision. Perhaps of greatest importance was the maintenance of close cooperation with the Czechoslovak party.⁵⁷

(*odlounout*) from the socialist bloc only what it can't do without." *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Sozialdemokrat*, 5.12.1929.

⁵⁷ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 98-100.

Another factor worth considering is that participation, heavily opposed by the party's left wing, helped the leadership to downgrade its left opposition and strengthen its own influence within the organization. As the winners of the intraparty debate, the moderate leadership successfully marginalized those elements that criticized compromising with the bourgeoisie, and indeed often called for a united proletarian front with the Communists.⁵⁸

At the DSAP congress in August 1929, the anti-Communist diatribes of leaders such as Ludwig Czech and Eugen de Witte certainly were as strong as ever. Czech, for example, condemned the "tragic" split of the working class perpetrated by the Communists and the subsequent "domination" by the class enemy. Then immediately he outlined the "great task standing before us in this hour," the reversal of the proletarian collapse (*Zusammenbruch*), which he asserted could not be done by Germans alone.⁵⁹ De Witte also claimed that cooperation of Germans and Czechs was necessary to beat first the "frivolous attacks of the agents of Moscow," and then the bourgeoisie.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ This opposition continued to criticize the party's coalition status after Czech became a minister, and also kept advocating the united front idea. See César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 2, p. 45.

⁵⁹ *Protokoll des siebenten Parteitages der DSAP*, held in Karlovy Vary 17.8.1929 (Prague: Verlag des Parteivorstandes der DSAP, 1929), pp. 44-45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

These statements indicate that the leadership's strategy for pre-election propaganda adhered to the essence of Social Democratic unity front and continued to shun any Communist-related impulses. Because German and Czech leaders went so far in this direction their prestige was at stake and would have suffered had they failed to lead the party into the coalition.

The left wing of the ČSDS undoubtedly would have enjoyed a rise in prestige, had the Czechoslovak party not joined the government. The left-oriented Social Democratic newspaper *Nová svoboda* (New freedom) reported on the debate over coalition politics, and spoke for the side that eschewed participation. It contained articles by writers who claimed, for instance, that a Social Democratic party in the cabinet would lose strength because the government supported the capitalist system, or in other words "unemployment politics." A downturn in the system meant great hardship for the masses. Since this problem was bound to worsen, they said, those out of work would be more susceptible to Communist propaganda, enlarging the KSČ and delaying the final consolidation of socialism under the leadership of Social Democracy.

This line of reasoning did not stop some of the more conservative voices within the ČSDS from thinking that *Nová svoboda* was too prone to Communist influence; and they felt the party should keep this tendency under control.

Parliamentary deputy Jan Koudelka, for example, attempted to get party chairman Hampl to regulate the paper, and "authoritatively decide on its future direction".⁶¹ Hampl's method for maintaining control apparently was not so direct. By guiding the party back into the government he effectively isolated and regulated its leftist elements.

It seems likely that in 1929 the moderate leadership of each Social Democratic party would have been quite concerned with controlling its left wing, which in that year expanded. This resulted as a fierce struggle for leadership of the KSC came to a tortured conclusion, and many members of the losing faction, both Czechs and Germans among them, were expelled from the party. Some of the supporters of this opposition clique, who incidentally had been Social Democrats before the 1920 schism, now returned to their former parties. On the Czech side this included powerful individuals such as the lawyer and trade union official Bohuslav Ečer, who were now ready and able to exert a considerable influence over Social Democratic organization and politics.⁶² Ečer was leader of the Communist party's rightist opposition group in Brno, and customarily advocated working with Social Democrats in labor matters. The Social

⁶¹ Ústav TGM, Fond politické strany, carton 4. 16.9.1930 report to President Masaryk of conversations with Koudelka.

⁶² Jacques Rupnik, *Histoire du Parti communiste tchécoslovaque* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1981), p. 88. For the harsh disputes between the KSC and the affiliated Communist unions see McDermott, *The Czech Red Unions*.

Democratic leadership was wary of him, for Ečer never expressly declared whether he intended to cooperate with them, or subvert their authority by dealing directly with Social Democratic workers.⁶³

In 1930 the leadership of both parties must have considered that the character of the threat from the left had changed in the last three years. The KSČ, according to the results of the parliamentary election, had lost some of its strength and influence among the masses. That party's fratricidal conflicts of course had taken a toll, but Social Democratic rhetoric most often promoted its program of cooperation and the resulting practical, concrete advantages for workers as the main reason for the Communist decline. Undoubtedly the party leaders believed this to be the case; they congratulated themselves on establishing cooperation and pledged to continue.

This was necessary because the threat was still present. The KSČ had received, after all, some thirty percent of the working-class vote and in some areas, such as the mainly German districts of Česká Lípa and Karlovy Vary, its support had increased.⁶⁴ Social Democratic leaders could note approvingly that their parties were now larger,⁶⁵ but they also knew that this influx was left-

⁶³ Ústav TGM, Fond politické strany, carton 161.

⁶⁴ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 96.

⁶⁵ The ČSDS for example now had 3,833 local party organizations, an increase of over 800 in three years. Horák, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party," p. 63.

oriented. This of course presented the potential for change within the movement, and the leadership certainly wished to have the greatest influence over the political course.

An unchanging focus on the Communist threat is evident in Social Democratic publications and activities in 1930. The leadership of the DSAP, for example, published a speaking guide (*Redeanleitung*) on various topics for its officials. For the matter of municipal administration, the guidebook taught speakers how to react when voters asked if perhaps there were not industrial areas in which Social Democrats and Communists together could build a working-class majority and represent this population's interests. The message to be featured, according to the wishes of the party, was that Communists were under instructions only to fight against Social Democrats by waging a smear campaign, and that such a party was unsuitable for serious community political work:

Communists in the municipal chambers are at best pointless ballast, an obstacle for effective work. [Their] municipal politics reveals more clearly than anything else the hypocrisy of the Communist united front tactics, and opens the eyes of the workers to the fact that only through Social Democracy is it possible to combine the power of the workers.⁶⁶

The party thus continued to stress the notion that its work was productive and far superior to that of the ineffective, impractical revolutionists. This made its policy of

⁶⁶ *Klassenkampf um die Gemeinden* (Bodenbach [Podmokly], Czechoslovakia: Parteivorstand der DSAP, 1930), pp. 12-13.

participation in the coalition appear in the best possible light.

For the ČSDS the biggest event of 1930 was its statewide congress in Prague in September. The party used this occasion to further its attack on the Communists. When the rhetoric of the congress did not belittle what it called the worthlessness of their ineffective policies, it portrayed the Communists as a dangerous element that could bring about only destruction and misery for the working class.

For example, just prior to the congress Prague had been the scene of four days of violent ethnic conflicts. Street riots, beatings, and the destruction of German and Jewish property followed the showing of German-language films.⁶⁷ A representative of the Prague district asserted to the congress delegates that the Communists, "working hand in hand with Czech fascists, cooperating for chaos," deserved the blame.⁶⁸ When Rudolf Bechyně spoke, he emphasized the

⁶⁷ One of these "offensive" films was *Der unsterbliche Lump* (The immortal tramp), an innocuous portrait of rural life in Austria, in which one scene depicted a wall map of Styria. The furor erupted because of a contemporary, well-publicized incident in which a businessman from Styria had insulted Czech military honor by referring to some Legionnaires as "dastardly dogs" (*Die Tschechen sind feige Hunde*). See Nancy Wingfield, "When Film Became National: 'Talkies' and the Anti-German Demonstrations of 1930 in Prague", in *Austrian History Yearbook* (forthcoming 1998).

⁶⁸ *Protokol XVI řádného sjezdu ČSDS (Protocol of the 16th regular congress)* (Prague, 1930), p. 70.

The actual cause of the xenophobic violence was the recent expressions of extreme nationalism in Germany, especially the electoral successes of the Nazis. Those who

principle that "we want above all else order in this state," for Social Democrats believed that all episodes of disorder created the potential for a dictatorship. Vojtěch Dundr boasted that the party had toppled the KSC^Ě from its perch and was striving to meet the fascist challenge.⁶⁹ Dundr reiterated the standard call to fight the reaction "whether from the right or the left."

Speaking for the Socialist International, František Soukup hammered home the point that the Soviet Union continued with its aim to bring about a Communist regime throughout Europe. Because it viewed Social Democracy as the main obstacle to this goal, he said, Moscow had not stopped directing all of its actions toward the destruction of the international movement,

for it is convinced that the open path to civil war and the resulting worldwide victory of the Soviets is over our dead bodies. Communist parties in European states are nothing more than the instruments of this destruction, paid for and maintained by the Russians.

Soukup hurled back at the Communists their assertion that the reformist parties were in reality "social fascists" with his own denunciation of communism as "nothing but fascism turned inside out."⁷⁰

provoked the violence most likely wished to harm the prestige of President Masaryk and Foreign Minister Edward Beneš, and goad the German ministers into quitting. See F. Gregory Campbell, *Confrontation in Central Europe* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 217-18.

⁶⁹ For Bechyně's speech see *Protokol XVI řádného sjezdu*, pp. 40-42; for Dundr's remarks see p. 34.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

Thus the rhetoric of the congress equated and condemned behavior at the extremes of the political spectrum. It also, unsurprisingly, celebrated the cooperation that party leaders held up as the basis for constructive, practical work. For example, as a guest speaker DSAP secretary Siegfried Taub greeted the delegates and praised the efforts that had resulted in coalition participation, for the betterment of workers.

Referring to the Prague riots and to recent expressions of nationalist fervor and authoritarianism in other European states (Italian fascism, the installation of the "colonels" regime in Poland that ruthlessly suppressed its opposition), Taub praised "our Czech comrades" for their dedication to controlling and helping to diminish nationalist excesses. He pointed to the new program which the party was to implement at this congress, stating that its value for better relations between Germans and Czechs was immense.⁷¹

The portion of the new program to which Taub referred incorporated the demand for cultural autonomy for minorities. It basically repeated the resolution adopted at the party's 1927 congress, whereby certain bodies elected by the members of each minority would be given the power to administer, and possibly control, its social and cultural

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

institutions.⁷² The conviction of the ČSDS to promote such autonomy was highly satisfying to the German party.⁷³

The congress also approved of the party's entry into government. To those who required an explanation for this policy, one that some Social Democrats at home and abroad doubted in 1930, party leaders presented a thesis which demonstrated that they were not going to jettison the Marxist ideology that had underpinned the movement so far. They stated that capitalism had come to the point where the bourgeoisie could not rule alone, and socialists were not yet strong enough to rule by themselves. The power of these two camps now offset each other and their fundamental disparities, if the Social Democrats stayed in opposition, would lead to static conditions of gridlock (*přeslapování na místě*) and render the parliament's work fruitless. This would be fertile ground for the anti-democratic arguments of fascism, the party leaders emphasized.⁷⁴ The fascist threat being uppermost in the minds of those on the left, it seems as if this message was best suited for consumption by the party's left wing. To make the policy even more palatable, the program emphasized that government participation was just a tactical move and was not the final

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁷³ See J. W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973), pp. 81-82; Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁴ See Zdeněk Kojecký, *Československá sociální demokracie včera a dnes* (Czechoslovak Social Democracy yesterday and today) (Brno: Knihovna Zár, 1946), pp. 104, 109.

goal of the party. This met with the approval of the left, who were determined that "a real, genuine socialist democracy and a new organization of society is our final goal."⁷⁵

The rhetoric of the congress obviously dealt with the seriousness of a growing fascist threat. Because of this, and the apparently waning strength of the KSČ, it would be fairly easy to conclude that, at the end of 1930, party leaders were most concerned with their enemies on the right. This outlook, however, would severely downplay those elements within the party that were opposed to its moderate leadership, and of all Social Democrats were closest to agreeing with the notion of a united front of all working-class parties, including the Communist.

At the DSAP congress in Teplice (northern Bohemia) in October 1930, party leaders also emphasized the tactical nature of coalition participation. Ludwig Czech, for example, said that this policy was in accordance with economic and social conditions and with those of domestic and international politics. He drew attention to the practical value of his work as a cabinet minister:

We can look at what has been accomplished in the last ten months and say that measured against what we would like, it's a drop in the bucket. But measured against what the bourgeois government of the past four years did

⁷⁵ *Nová doba*, 21.8.1930. This was a left-oriented Social Democratic newspaper.

[for workers], it towers like a Himalayan mountain.⁷⁶

Czech also warned that the party had to play coalition politics in order to counter the serious threat from fascism. "The world is an army camp full of dynamite," he declared, mentioning that the fascist wave was spreading in Germany, Austria, and had swirled through Prague during the recent riots. Similarly to the rhetoric of the ČSDS congress, Czech's statements were useful for countering the leftist impulses within the party that emanated from members such as Richard Reitzner. At Teplice and at other party congresses Reitzner spoke fervently in opposition to government participation.⁷⁷

Opposition arose not only because some members stuck to their Marxist principles, however. The leadership of the DSAP was well aware that the membership expected nationality questions to be among the top concerns of the party. If they were not fully cognizant of this, there were speakers at the congress who forcefully reminded them that some German workers felt that their minority status resulted in oppression and suffering.⁷⁸ The party leaders knew that the Nazi party in Czechoslovakia had increased its strength after the 1929 election (having now 12 parliamentary delegates, up from 10), applying pressure to the movement from the right. The leaders dealt with these problems by

⁷⁶ *Prager Presse*, 18.10.1930.

⁷⁷ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 111.

⁷⁸ *Sozialdemokrat*, 16.10.1930.

asserting that participation in the government was the best remedy for German grievances. Wenzel Jaksch, a younger member of the party's executive committee (who would go on to become party chairman in 1938), had built a reputation on his concern for the national question. Jaksch declared that an effective solution was a historic necessity for the state. He appeared mindful of opposition from both wings of the party: he said that those who decried government participation from their basic Marxism were dogmatic and outdated; and party leaders had the courage to bear any criticism that they were selling out their nation. Was it not better, asked Jaksch, to confront and dispatch the opponent than to voluntarily walk off the playing field?⁷⁹

The program for cooperation launched at Smíchov carried the two parties through a successful joint campaign in opposition to the policies of the bourgeois coalition, and through their coordinated attack on the Communist threat. Their electoral successes in 1928 and 1929 and the corresponding loss of strength for the KSC^Ě led party leaders to the conclusion that cooperation was largely responsible for this pleasant news, that obviously it had great benefits to bestow on them, and that it would be highly desirable to maintain it.

⁷⁹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 16.10.1930. See Martin K. Bachstein, *Wenzel Jaksch und die sudetendeutsche Sozialdemokratie* (Munich and Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1974), pp. 17-35, for this young leader's political activities during the 1920s.

The parties' decision to enter the government after the 1929 election was due to a number of factors, and the maintenance of their united front policy was one of the uppermost. Party leaders still must have considered that this policy was useful to offset and diminish a threat from the left. However, while in 1927 the threat was almost exclusively advanced by the KSC, that party's internecine conflict resulted in the 1929 purges that weakened it, and downgraded it as the only true source for the Social Democratic leadership's vigilance. Their ranks were enlarged by those purge victims, and this group contained left-oriented activists, who in many cases advocated the old idea of the working-class front. Their motivation for this may have been due to their basic principles, or perhaps to a desire to regain influence over the politics of the KSC.

The actual reasons of course made no difference to the Social Democratic leadership. The German side, much more than the Czech, had to take nationalist protests against its decisions into consideration. Nonetheless, the concern on both sides was to maintain control of the party and prevent a drift to the left. To have remained as opposition parties would have supported such a drift. Since they were mindful of the strength of the leftward impulse, they advertised the line of reasoning that coalition politics was being undertaken only for tactical purposes. This afforded the option of leaving the coalition, if it appeared shrewd to do

so. The parties did not exercise this option during the 1930s. Why they chose not to is a central question, which succeeding chapters will discuss.

Chapter III: Coalition Politics and Economic Depression

During the period from 1930-1933 the Social Democratic leadership above all else wanted to exercise the power of the labor vote in the parliamentary process. These leaders felt that the means to achieve gains for their membership was through participation in government.

Although the top party executives viewed fascism as a serious danger to the labor movement in Europe, and warnings of fascism's hazards to society were a staple of their rhetoric, they did not view this anti-democratic ideology as a dire threat to the working class in Czechoslovakia, even after the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933. In the leaders' opinion, a decisive majority of the population supported democratic ideals, as they were personified by the generally revered figure of the "President-Liberator," Thomas Masaryk. Having this type of social environment meant that fascism would have had to take over the country from outside. Social Democratic leaders at this time felt that the state's alliance system, with France in the leading position, was a safeguard against invasion from neighboring countries.

The greatest threat to the plans of party leaders was therefore from within, in the form of the more radical, leftist opposition that disapproved of coalition politics. Cooperation in parliament and outside of it, in the form of joint activities among Czechs and Germans, continued to serve the plans of party leaders. Official rhetoric continued to highlight the program of unity, although the

message to the working class had changed since 1928. In the earlier period the campaign for solidarity was useful primarily against the united front propaganda of the KSČ, and stressed democracy as the only realistic path to achieve goals. By 1933, the issue of democracy had not been forgotten, but the message now included references to "subversives" who would destroy Social Democratic unity by withdrawing their party from the coalition. The ideal of unity became something of a sacred cow that should not be harmed. This concept supported the notion that both parties had to stay together in the government.

The uppermost leadership of both Social Democratic parties met in Prague in January 1931, in order to prepare proposals for legislative action. With the effects of the economic depression already threatening the working class in Czechoslovakia, party leaders naturally highlighted measures intended to alleviate the workers' greatest concerns. The advisory which they submitted to premier František Udržal first of all recommended extending the existing nourishment programs for poor children and the unemployed. Figuring that the state itself should do more to stimulate jobs, both parties expressed dissatisfaction with the government's public works program. Social Democrats promoted the basic idea that more exports equaled more jobs, and both parties favored increased commerce with neighboring states. Party leaders thus acknowledged the inauguration of talks on

trading pacts with Yugoslavia, and hoped for positive results. Their communiqué to the prime minister concluded with the statement that they considered no less important the opportunity for a trade pact with Hungary.¹ The creation of larger trading units of course appealed to the internationalist economic theory that the movement embraced. Within a short time, the Social Democrats would have a chance to comment on another, similar proposal; however it had far greater implications for Czechoslovakia and indeed for most of Europe.

In March 1931 the governments of Germany and Austria announced their desire to establish a customs union between their countries. The announcement was sudden and surprising; it caused immediate and strongly negative reaction from European capitals.² While Germany and Austria declared that the plan was purely a beneficial economic measure, other governments detected a political intent, namely to effect an eventual *Anschluß*. This was forbidden under the terms of the Paris Peace Treaty; and Great Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia had reaffirmed this ban when they concluded the Geneva Protocol in 1922, which provided Austria with financial aid. Paris

¹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 21.1.1931.

² On the customs union see Edward W. Bennett, *Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, 1931* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1962), chapter 3; F. G. Stambrook, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Project of 1931: A Study of German Methods and Motives," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 21 (1961): 15-44.

and Prague moved quickly to block the proposed customs union, insisting that the Permanent International Court at The Hague should determine the legality of the plan. This tribunal eventually declared the union to be in violation of treaty law.

As one may well imagine, the customs union plan raised tensions in Czechoslovakia, as support for the idea tended to separate across national lines. Foreign Minister Edward Beneš addressed the Chamber of Deputies on 23 April regarding the proposal, expressing strong disapproval of its probable impact on his state.³ Beneš, a member of the Czechoslovak National Socialists, expressed the notion prevailing among Czechs, that the customs union would inexorably lock the smaller economies of Central Europe into an orbit revolving around Berlin, resulting in German hegemony over the region.

While Czech politicians and commentators condemned the customs union, most Germans in Czechoslovakia supported it. Nationalists, of course, championed any move that seemed to bolster the unification of Germans. Although some German industrialists feared the plan's effects, which virtually would have guaranteed a smaller market for their products, others hoped for its approval. They realized that Czechoslovakia would eventually have had no choice but to

³ The speech was published as "The Austro-German Customs Union Project" (Prague: Orbis, 1931).

enter into the agreement itself, leading to a potentially larger market, plus an increased importance in political matters for German-speaking society.

The German Agrarian party, as a coalition member, moderated its approval of the union in order not to clash with official government policy. The German Social Democrats, however, openly endorsed the idea of eliminating customs barriers. Although Beneš described how badly the Czechoslovak economy would be affected, certainly leading to greater unemployment, the DSAP supported the plan as an expression of fundamental socialist principles.⁴ The party pointed out that the Socialist International favored greater international cooperation, and suggested that Czechoslovakia should indeed join the customs union and actively participate in developing a Central European trading area.

As there are no internal party memoranda, personal correspondence, or diaries of party leaders available for this period, it is not possible to determine whether the economic principle provided a screen for nationalist impulses that were behind the German Social Democrats' support of the plan. However, party leaders certainly were aware of its political implications, not the least of which was a challenge to French prestige. Germans often protested that Czechoslovakia slavishly followed France's foreign

⁴ *Sozialdemokrat*, 9.4.1931.

policy, to the detriment of the state's economic relations with its neighbors.⁵

With so much vehemence directed against the customs union, the DSAP's solid endorsement exposed it to attacks. Why did party leaders think it was worth drawing the wrath of the Czech politicians and public? If it was in order to cater to nationalist sentiment, then this contradicts the leadership's perception of the German population's mood: The party anticipated that it would maintain its share of the vote in the upcoming municipal elections. The leaders reckoned that there would be an increase in nationalist sentiment in the general population, brought on by hard times and stimulated by the recent successes of the Nazi party in Germany. However, in Czechoslovakia this only would mean a split of the vote between the domestic Nazi party (*DNSAP, Deutsche nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*) and the German Nationals (*DNP, Deutsche Nationalpartei*). Thus there was no overwhelming need for the Social Democrats themselves to harden their national line.⁶

The DSAP leadership knew that its position would find favor with German workers who felt aggrieved by the policies of the Czechoslovak parties, particularly the Agrarians.

⁵ *Tätigkeitsbericht des Klubs der Abgeordneten und Senatoren DSAP vom 16.9.1930 bis 16.7.1931* (Bodenbach/Podmokly: Verlag des Parteivorstandes der DSAP, 1931), p. 10.

⁶ Carl Heller's analysis, as reported to President Masaryk on 27.5.1931. Archív TGM.

Even more importantly, support for the customs union also served the party nicely in its propaganda battle against the Communists, who had reacted negatively to the idea. Social Democrats in Germany (and in Austria) supported the union, and the Communists there had attacked them as partners in the Brüning government's alleged plan to establish a fascist dictatorship. The KSČ echoed this interpretation.⁷ The DSAP thus was able, once again, to contrast itself with the Communists, condemning the latter's seeming unwillingness to support effective action and development for the benefit of the working class.

By supporting the call for a customs union, therefore, the DSAP had just about all the bases covered. It opposed the strongest bourgeois party, the Czechoslovak Agrarians, whose interest in high tariffs harmed workers; it acquitted itself well in the eyes of German workers, whether or not they were nationally-minded; and scored a propaganda victory over the KSČ. What effect then did its position have on its Czech comrades?

The ČSDS joined its counterpart in supporting the Austro-German plan, but the Czech leadership must have had a much more difficult time arriving at this decision. It naturally was mindful of its image within the Czech community, and hated giving other parties an opportunity to

⁷ César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 2, pp. 83-85.

stigmatize it as traitorous.⁸ Minutes for the meetings of the party presidium during this time are not available, so no account of the internal debate is possible. However, the Czech leaders were determined to resist political integration. The International convened a meeting of delegates of parties that were concerned about this matter in April 1931. Lev Winter, attending as a representative of the ČSDS, rejected each recommendation for such a union that was put forth.⁹ The Czechoslovak party required an explicit acknowledgment that an economic plan would not lead to political unification. Only when the International was able to draft a resolution which accented the economic principle was the ČSDS willing to agree with it. In its public rhetoric the party reiterated this viewpoint.¹⁰ The ČSDS stated that the government was not doing enough for the economy, and that the customs union would make the ČSR develop an active trade policy. Both Social Democratic parties, then, were united in their demand for bringing

⁸ The party sometimes felt the need to defend itself against this charge. It declared, for example, that as it endeavored to protect the interests of the working class through the realization of beneficial trade pacts, "[we] never forgot the vital concerns of the republic, the necessity for the defense of its freedom and independence." *Šest let činnosti pro pracující lid* (Six years of activity on behalf of working people) (Prague: ČSDS, 1935), p. 7.

⁹ Otfried Dankelmann, "Die Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale und das Projekt einer deutsch-österreichischen Zollunion 1931", in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 34/2 (1986), p. 138.

¹⁰ *Právo lidu*, 12.5.1931.

about the closer economic cooperation of Central European states.¹¹

The ČSDS may not have been as enthusiastic as the DSAP was about this issue, but its decision to remain in close cooperation was an important consideration. The Czech side looked forward to the municipal elections, to be held in late September, in anticipation of favorable changes in the coalition.¹² Election strategy called for unified candidate lists, and now was hardly the time to display a lack of solidarity. Furthermore, the ČSDS could base its decision on tactical considerations similar to those of its German comrades. An opportunity to oppose both the Agrarians and the Communists was certainly tempting.

During the summer months the leaders of both parties met to construct the platform they would present to the public before the election. All demands were predictably geared toward securing improvements for workers. At the international level, the parliamentary clubs of both parties would work for universal disarmament, cancellation of war debts, reduction of tariffs, and the adoption of international agreements to regulate industrial activities. This included a standard six-hour working day (without a reduction in earnings, of course), which would increase employment. Without relaxing their vigilance against the

¹¹ *Tätigkeitsbericht des Klubs DSAP*, p. 11.

¹² Archív TGM, 27.5.1931.

Bolsheviks, they suggested that the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union would benefit trade.

These measures clearly reflected the struggle against the bourgeois parties, and the story was the same in the realm of domestic politics. The Social Democrats advocated a reduction of bureaucratic expenditures, especially in the Ministry of National Defense, in keeping with their crusade against militarism. A shorter length of compulsory military service accompanied this. In order to demonstrate that they would not selfishly demand reduced budgets only for ministries controlled by other parties, they suggested that reform was necessary in Railways, administered by ČSDS functionary Rudolf Bechyně, a department which required massive annual state outlays.

One of the main Social Democratic ideas for stimulating the economy was a reconsideration of an export credit law that parliament had passed in its last session. This would have more than doubled the amount of money available in a fund for the businesses that could take advantage of it. Since many industries in German areas were geared toward exports, German workers stood to gain from this. The platform included demands for increased state support to stimulate the building trades, additional care for the unemployed, and government control of industry's ability to discharge workers.

Another demand certain to be popular with their constituency was for stricter control and enforcement of tax collections from industrialists and the owners of large estates. A common perception of the time was that these individuals were skillfully evading their tax burden.

The Social Democrats also emphasized their resistance against repeal of the law for the protection of tenants; this measure served to keep rents at approximately their pre-War level. Two Czechoslovak bourgeois parties, the Agrarians and the National Democrats, aggressively led the effort to strike down the law. Many members of these parties were large owners of urban property, and wished to secure greater income from these investments. By drawing public attention to the behavior of the Agrarians, the Social Democrats hoped to line up enough votes to effect changes in the government, perhaps even forcing the Agrarians to go into opposition.¹³ This would have been a great triumph for the policy of government participation, opposed by the left wing of each party.

¹³ U.S. National Archives (College Park, Maryland), *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Czechoslovakia, 1910-1944*, file 860f.00, reel 14, documents 324-26, 335, and 343 contain some observations of Social Democratic activity for the 1931 pre-election period. They are part of an array of analyses and reports of political activity that American diplomats sent back to their superiors in Washington. See also *Šest let činnosti pro pracující lid*, pp. 13-14, 18-21, 28; and *Tätigkeitsbericht des Klubs DSAP*, pp. 29-45.

Although the Agrarians remained in the coalition, the municipal elections held in the autumn of 1931 were satisfying to both Social Democratic parties, as they saw their totals increase from the general election of 1929. After the election a state-wide conference of ČSDS local delegates (*zastupitelstvo*) took place in Prague. The party newspaper reported that it was an occasion when the delegates offered their "full confidence" in the basic politics of the leadership and the activities of representatives in parliament.¹⁴ Yet the newspaper account states that some delegates felt that the party should do more to "effectively propagate the ideals of socialism among the masses," indicating the existence of vigilance in the matter of adhering to traditional ideologies.

Both parties drew benefits from cooperating in the election, as joint candidate lists secured more seats for Social Democrats in areas of mixed nationalities than would have separate ones. Sometimes this practice favored one nationality, so that for example a German rather than a Czech would take the seat on a local school board.¹⁵ Inevitably there were national-minded individuals in a

¹⁴ *Právo lidu*, 22.11.1931.

¹⁵ The nationalist newspapers could be counted on to report these incidents. When the parties had separate lists, these papers attributed it to the righteous indignation of patriots who would not sell out to the other nation. For example, the Czechoslovak National Democrats' paper, *Národní listy*, on 8.11.1931 pointed out that ČSDS officials in Stod, near Plzeň, did not join election lists with the Germans.

certain locality who disagreed with this; thus there were cases on both sides when the local party apparatus, with the central leadership's approval, chose to submit a list separately from the other Social Democratic party.

During this time of great economic dislocations, which inexorably led to greater tensions between Czechs and Germans, there were few instances when the Social Democratic parties had to break ranks due to national considerations. The most prominent incident of this kind resulted from the *Volkssport* trial of 1932-33.¹⁶

The trial was an effort by the state to crack down on the radicalization of German politics. Social misery caused by the economic crisis had driven thousands of Germans, primarily young people, into the DNSAP. Between 1930 and 1932 that party's membership more than doubled, from 30,000 to better than 61,000.¹⁷ Having lost faith in the parliamentary system, these young have-nots pushed the program of the DNSAP in an even more strongly anti-democratic direction.

In the summer of 1932 the government displayed its determination to control this trend by indicting seven

¹⁶ For information on the trial see Ronald M. Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem, 1933-1938. Volkstumpolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1975) pp. 52-56; and Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, pp. 135-40.

¹⁷ Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem*, p. 52. By comparison, the DSAP had 81,000 members in 1930, declining to 52,000 by late 1933. See Kürbis, *Chronik*, pp. 69, 72.

members of the DNSAP youth organization, the *Volkssport*, on charges of treason. The court which held jurisdiction also requested that four DNSAP deputies stand trial for their alleged participation, so that the Chamber of Deputies would have to waive their parliamentary immunity to prosecution.

When the Chamber finally acted upon the request in February 1933, all Czechoslovak parties voted to lift the deputies' immunity, but the DSAP abstained. The party's motive for this was no doubt to avoid voting against Germans, even those who were hostile to its program, until it could sort out the ramifications of Adolf Hitler's very recent seizure of power in Germany. Hitler's triumph had created great excitement among the Germans in the ČSR, and the German parties in the coalition were under attack from those in opposition, as well as from the KSČ.¹⁸

Many Czechs severely criticized the DSAP for abstaining from the vote. The chauvinistic National Democrats went so far as to present the prime minister with an ultimatum: they would resign from the coalition unless he required the German Social Democrats to apologize for their failure to vote.¹⁹

¹⁸ See the report of Dr. Walter Koch, Germany's ambassador to the ČSR, collected in *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte aus Prag. Innenpolitik und Minderheitenprobleme in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1991), part IV, pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ State Department Records, file 860f.00/343, reel 14, 25.2.1933.

This demand by their class opponents helped the Czech Social Democrats get out of the dilemma forced upon them by the abstention. As a loyal Czechoslovak party, they should have joined in censuring the DSAP, and no doubt there were many party members who would have done so. However, the protocol required by their position of solidarity with their German comrades made this awkward, to say the least. The aggressive posture of the National Democrats, however, allowed the ČSDS to override national considerations and elevate those of working-class unity.

Furthermore, the Czech Social Democrats were quite aware of the pressure the DSAP was under from clamoring nationalists. They were trying to help their comrades' position in this area by carrying out their pledge to support German cultural autonomy.²⁰ They were understanding when Ludwig Czech, in his polemics against German National Socialists, sometimes put a nationalist spin on his work as Minister of Social Welfare.²¹ Thus the

²⁰ Support for separate linguistic groups in local and district education councils appeared prominently in the 1932 education reform legislation prepared by Minister of Education Ivan Déřer, a Slovak member of the ČSDS. For the text of Déřer's work see the *Central European Observer*, 1.1.1933, pp. 5-6.

²¹ See for example Czech's speech in response to an attack from DNSAP deputy Rudolf Jung in October 1932, in Bachstein, *Wenzel Jaksch und die sudetendeutsche Sozialdemokratie*, p. 42. Czech declared that by providing social care for unemployed Germans, and particularly for poor children, "...we have accomplished not only social, but also national work, in the noblest sense of the word."

leadership of the ČSDS issued no special judgment against the DSAP's abstention.

Party leaders much preferred to launch attacks against their main nemeses, the Czechoslovak Agrarians and the Communists. The tragic occurrences in Fryvaldov (today Jeseník, in Silesia) during October 1931 gave them the opportunity to condemn both at the same time. The coal-mining industry in this German district had experienced a sharp decline in recent months, with a corresponding lowering of wages for those miners who were able to hang onto their jobs. Communist agitation led to a violent demonstration. State police fired their weapons into a crowd of workers, killing several of them. In the name of both Czech and German Social Democrats, ČSDS deputy Josef Stivín spoke out in parliament first of all against the excesses of the Communists,

...who do not intend to help the suffering people, but rather victimize them through agitation for their own dark aims, [and who] are indifferent to the misfortune toward which they are hustling workers.

Because the police were responsible to Minister of the Interior Juraj Slávik, a Slovak member of the Czechoslovak Agrarians, Stivín also was able to condemn that party for its seemingly inhuman treatment of workers. This was a superb occasion for the Social Democrats to warn workers

that extremists on the left were as dangerous as the class enemy on the right.²²

When a mining strike broke out in the area of Most, northern Bohemia, in the spring of 1932 the Social Democrats teamed up to counter the action of Bolshevik agitation. While Communists tried to control joint conferences of trade unions that were affiliated with either the KSČ, ČSDS, or DSAP, the Social Democratic deputies worked jointly to present proposals for the nationalization of coal mines in Czechoslovakia.²³ Leaders of both parties, who also effectively directed the decisions of their affiliated union leadership, then accepted a compromise with mine owners. The agreement was concluded at the office of the Minister of Public Works, ČSDS functionary Dr. Lev Winter. Union leaders then succeeded in getting their members to return to work. Social Democrats had combined to undercut the Communist position both in the field and in parliament, where deputies again excoriated the "worthless" tactics of the KSČ.²⁴

²² An account of these events from the Communist point of view is presented in Oldřich Jaroš and Vera Jarošová, *Fryvaldovská stávka* (The Fryvaldov strike) (Ostrava, Czechoslovakia: Slezský ústav ČSAV, 1961); see pp. 66-67 for Stivín's speech in the Chamber of Deputies.

²³ *Právo lidu*, 31.3.1932.

²⁴ *Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích Národního shromáždění*, 14.4.1932. For a Communist treatment see Lubomír Vebr, *Mostecká stávka* (The Most strike) (Prague: Státní Nakladatelství Politické Literatury, 1955).

During this period the leadership of the parties dueled not only with the bourgeoisie, the authoritarian right, and the KSC, but with the left-wing elements in the movement itself that disapproved of Social Democratic coalition politics. This contingent was more geared toward the united front idea in opposition to bourgeois parties and the extreme right.

This issue was of such importance within both parties that leaders constantly felt the pulse of the membership and issued regular statements about the progression of the internal struggle. Most party newspapers highlighted unity, not dissension within the membership. Toward the end of 1931, for example, the conference of ČSDS regional representatives, comprising 156 members from throughout the state, met in Prague and signaled full faith in the leadership, including its coalition politics.²⁵ The regional directorate (*župní zastupitelstvo*) of the party's stronghold in Plzeň soon afterward stated that "we are completely in agreement with the basic tactics of the leadership of our party."²⁶ At the beginning of 1932 a DSAP conference similarly passed a resolution of approval for Ludwig Czech's role as a government minister.²⁷

In a December 1931 party conference in Moravia the ČSDS leadership emphatically rejected creating ties with the KSC.

²⁵ *Právo lidu*, 22.11.1931.

²⁶ *Nová doba* (Plzeň), 26.1.1932.

²⁷ *Sozialdemokrat*, 7.1.1932; *Prager presse*, 8.1.1932.

Chairman Antonín Hampl denounced recent Communist ideas for a united front of not only workers but also farmers in the ČSR. "There can be no cooperation with that party," he stated, "unless it refrains from undermining the work of the socialist parties (ČSDS, DSAP, and the ČNS) and abandons the insanely hazardous course that it continues to lead to this day!"²⁸ This message accentuated the party's coalition efforts. The resolution adopted by the delegates to the conference appealed to working men and women "not to fall in with foolhardy (*hazardér*) Bolsheviks, who would misuse the penury of the unemployed for their demagoguery." The resolution referred to the events at Fryvaldov as an example. This document also paid appropriate homage to the solidarity that Czech and German Social Democrats were enjoying.²⁹

Joint activities between the nationalities were commonplace at this time. Often the leadership could use these events to advertise support for its position. In February 1932, for instance, both parties and their affiliated trade unions organized an anti-military conference in Prague, in conjunction with the international disarmament and peace conference then being held in Geneva. This was a well-coordinated action, with the women's and youth groups of both parties also in attendance. The ČSDS

²⁸ SÚA MVP 225-868-4, p. 239, police report of ČSDS conference 17.12.1931 in Ostrava.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-43.

newspaper reported that a small group of Communists also arrived, intending to disrupt the proceedings, but "noticeably overwhelmed by the weighty words of the speakers, did not dare to interject even one word."³⁰

For the DSAP this event was an opportunity to publicize both their close relationship with Czech comrades and tight discipline within the party. The leadership's organizational prowess in coordinating action throughout the levels of the movement demonstrated the latter. The party paper did not fail to announce this: In the course of assembling representatives to the conference and drafting a petition with demands that would be presented to prime minister Udržal, 464 meetings took place under the auspices of the DSAP. Attending them were meetings of 849 local party organizations, 1042 union organizations, 193 worker cooperatives, and 742 Social Democratic cultural organizations.³¹

The Czechoslovak party's educational group, *Dělnická akademie* (The workers' academy) habitually invited German Social Democrats to its functions. Bilingual DSAP functionaries such as Ludwig Czech and Siegfried Taub frequently appeared as guest lecturers for an educational program. This group also coordinated some activities with its DSAP counterpart, the *Sozialdemokratische Bildungstelle*.

³⁰ *Právo lidu*, 2.2.1932.

³¹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 5.2.1932.

In March 1932, for instance, both groups organized a large commemoration of Goethe's death 100 years earlier. The parties supplied speakers for the event; and the program also featured music and recitations of the poet's works.³²

In keeping with the desire for cooperation the leaders of both parties announced that they would meet regularly during 1932. The purpose for these joint consultations was to come up with solutions to the economic crisis. From newspaper accounts, however, it appears that these meetings largely were ineffectual. A meeting on 22 July, for example, produced only hackneyed statements of the "necessity for systematic procedures for the purpose of improving markets and industrial and agricultural production, boosting building activity, and strengthening investments." This meeting generated no imaginative ideas, but it was a good chance to jointly blame the bourgeois parties for impeding progress. The Social Democrats thus condemned the Czechoslovak and the German Agrarians for their "carelessness," charging that they had thwarted the approval of a law requiring employer contributions to an emergency unemployment fund.³³ The chairmen of the parties led another joint meeting on 13 September, with no appreciable difference in results.³⁴

³² SÚA MVP 225-870-7, report of 2.4.1932.

³³ *Sozialdemokrat*, 23.7.1932.

³⁴ SÚA MVP 225-870-7, report of 2.10.1932.

Party leaders met again on 22 September and jointly demanded "above all else planned adjustment and control of the economy." Their plan repeated earlier calls for the establishment of a 40-hour work week and a public works program for road building, water mains, and electrification projects.³⁵ The leadership offered nothing new with these ideas.

This meeting did produce signals that both parties were now willing to support the grain monopoly that had long been a desire of the Agrarian interests. This would protect farmers from falling prices for their products, but the corollary was that food prices went up. The Social Democrats stated that they wished to participate in the monopoly because farmers should not have to suffer, but even more so "to protect consumers from price-gouging." The working class would benefit from the regulation of prices, they declared, rather than letting usurious speculators hold sway. Additionally, this was a step toward the planned economy that theoretically was in the workers' interest. This rhetoric helped the leadership moderate the difficult news that the cost of living would have to increase, due to the necessity of compromising with the Agrarians at that time.

The parties sponsored joint meetings throughout 1932 and 1933; their purpose was to display solidarity and to

³⁵ *Právo lidu*, 24.9.1932.

protest against the allegedly anti-worker politics of the bourgeois parties. Since the Czechoslovak Agrarians were the strongest government party, they received most of the attention. After Hitler's seizure of power in Germany in 1933, these joint meetings stepped up the anti-fascist message, promoting democracy as the only friend to workers. In order to convince young Germans not to fall prey to the nationalist propaganda of the DNSAP, Social Democrats sometimes pointed out that the right wing of the Agrarians was willing to offer aid and comfort to German fascists, but only in order to destroy working-class unity. DSAP deputy Karl Kaufmann told his audiences wryly that the Nazis played up racial superiority, but their program contained nothing authentically German: they had borrowed the swastika from India, their four-year plan from bolshevist Russia, and the rest of their fascist ideas from Italy.³⁶

The meetings also served to undercut any leftward drift within the movement by reinforcing an anti-Communist message. The parties concentrated their efforts on areas such as Ostrava that were prone to radicalism; this region was sometimes called the "red ruby" of the International. In this climate a blatant, head-on assault against the Communists perhaps would have been met with stubborn resistance by a large segment of the population. The Social Democratic leadership was able in such a case to alter the

³⁶ SÚA MVP 225-868-3, pp. 60-61.

message, as it did for a joint rally in Ostrava on 2.8.1932. Instead of outright denunciation of the KSČ, the speakers devoted considerable attention to the recent execution of two Communists in Hungary, who were "deprived of their rights by a kangaroo court, victims of the white terror of the Horthy regime." These Social Democratic officials pointed out to the assembly of Czech and German workers that the only possibility for protection against similar "cruelty and terror" was the unity of the working class under the rubric of the democratic process. This was a demonstration of the necessity for supporting democracy, and by implication the leadership's participation in government.³⁷

When Czech and German women held joint meetings and conferences, they also emphasized that their parties were following the right path. A joint congress on the occasion of International Women's Day in March 1933 declared:

We proudly, and with love, avow that we are for international socialism [and] we proclaim our allegiance to [our] Social Democratic party, which is the instrument for its realization. Our manifestation today is above all a declaration for socialism and democracy and a sign of our faith in our party.³⁸

Confidence in the party leadership was high among Social Democratic women. They expected their leaders to protect them and their families from the ravages of capitalism and militarism. Women furthermore called upon their party to

³⁷ SÚA MVP 225-868-4, p. 123.

³⁸ *Právo lidu*, 9.3.1933.

fight against state laws that denied them the right to work, and the ban on abortion.

Social Democratic women, German as well as Czech, hailed the efforts of the Czech Social Democratic Minister of Justice, Alfred Meissner, to modify criminal penalties against abortion. These women objected to the law because it deprived them of the freedom to decide for themselves whether to bear children. They said that their choice in this vital matter was a condition necessary for "liberation." It was also a matter of class. Social Democrats maintained that in contrast to hard-pressed families, bourgeois women had the means for access to contraceptives. Should pregnancy occur, a well-off woman could enlist the services of a skilled and compliant physician. Working women, on the other hand, too often risked their health and even their lives in an abortion mill.

In joint meetings Social Democratic women thus supported Meissner's proposals to reform the law. They acknowledged that he was not leading a drive for complete rescission of the ban. However, they understood that this was because of strenuous opposition, particularly from the clerical parties, which prevented a more favorable outcome from prevailing. Thus these women expected no more than a realistic compromise on this important issue, just as Social

Democrats did with other political questions, as part of the democratic process that their party championed.³⁹

According to police reports, Communists often intruded into the joint Social Democratic meetings, demanding to address the assembly in order to rebut the statements of the reformist speakers. When refused this opportunity they resorted to shouting, in an attempt to disrupt the proceedings. Their agitation continued until either the crowd silenced them or removed them from the meeting place or, if a melee broke out, the police observer canceled the meeting for the purpose of maintaining public order.⁴⁰

Sometimes, however, Communists received permission to speak. If Social Democratic rhetoric was so stringently and thoroughly opposed to the revolutionary message, how could this have occurred? In these cases it is possible that the meeting chairmen may have decided to grant permission in order to avoid a disturbance and the frustration of the subsequent police intervention. Yet it also seems likely that this happened because there was some sympathy with the anti-government message preached by the revolutionists,

³⁹ SÚA MVP 225-868-4, pp. 77-79.

⁴⁰ Party newspapers usually reported these disturbances. With satisfaction they noted when Communists were arrested and tried for disturbing public order, as resulted from a party-union meeting in Teplice on 20.3.1932. *Sozialdemokrat*, 22.3.1932.

whether among some local party officials, party members in attendance, or both.

For example, both Social Democratic parties in Nový Bohumín (Ostrava region) organized a joint parade and political rally in March 1932. The police observer's report states that 1200 listeners filled the hall "to the last seat," and 300 people had to stand outside. As the meeting got under way some German and Czech Communists marched to the front and demanded to address the audience. After a brief huddle on stage the Social Democrats agreed to let them go on after the scheduled speakers, who predictably attacked the Agrarians and supported Social Democratic efforts to ease the harsh effects of unemployment.

Presenting their views in both German and Czech, the Communists then launched a long and untiring attack against the capitalist system and the Social Democrats who, by compromising with the bourgeoisie, were propping it up. Their tirades covered points both international in scope and also those close to home, such as their claim that Social Democrats had allowed the price of tobacco and matches to rise. They concluded by presenting, in both languages, a resolution for those workers present to vote upon. Most of the audience seems to have agreed with their points.⁴¹

The observer's report in fact indicates that approval for the Communists' message was nearly unanimous among the

⁴¹ SÚA MVP 225-868-4, pp. 191-93.

audience. These were indeed Social Democrats, for they had marched to the meeting hall directly upon finishing their parade. Communist adherents would not have participated in the march in such great numbers. Thus the anti-capitalist, anti-coalition point of view made sense to some German and Czech Social Democratic workers, giving the leaders of the parties reason to bolster the rhetoric promoting government participation.

The question remains, were local party officials aiding and abetting the intraparty opposition when they permitted Communists to speak? They knew the KSČ activists well enough to realize that, given any opportunity at all, Communists would blatantly condemn the Social Democratic leadership in the most intemperate terms. Furthermore, a workforce that felt imperiled by the economic crisis could have accepted the simplistic themes of this demagoguery, as apparently happened in Nový Bohumín. Thus from the party's standpoint it would have been logical in any case to risk cancellation of the meeting, and refuse to let revolutionary tirades invade the Social Democratic community. These local officials seem to have been content to utter the party line, in support of Ludwig Czech and the other Social Democratic ministers, while letting the Communists do the dirty work of spreading the anti-government message. The threat of cancellation gave them a handy excuse to defend themselves with against criticism of their decision.

Party leaders were plain enough with their decrees against dealing with Communists. When local activities seemed to run contrary to their wishes, they drew the logical conclusion, that opposition to their politics existed and had to be held in check.

The anti-Communist rhetoric of party leaders at this time was indeed strong. However, during this period there were many indications that the KSČ was performing poorly, so it is questionable why party executives devoted so much attention to a purported threat from the left.

Results from recent elections to factory committees and other posts, in which workers chose among candidates supported by different parties, showed that in most cases KSČ candidates were losers. For example, in October 1932 railway workers (an industry with a significant number of both German and Czech workers) selected representatives to shop steward (*důvěrník*) committees and to accident insurance boards. A slate of combined Czech and German Social Democrats was the clear winner, increasing its total from the last election in 1928. Candidates supported by the KSČ, however, lost more than a third of their previous votes.⁴²

Although membership in Communist unions had increased since the start of the Depression, they were still far short of the growth of Social Democratic unions, which in 1932 had more than ten times as many members as those affiliated with

⁴² SÚA MVP 225-870-7, p. 81.

the KSC.⁴³ At the sixth general congress of the KSC, held in May 1931, the party itself admitted that its organizational structure was seriously flawed, causing insufficient agitational work in factories.⁴⁴

Membership in the party itself is difficult to assess, since figures are available only from Communist sources. While these sources do indicate an increase in card-carrying members over the course of 1930-1933, from 30,000 to 72,000, it seems that Germans were not adding to the party's totals.⁴⁵ German Social Democrats, remarking on the ineptness and sterility of Communist policies, looked on with satisfaction as KSC organizations and affiliated unions in northwest Bohemia fell apart. In areas of traditional Social Democratic strength such as Cheb and Karlovy Vary, the DSAP's membership increased. However, when these Germans turned their backs on Communism they did not necessarily join the DSAP, many instead went over to the DNSAP or to the German Christian Social party.⁴⁶

To the Social Democratic leadership the KSC itself did not present the same threat as it had in the 1920s; Antonín Hampl, Ludwig Czech, and their cohorts did not fear that

⁴³ Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics*, p. 251.

⁴⁴ See Heinrich Kuhn, *Der Kommunismus in der Tschechoslowakei* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1965), p. 44. The party deemed it necessary to hold a special conference prior to its state-wide congress, to deal with the organizational problem. The conference generated a resolution, reprinted in Kuhn, pp. 197-218.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66; Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 108.

Communist propaganda was enticing workers away from the fold. Reformist leaders now dedicated themselves to maintaining discipline within their own parties, in order to control the left opposition that challenged participation in the government.

What form did this opposition take? A segment of the membership was dissatisfied with the political path that followed compromise with the bourgeois parties. These protesters claimed that when their leaders were conservative, the working class inevitably had to settle for less than its fair share. For example, at the ČSDS regional conference in Ostrava in November 1932, angry workers heaped scorn on the party leadership for following "trial-and-error politics." They asserted that the National Democrats, who had only one minister and 15 deputies, had greater influence in the government than did the whole socialist bloc. The party let the bourgeoisie grab the most important ministries, the protesters added. Unhappy voices chimed in with demands for "radical corrections" to this state of affairs. According to the police observers report of this and other such meetings, "thunderous applause" always greeted these stringent demands.⁴⁷

At this regional conference ČSDS officials managed to secure passage of a resolution which declared:

it is the responsibility of all members of the Social

⁴⁷ SÚA MVP 225-868-4, pp. 70-75.

Democratic movement in this area to help keep the working class, especially the youth, from falling under the sway of influences from the right, namely the bourgeois parties, and from the left, in the form of the Communist party. With their inappropriate tactics, the Bolsheviks only prepare workers to serve the parties of capitalism.

This expressed a real Social Democratic concern for the potential of young workers to stimulate agitation for a more radical, leftist orientation for party politics. Another portion of the resolution defended coalition participation by asserting that it was drawing Czechs and Germans together, and "everything that serves to unite workers is revolutionary."⁴⁸

The ideal of cooperation thus was useful in the bid to offset the left opposition. In this way, the rhetoric of party leaders transmuted their reformist practice of compromise into the politics of revolution. The message transmitted to the movement: unity serves workers best, therefore both parties must stay in the coalition.

The leadership of the Czechoslovak party had serious concerns about maintaining discipline among Social Democratic youth. As the economic crisis wore on month by month, the behavior of young people on both sides of the political spectrum grew more radical and heated. Brawls between youthful German and Czech supporters of fascism and their Marxist adversaries were common in many areas of Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The nationalist parties had their youth cadres, just as did the socialists. Communist youths formed the core of gangs that violently broke up meetings of these rightists. Their vigor caused admiration among young Social Democrats, who then gathered around the Communists to follow their lead. According to reports supplied by party informers, the ČSDS leadership acknowledged to themselves that Social Democratic youth were "very radical and unhappy with their leaders." The leadership nonetheless maintained a firm hand. On 6 April 1933, for instance, party leaders forbade young members from joining Communists in these violent raids.⁴⁹

The German Social Democratic youth organization also found much to oppose in the party's policies. Party leaders held this tightly in check. They ascribed much influence on Social Democratic youth to the Communists.⁵⁰

In October 1932 Czech members of the so-called "Right Communist Opposition" faction formally joined the ranks of the ČSDS. The KSC had expelled this group in 1929, after Klement Gottwald's successful fight to bolshevize his party. Most of the members of this cadre came from Prague and the mining area of Kladno to the northwest of the capital, a

⁴⁹ Archív TGM, 11.4.1933.

⁵⁰ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 111-18 discusses the youth opposition centered around the periodical *Sozialistische Aktion*, and the appeal that Communism held for young Germans.

stronghold of the Communists, with the rest coming from the industrial areas of northern Bohemia and Moravia. The ČSDS gained about 5,000 new members from this unification.⁵¹

Leaders of the party welcomed the faction as a sort of return of prodigal sons, for these were former Social Democrats who had split away with the Radical Left to form the KSČ in 1920. In a grand ceremony in Trade Union Hall in Prague, Antonín Hampl and other party leaders hailed this decision to support "constructive" work, calling it "the victory of the politics of reality among the working class."⁵²

While these leaders undoubtedly wanted to see the trend in politics head in this direction, they still faced the problem of controlling the left-oriented proclivity of their new/old members, which included names long prominent within the KSČ. Among them were Alois Muna, who Lenin himself in 1918 had sent to Czechoslovakia to spread the glory of the Bolshevik Revolution, and Josef Hais, former leader of the Communist Red Unions. Such individuals were likely to cause ferment within the party, bolstering those forces opposed to coalition politics. Already at the unification ceremony the new members revealed that one reason for their dismay with the KSČ had been its refusal to sanction cooperation with Social Democrats in the matter of electing representatives

⁵¹ State Department Records, file 860f.00b/93, reel 16.

⁵² *Právo lidu*, 18.10.1932.

to municipal bodies.⁵³ This indicated a belief in the wisdom of united-front tactics against the class enemy.

Besides the dissent caused by the fundamental ideological clash of revolution and reform, the social composition of the movement also constituted a source of opposition to the party elites. The Social Democratic parties were not comprised strictly of workers. The ČSDS, for example, found almost forty per cent of its members outside of the working class.⁵⁴ Bureaucratic positions in the parties were usually staffed by better-educated individuals, which sometimes resulted in class-based antagonism. Many workers believed that these "intellectuals" had no real enthusiasm for the principles of the movement, and made claims that their interest was in the salary they received, allocated from the dues the workers contributed from their hard-earned wages.

Police reports of party meetings show that this was a chronic problem within the movement. At a ČSDS gathering in Znojmo (south Moravia), for instance, railroad employee František Vítkovský complained that organizational activity in the area was dropping, and blamed the general secretary

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Horak, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party," p. 70. Thomas Weiser studied representatives of the "better" professions (such as teachers) among ČSDS middle- and lower-level officials during the interwar period. See his article "Beruf und Karrieregestaltung der tschechoslowakischen sozialdemokratischen Funktionärskader der mittleren und niederen Ebene," in *Bohemia* 33/2 (1992): 299-321.

and the town's mayor, both paid officials of the party. The mayor allegedly was concentrating on his own affairs and neglecting party matters, and of the secretary: "his interest is limited to getting his hands on the most money." Even more offensive to the spirit of the movement was the charge that the secretary's female assistant had lately been seen walking around town dressed "in elegant style," and no one could imagine how she had paid for such splendid clothes. Vítovský declared that she was "too intimate" with the secretary, who had misappropriated party funds for his mistress. "Intellectuals join the party, but only in order to get something," claimed the disgruntled worker. "As soon as they get what they're after, they slack off."⁵⁵

The behavior of party officials in the "intellectual" category seems to have been under close scrutiny in many areas with a substantial Social Democratic population, due to the numerous complaints on record. Class-conscious workers noted when these officials sent their children to Sokol, the gymnastic organization identified with bourgeois and national interests, instead of having them attend the Social Democratic athletic group, the DTJ. Officials also drew criticism when they did not enlist their wives in the party. Workers could sometimes point to examples of a husband actively discouraging his spouse from party activities, and they labeled this a sure sign of the

⁵⁵ SUA MVP X23 1-1, 225-868-3, p. 10, 29.10.1932.

official's lack of integrity and commitment to socialist principles.⁵⁶ Workers proposed that their local organizations should not permit such officials to become candidates in municipal elections, and in fact regularly crusaded to "remove this deadwood from the party."⁵⁷

The rank and file of the DSAP at times lamented that the party was beset by an excessively bureaucratized, aged, and conservative lineup of officials. There were periodic attempts by workers to overturn this trend. At the 1932 party congress, for instance, delegates heard proposals for an age limit of 60 for public and party offices. Additional proposals suggested that half of the presidium should be comprised of members who were not employees of the party, and that on this executive body there should be parity between intellectuals and workers.⁵⁸

Similar campaigns against bourgeoisification were also taking place within the Social Democratic Party in Austria (SDÖ, *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in Österreich*) and, until the Nazi takeover, within the SPD in Germany.⁵⁹ Regular contacts between the parties in Czechoslovakia and those in neighboring states, plus the fact that opposition

⁵⁶ SÚA MVP 225-868-4, p. 72.

⁵⁷ SÚA MVP X23 1-1, 225-868-3, p. 11, 29.10.1932.

⁵⁸ *Sozialdemokrat*, 27.10.1932.

⁵⁹ Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism*, chapter 3. W. L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875-1933: From Ghetto to Government* (London and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 156-60, 227-30, 251-53; and Richard N. Hunt, *German Social Democracy 1918-1933* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1964), pp. 92-105.

to bureaucratization received public attention at party congresses, kept DSAP and ČSDS leaders aware of workers' sentiments regarding this subject. However, it is likely that they were well aware of the course of domestic events, without the need for outside news to alert them to it.

Their roots being in the Austrian labor movement, both German and Czech party leaders in the ČSR more than likely paid close attention to developments within the SDÖ. The turmoil within the latter party during 1932-33 must have affected Social Democrats across the border. In a state threatened by the takeover of authoritarian forces, tensions among socialists resulted in an unprecedented breakdown of discipline, unity, and loyalty to the party leadership.

The SDÖ congress in November 1932 was a rancorous display of such opposition. Proposals from some district organizations demanded effective action and hardly expressed any faith in parliamentary procedures. An expectation of an armed struggle was apparent among the proletariat. Youth groups and some leaders of the party's women's organizations, such as the dynamic Käthe Leichter, argued for the plausibility of resorting to revolutionary means to defend democracy. Some districts went as far as to break the strictest party taboo by calling for an alliance between the Socialist International and the Comintern.⁶⁰ By the time of the next party congress in October 1933 the left

⁶⁰ Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism*, pp. 82-84.

opposition had increased its influence, not only in Vienna but in the provincial organizations as well. The left mounted a vigorous challenge to party leaders, supporting a radical agenda that included mass strikes, an unconditional united front with the Comintern, and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.⁶¹ From this congress until the collapse of the Austrian socialists in the civil war of February 1934, the left opposition increased its contacts with Communists in order to negotiate a united front from below.

As party leaders in Czechoslovakia observed this threat to the established order in the SDÖ, their resolve to counteract a climate of growing dissidence and radicalization and stifle their own opposition increased to meet the challenge. The DSAP leadership enforced discipline at its November 1932 state-wide conference in Prague to prevent many antagonistic voices from coalescing into a movement that might have changed the party's direction. When a majority of conference delegates spoke against participation in the government, reproaching the position of the leadership, the executive body succeeded in closing the debate on the topic. The delegates then were not able to

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, chapter 5.

put forth a separate motion requiring a vote for remaining in the coalition, or leaving it.⁶²

At this conference Ludwig Czech used the benchmark of the movement, cooperation between the nationalities, as an argument to weaken his opponents.

What would follow, if we dropped out and our Czech comrades stayed in the coalition? Could there be a greater tragedy for the working class in this state? And what a blow this would be to the entire International!...we may not permit any pessimism... the most important thing for us is unity!⁶³

The program of cooperation once again fit neatly into the chairman's plans to thwart a threat from the left.

Leaders of the Czechoslovak party met voices of opposition with arguments that the united participation of Social Democrats in government was a "thorn in the flesh of the bourgeoisie." They posited the question, what would happen if the bourgeois parties controlled the government? They invited workers to reflect back to the *panská koalice* of 1926-29 for their answer. After Hitler took command in 1933, the leadership began to use the example of the German SPD to back up its case. It called that party's decision to withdraw from the government in 1930 a crucial mistake, for the SPD then was not able to withstand bourgeois and fascist attacks, finally yielding to "Hitlerism".⁶⁴

⁶² Bachstein, *Wenzel Jaksch und die sudetendeutsche Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 54-58; César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 2, pp. 107-10.

⁶³ *Sozialdemokrat*, 1.11.1932.

⁶⁴ SÚA MVP X23 1-1, 225-868-3, pp. 2-4, 31.8.1933.

ČSDS leaders made a bid to reinforce discipline by stressing, to local party trustees (*důvěrníky*) and officers of local political organizations, their determination to follow a set course. Secretary Alois Langer, for instance, traveled to meetings of these officials and exhorted them to "be on guard," follow political activities in the party newspapers, read and understand the directives (*pokyny*) from party headquarters in Prague, and in each organization work for order and the strengthening of discipline. He emphasized that they must "confront seditious elements" (*rozvratníky*) that would harm the movement. The leadership began to conflate opposition with treason to the working class. In a similar vein, workers' complaints against sinecures for party officials were called "an old, worn-out tune sung by enemies of Social Democracy." Instead of dealing with the problem, the party repressed dialogue about it, expressing surprise that, when times were so serious, workers would mention it at all.⁶⁵

Hitler's triumph and the fascist danger to Austria were indeed grounds for unease among socialists in Czechoslovakia during 1933. At that time, however, Social Democratic leaders felt that the republic's alliance with France secured the state against invasion,⁶⁶ so there was no

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁶ Ludwig Czech expressed his assurance that the alliance protected the ČSR to the Austrian Social Democratic

compulsion to concentrate on a threat from abroad. In the eyes of the party leadership this diplomatic situation removed any pressing need for cooperation with the Communists against fascism. The feeling that the borders were secure in fact sustained the idea that the threat posed by the left opposition was the greatest danger.

Throughout 1933 leaders of both parties uniformly disparaged Communist efforts toward creating a united front. In March the leadership of the KSC sent letters suggesting cooperation to the socialist parties, and then published a manifesto for unity in the party newspaper, *Rudé právo*. Social Democrats quickly attacked this maneuver as a mere cover for the Communists' actual, nefarious intentions. The executive committee of the DSAP avowed that their revolutionary adversaries could never be trusted:

Their only interest lies in a pretext of unity, while increasing their struggle for the annihilation of Social Democracy, under the conscious protection of the capitalist parties. This process, together with their self-avowed threat to democracy, causes an atmosphere favorable to the current ascent of fascism, and useful to the political ends of the fascist parties.⁶⁷

The spate of antifascist activities involving German organizations during the year featured a common declaration: it was possible to cooperate to defeat fascism only with

journalist Julius Braunthal, who traveled to Prague seeking help with the delivery of arms to his movement's paramilitary wing. See Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism*, p. 167.

⁶⁷ *Sozialdemokrat*, 30.3.1933.

Social Democrats of other nations, and never with Communists.⁶⁸

The Czechoslovak party held its October congress in Prague. With German party leaders looking on as honored guests, congress delegates concerned themselves with the familiar themes of celebrating the unity of all Social Democrats while reiterating the danger to the working class from its enemies on the left and right. The conference proceedings also attended to the matter of expressing support for the party leadership.

Chairman Antonín Hampl opened the congress with a speech extolling cooperation and the wise policy of refusing the united front "propaganda slogans" and "unfaithful offers" of the Communists. Hampl assured his audience that by working together the nations would beat their ideological enemies, and drafted a letter of solidarity to be sent to the Austrian socialists, beset with the fascist danger.⁶⁹

The party's general secretary Vojtěch Dundr spoke of adherence to the policy of cooperation as one of the party's main achievements since the last congress in 1930. Dundr emphasized that cooperation manifested itself in both

⁶⁸ *Sozialdemokrat*, 26.9.1933, reporting on a youth conference held in Prague. For more of the anti-Communist campaign see César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 2, pp. 161-65.

⁶⁹ *Protokol sedmnáctého řádného a jubilejního sjezdu čs. sociálně demokratické strany dělnické* (Protocol of the 17th regular and jubilee-year congress of the ČSDS) (Prague: Nákladem Ústředního vykonávaného výboru ČSDS v Praze, 1933), pp. 10, 13.

parties' government participation. Here he used the theme of unity as a crutch in the leadership's bid to retain control of the party's politics. When the parties held up German-Czech unity as an ideal, a corollary was that they must stay in the government together.

Dundr spoke not only of unification in coalition politics and in parliament, but also of both nations coming together in activities at the grass roots level. Czech and German solidarity, said Dundr, is expressed "in the reality of our lives."

It is revealed in the joint celebrations of 1 May, in the unification of candidate lists, in the fight against fascism, nazism, and also communism. It is displayed most strikingly with the participation of German Social Democrats in the celebration of our 28 October state holiday!⁷⁰

The delegates greeted this statement with a burst of "noisy, long-lasting applause," for it seemed to demonstrate that Social Democratic relations were now as close as they could be. Before 1933 the DSAP had not officially celebrated Czechoslovak Independence Day, although since 1928 many local German organizations had joined their Czech counterparts to commemorate the occasion.

The decision of German leaders to sanction 28 October certainly was gratifying to the Czech side. Prior to this the Germans had denigrated it as a "bourgeois holiday." The DSAP leaders now had more motivation to join the Czechs in

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

embracing the anniversary. As a partner in the government, the German leaders did best for their own cause by advancing the image of the Czechoslovak Republic as a good thing for German workers. This was especially valid after Hitler's seizure of power and the Nazi's subsequent authoritarian control of the labor movement in Germany. Additionally, the German Social Democrats had to affirm that their Czech comrades were carrying through on their pledge to secure equality for German cultural interests, a program which for Germans meant that culturally, life in Czechoslovakia was as good as in any other state. To have shunned Independence Day once again would have put that program in question, possibly leading to suspicions of the Czech comrades, and perhaps even to doubts about the entire program of cooperation. This of course would have undercut the party's coalition politics.

At the ČSDS conference the leadership secured passage of a resolution which affirmed the basic political direction taken by the party; it stated that the membership expressed "full confidence" in the executive committee and the party's representatives in the coalition.⁷¹ Yet although there were no blatant challenges to the party leaders, the protocol reveals more subtle indications that a mood of opposition did exist.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139. Rudolf Bechyně (Railways), Dr. Ivan Déřer (Education), and Dr. Alfred Meissner (Justice) were the ČSDS ministers at the time.

In several cases where a delegate voiced support for coalition politics, he took pains to justify the need to make compromises with the other government parties. This obviously addressed the concerns of the left wing that the party had become too conservative. Deputy Antonín Srba, for instance, said that Social Democrats could not be held responsible for the trade-offs that were a necessary component of parliamentary democracy. He answered leftist critics by pointing to the Soviet Union's need to coexist with states that were its ideological foes:

Russia, threatened by only one enemy, Japan, makes compromises and friendly agreements with all bourgeois states, and today fights only with the working class organized within Social Democracy. We have the right to ask workers to think over this situation.⁷²

It is possible to surmise some of the tensions within the party and throughout the movement itself from an address delivered by a minor party official from Plzeň, one Antonín Korelus. He was convinced that the congress would support the party's coalition politics, and acknowledged that often "we must consent to things that are painful." Korelus advised, however, that party leaders were not tending to their flock wisely, and that they were seriously out of touch with the masses.

He pointed out that the leadership did nothing to help cushion the shock when the working class had to swallow bitter medicine in compromising with the other parties.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Instead, party officials and workers were presented with a fait accompli.

It's necessary to inform the masses, in an objective and timely manner, of all actions being prepared in government, especially when these measures injure our members. The object is to intensify relations and fortify the contact of the leadership with the organized membership...in the interest of increasing its confidence in the party.

This policy was important, Korelus stressed, because it strengthened individuals in the fight against "subversive elements" within the party, clearly a reference to the left opposition that challenged the politics of compromise.⁷³

Korelus made some pertinent observations about the segment of the membership that the leadership seemed to be treating too lightly:

The psychology of the workers is such that it compels them to direct action, so that they can fight life's problems. To them, each word with a defensive nature seems negative. The working class wants to fight, especially young people. They want to fight alongside of the party and either win, or die.

The message to the conference delegates was understated, but clear: some workers were unhappy with certain aspects of coalition politics, particularly young ones. The leadership should not be so aloof and authoritarian; leaders should more often accept input from below. This speech also indicated that party headquarters did not ordinarily give lower-ranking officials advance warning of the bitter pills that the working class would have to swallow. These

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

functionaries then were not prepared for any abuse that fell upon them due to the reaction of workers; they must have resented this lack of help in preparing ways to placate angry and disappointed workers. The directives (*pokyny*) that Prague did send to local officials apparently did not contain such advice, thus were of no help in this matter. Despite the overt support for the leadership's politics there were fissures within the party.

Social Democratic leaders recognized that opposition existed. Their style of managing it was authoritarian. Sometimes they chose to maintain an aloof position that banked on their traditional prestige and party discipline, or they relied on discipline to repress voices of dissent. When they chose to confront opposition, the ideal of cooperation among Czech and German Social Democrats was useful in their effort to sanction their desire to remain in the government. Party leaders turned the exalted word *cooperation* into a shibboleth which they used to distinguish "good" members from "subversives." The working class received the message that national unity was good, thus both parties had to stay in the coalition.

The desire to maintain solidarity promoted temperate responses to events related to national matters, even those as significant as the 1931 proposal for an Austro-German customs union. Although the Czech leaders resisted any form of this plan that could have resulted in political

integration, they did sanction its economic aspect. In the past, the Czechs would have been expected to thoroughly condemn the very idea of such a measure. Neither did the Czechs excoriate their German comrades after the latter abstained from voting against nationalist German deputies in the *Volkssport* affair. This type of behavior manifested the Czech leaders' ongoing realization that solidarity was an important process that had to be nurtured, even if they had to make compromises in ways that appeared to subjugate the interests of the Czech nation. The German leaders, for their part, found that conditions were favorable for them to finally give the party's official blessing to celebrations of Czechoslovak Independence day in 1933.

Chapter IV: Opposition within the Parties

The years 1933-36 spanned the middle of a decade of economic and political crises in Europe, and this turmoil caused great tensions among political organizations in Czechoslovakia. As the economy continued to founder, the parties on the left and the right of the spectrum had to compete harder for any available state resources for their constituencies, and for dominance in establishing the government's program for economic recovery. Class interests played a greater role in politics, and it is noticeable that national differences did not seem to be as much of a consideration for right-wing parties as they had been in the past. Therefore some members of the Czechoslovak Agrarians supported the efforts of the *Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront*, a new pan-German nationalist organization led by Konrad Henlein, in order to groom it as an ally against the socialist parties. Nationalism affected relations between the ČSDS and the Czechoslovak National Socialists, for many members of the latter party had no desire to cooperate with Social Democratic Germans.

The leadership of the Social Democratic parties did not alter the program for cooperation in parliament and outside of it, i.e., within the Social Democratic milieu. The progress of joint activities indicates that bonds had begun to form among some Germans and Czechs. Cooperation seemed to be safely entrenched within the movement, even though miserably high unemployment threatened discord. The

desperate living conditions that especially afflicted German areas caused a susceptibility to demagoguery and resulted in the DSAP losing much of its backing in the 1935 general election to the Henlein movement. However, this defeat did not bring about a decision to change or modify tactics. Leaders of the parties remained determined to work together.

The question of what tactics were appropriate to follow preoccupied discussions at all levels of the movement. Party leaders declared that incorrect tactics, such as the German SPD's (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) decision to drop out of the coalition in 1930, had led to the defeat of Social Democracy in neighboring Germany and Austria. This contention by leaders in Czechoslovakia bolstered their desire to keep the parties in the government. Furthermore, these leaders had used their control of certain government ministries to benefit workers. They had alleviated some of the distress brought on by joblessness, and they justifiably pointed out that they should not relinquish control of these ministries to non-socialist parties. The successful program for cooperation, they argued, demonstrated that both parties could and should remain in the coalition, because their combined strength achieved practical results for the working class.

Their detractors, unimpressed with these accomplishments, clamored for a policy that would have taken the parties into opposition. The impetus for an anti-

fascist united front of working-class parties, including the Communists, drove this contingent; and the united front in France was an example that inspired these Social Democrats. The Czechoslovak Communists adamantly refused to compromise with bourgeois parties, so coalition politics could not enter the realm of possibilities for these forces.

Besides this brand of opposition, jealousies and rivalries within each party influenced the course of politics. Personal power struggles within the organization forced some members of the presidium to oppose policies and programs that would have increased the prestige of their rivals. The phenomenon of personal antagonism among party officials sometimes inspired a more extreme reaction to a given proposal than would have occurred, had such conditions been absent. This being the case, however, the inertia of the organization's bureaucratic and authoritarian structure favored preservation of the conservative status quo when conflicts arose in the realm of party policies. It simply was too difficult for the proponents of new policies to override those forces that held them in check.

To summarize Social Democracy's state of affairs: Party leaders genuinely thought that they were performing their mission, but they encountered a left opposition that clamored for change. Quarrels within the top echelon of the parties induced leaders to appear firm, and maintain their position. The Communists showed no signs of stopping their

attacks against Social Democratic leaders. These factors inhibited changes in policy that would have led to an alliance with the Communists. Even after the dramatic performance of Henlein's party in the 1935 election, the Social Democratic leadership continued to blame the KSČ for damaging the interests of the working class, and forbade relations with Communists.

Joint activities organized by Czechs and Germans in Social Democratic groups continued to be a characteristic feature of the labor movement in the middle years of the 1930s. Social tensions resulting from the severity of the economic depression and the growth of fascism within the general population of Germans and Czechs did not invade the Social Democratic camp. The establishment of a genuine concern for solidarity among the nationalities should be considered one of the greatest achievements of the program of cooperation.

Thus Germans and Czechs marched together on special occasions such as the First of May, and Czechoslovak Independence Day celebrations in October 1933. There were joint protest meetings after the socialists in Austria were annihilated in February 1934; at these assemblies members of both nationalities denounced the atrocities perpetrated by the Dollfuss government against the working class, including "defenseless women and children." They exalted "liberty, fraternity, and equality" and together sang the

"Marseilles." Speakers in both languages peppered their addresses with phrases such as "all rights flow from the people," and "the sun will never set on Social Democracy, even if clouds sometimes cover it up." The participants passed resolutions expressing solidarity with the Austrian working class, while declaring faith in and loyalty to democracy and the republic. The assembled workers also endured the harassment of German fascists and Communists, who shouted denunciations of Social Democratic programs and leaders.¹

The Social Democratic parties organized joint meetings and demonstrations in the days following the 30 June 1934 "Night of the Long Knives" in Germany. These activities were intended to be neither a protest nor a celebration of Hitler's decision to liquidate the troublesome Ernst Röhm and the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), for the true nature of this operation was not yet known. The Social Democrats thought that dissidents had attempted a revolution against Hitler. Thus Czechs and Germans marched together under numerous red socialist flags, displaying their support for the tide of opposition that they hoped would bring down the Nazi regime.²

¹ SÚA PZU 207-8-1,68,29, carton 760.

² *Fünf Jahre Kampf und Arbeit! Bericht an den in der Zeit 1938 Parteitag* (Prague: Verlag des Parteivorstandes der DSAP, 1938), p. 92.

Cooperation on a large scale took place between the workers' gymnastic organizations. On the German side, Social Democratic men and women joined the *Arbeiter Turn- und Sportbund* (ATUS), while Czechs exercised within the DTJ. These groups jointly participated in the Workers' Olympiads, periodic athletic competitions and exhibitions of mass calisthenics conducted under the aegis of the International. The colossal Strahov stadium in Prague, capable of holding over 120,000 spectators, was the site for this event during the week of 5-10 July 1934.

The Olympiad was an epic production of Social Democracy's values and a showcase of working-class solidarity. Participants from many European countries and from the United States attended, and were fêted by prominent men and women of the socialist world. The opening days of the festival belonged to working-class children, some as young as six years, who marched onto the vast field to perform calisthenics while holding fresh flowers. In the evening a torchlight procession of over 30,000 Olympiad participants lit the streets of Prague. The stadium was filled for the concluding, and crowning day of the exhibition. More than 40,000 DTJ members took the field, along with over 5,000 Germans from the ATUS. In order to show their loyalty to the republic the German contingent carried banners proclaiming "Long Live T. G. Masaryk!"

The festival was a virtually non-stop display of working-class symbolism, from the children representing the future, to the thousands of athletes epitomizing the socialist collective, to the thematic tableaux that capped each day's activities. On the closing day, with the theme "The Liberation of Labor," the spectators saw a huge dramatization of the economic dilemma of industrial rationalization and unemployment. For the first act, performers staged a model of a small, secure pre-War industrial enterprise which suddenly was broken up and devastated by the arrival of the War. Then, the scene shifted to the rise of new production methods that caused a devastating loss of jobs. The troupe acted out the message that rationalization had one-sided benefits and did not serve the interests of society.

The Olympiads also were great festivals for Social Democratic groups involved in activities other than physical fitness. During their course many other events took place in Prague, such as chess tournaments, and competitions among amateur photographers and even puppeteers.³

For vast numbers of unemployed workers, participation in these associational groups provided some solace in the midst of grim living conditions. The economic depression

³ *Central European Observer*, 13.7.1934; Adolf Mokřý, *Osmdesát let československé sociální demokracie*, p. 207; *Zpráva o činnosti ČSDS 1933-36* (Report on the party's activities 1933-36) (Prague: ČSDS, 1937), p. 342.

reached its lowest point in 1933, and then only very gradually receded. Through the end of 1936 the economy still had not returned to normal. During this time the leadership of both Social Democratic parties worked together to formulate suggestions and demands for measures that were intended to stimulate commercial activity and relieve the terrible problem of high unemployment. In February 1933 the labor exchange reports listed 920,000 unemployed, although the actual number may have been as high as 1.3 million throughout the country;⁴ the state population at this time was about 14 million.

Joblessness was endemic to German areas. The industry situated there depended upon exported products, and all such enterprises suffered as an effect of the collapse of international trade, and the ensuing drive toward autarky that was a common response of states. Unemployment among the German population during this time typically ranged from twenty-five to thirty-five percent.⁵ In order to stimulate exports the Czech and German Social Democrats advocated a devaluation of the currency, so that products would be cheaper abroad. Party leaders lobbied for an exports bureau, which came into being in 1934. They also jointly demanded state funding so that the ceramics, glass, and

⁴ Zora P. Pryor, "Czechoslovak Economic Development in the Interwar Period," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, pp. 205-08.

⁵ *Twenty Years of Social Welfare in the Czechoslovak Republic* (Prague: Ministry of Social Welfare, 1938), p. 32.

textile industries could develop new markets, to compensate for those outlets lost due to the dislocating effects of the depression. In order to underwrite the cost of these plans, Social Democratic leaders proposed that the government should place controls on the profits of cartels, an idea which the Swedish Social Democrats had already put into effect.⁶

Social Democrats announced that they would demand state support for activity in the building trades. They declared that cheaper real estate, building materials, and credit would serve this desired purpose. As a means to achieve these savings, Social Democrats suggested controlling the earnings of "cartels and speculators" that did business in these areas.

A shortening of the work week to 40 hours was perhaps the most publicized measure. Party leaders stated that if the process of rationalization in industry continued to eliminate jobs, there should be a further reduction of the work period to 30 hours.

Because the mining industry was in a slump, the parties attempted passage of a law which called for the reclamation of lands damaged by coal mining. This stricture would have created many jobs in these areas, but the proposal was defeated in parliament. The Social Democrats then demanded

⁶ SUA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, carton 1166, pp. 43-45.

the nationalization of mines and their attendant facilities, but this also was unsuccessful.

Leaders of both parties had no trouble finding agreement on measures that, if enacted, would have enabled the state to squeeze more revenue from the upper class. Social Democrats declared that tax reform was necessary so that large-scale tax dodgers could be brought to heel. They also said that interest rates on large commercial loans should come down, because in order to pay off the high rates enterprises lowered wages. Another joint demand was for discounting the returns paid on government bonds, allowing the savings in state expenditures to flow into work programs. These two measures of course would have troubled banks, and individuals who wished to earn more from their investments.⁷

Besides these economic provisions, Czech and German Social Democratic leaders were united in supporting a law that expanded the provisions of the Law for the Protection of the Republic, which had been in force since 1923. Both sides agreed that they would benefit from the use of the Law against extremists on the left or the right. In October 1933 the parliament passed a measure legalizing the suppression of subversive political parties. The Social

⁷ See Antonín Hampl and Josef Belina, *Z krise ven* (Getting out of the crisis) (Prague: Nakladem Svazu Kovodělníků v ČSR, 1935) pp. 15-32; *Aufarbeit im Krisensturm. Ein sozialdemokratischer Rechenschaftsbericht* (Teplice, Czechoslovakia: Verlag DSAP, 1935), pp. 103-17.

Democratic leaders favored disbanding the German National Socialist Party for its extreme anti-republic attitude and behavior. However, in the case of the German Nationalists, they wished only for close supervision of its activities. Most Social Democrats wanted the government to banish the KSČ, but some party members thought this action was unnecessary. Their belief was that the radicalism of the Communists would grow more extreme, causing them to "devour themselves."⁸

Leaders of the ČSDS and the DSAP cooperated to achieve a joint position on many legislative proposals. However, there initially was strong disagreement over the adoption of the most comprehensive measure of all, the Enabling Act of June 1933, which allowed the government to enact laws on its own, without parliament. The Czech side had to cajole, and even issue a veiled threat to its German comrades, in order to convince them to sign on with their support. The fact that this transpired and did not result in a breach in Social Democratic cooperation indicates that both sides realized that the Germans depended upon the Czechs for their prominence in political affairs.⁹ The Czech leaders also had to control and override recalcitrant members of their

⁸ Archív ÚTGM, report of 6.11.1933.

⁹ This situation was common knowledge in political circles. German ambassador Koch called Ludwig Czech and his party an "appendage" of the ČSDS. *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte*, IV, p. 140.

own party, who opposed the authoritarian nature of this special legislation.¹⁰

The president and coalition ministers thought such power was necessary during this period of great economic and social tension. After six months the act was to have expired, after which it could be renewed (it was, several times). The rationale behind the idea was that the ability to establish laws quickly, circumventing the usual lengthy process, would give the government more leeway in its efforts to stimulate the economy.

ČSDS chairman Antonín Hampl favored the extraordinary act because of this economic aspect. He was confident that the working class would benefit from the measure, and that the Czechoslovak Agrarians would not be able to abuse the Act's powers to assume dictatorial control over the government, as many Social Democrats feared would happen. During the spring months of 1933 ideas for widening the coalition's authority circulated freely in newspapers. Because there were great concerns about the dangers of the Enabling Act, special issues of papers dealing specifically with the Act went to press.¹¹ Several articles in *Právo*

¹⁰ For a Communist interpretation of the legislation and its effects see Zdeněk Hradilák, "Československá sociální demokracie a zmocňovací zákon v roce 1933" (Czechoslovak Social Democracy and the Enabling Act of 1933), in *Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ* (Contributions to the history of the KSČ) (1/1967): 29-51.

¹¹ For instance *Nová svoboda* 1.6.1933 said the law would lead to "instant" (*suchý*) fascism, "all one has to do is add water."

lidu attacked the proposals by calling such plans a "deformation of democracy," demonstrating that within the movement there was widespread concern that the legislation was a big step toward establishing fascism in the state.

The German Social Democratic leaders opposed the plan because they figured the Agrarians would use it to dismantle whatever autonomy German areas had. One of the important reasons why the Czechoslovak parties wanted an enabling act indeed was to be able to exert greater control over the border regions. The Nazi seizure of power in Germany made such safeguards appear to be vital for the republic's security.

Thus Czechoslovak politicians deemed it necessary to nationalize the police in the frontier districts, replacing Germans with Czechs. German Social Democrats protested this measure, but they blamed it on the bourgeois parties.¹² For the sake of appearances the Social Democrats had to condemn such actions by the Czechs, even though they probably knew that they were better off when Czech officers had authority in their cities and villages. Most German police came from the lower middle-class strata for which nationalist demagoguery had great appeal. These officials would be likely to play down transgressions perpetrated by nationalists and enforce state laws mainly against Social

¹² Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 135.

Democrats, or Communists, and also to bend the rules to harass them.¹³

As the spring 1933 session of the parliament drew near to closing for the summer recess, the matter of the Enabling Act suddenly appeared before the government. The German Social Democrats raised strong objections to the Act. Antonín Hampl does not seem to have been able to mollify them, so he joined other leading Czech politicians in pressuring the Germans by warning them that a new coalition would be made necessary, and that the Social Democratic parties would have to exit.¹⁴ Since Ludwig Czech and his colleagues had no desire to take the party out of the cabinet, they came around to supporting the Act.

Hampl also had a great deal of trouble persuading many of his Czech colleagues to join him in supporting the Act. In meetings of the party's parliamentary club, several of the most prominent members objected vehemently to the proposal, certain that it would lead to Agrarian control of the government.¹⁵ Hampl pointed out that the Act would require the president as well as the prime minister to sign bills. Hampl expected his colleagues to consider this feature to be an adequate safeguard, due to President Masaryk's enormous prestige among Social Democrats. However, the opponents of the Act were not reassured,

¹³ Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, p. 200.

¹⁴ *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte*, IV, pp. 46-7.

¹⁵ Archív ÚTGM, report of 1.6.1933.

because Masaryk was 83 years old and no one could foretell who would follow him in office.

The party chairman, however, fought for the Enabling Act "like a lion." Employing a mixture of rational arguments, emotional pleading, and reliance on his personal authority, Hampl "with tears in his eyes, went all out (*obout se*) to state his case," and according to an eyewitness' report, "we all felt much empathy for him."¹⁶ He told the dissenters that "they can't see past their noses," and exclaimed that he would never agree with a situation in which the party lost control of its destiny to the Agrarians. Furthermore, he issued the stern warning that it was precisely the future of the party that was on the line, declaring that if the Social Democrats did not agree to the Enabling Act, "the fate of the SPD awaits us." By this Hampl presumably meant that the government would fall and the Agrarians would manage to exclude the Social Democratic parties from the new coalition. Then the government would inexorably continue moving to the right. Whether the members of the party presidium were impressed by the chairman's arguments or perhaps guided by their faith in his judgment, Hampl's will prevailed "after a great struggle" and the leadership offered its support for the Enabling Act. When a presidential advisor asked Hampl how

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

he had come to adopt a position on the enabling powers that apparently was so favorable to the Agrarians, he said only:

I have never left anyone with any doubts as to the following: *I am a Czech first, and a socialist second.* I will not wreck or ban a situation, if the state would suffer because of it.¹⁷

The dispute among ČSDS leaders over the Enabling Act had more than one basis. Besides apprehensions over a possible Agrarian dictatorship, personal animosities between rival members of the party's top level also played a part. This resulted in collusion among members who wished to erode the power and influence of their rivals. The private agenda of individuals affected the formulation of opinion on measures such as the Act, which established the level of power for cabinet ministers.

No one challenged Hampl's leading role during his long (1924-38) reign as chairman. As a forceful orator and talented organizer, Hampl possessed skills that served him well as an official. Perhaps most importantly for his career, he had a true working-class background, a very significant qualification for the leader of a party concerned about the large number of lawyers and other middle-class individuals in its top echelon.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ No biography of Hampl exists. He apprenticed as a locksmith and also worked as a draftsman during his youth. His family and colleagues published a small eulogy, *Na paměť soudruha Antonína Hampla* (To the memory of comrade Antonín Hampl) (Jaromeř, Czechoslovakia: ČSDS, 1946). Hampl succumbed to illness as a prisoner of the Nazis in 1942.

Rudolf Bechyně enjoyed Hampl's support, but also had a number of adversaries within the party leadership. In 1933 Bechyně was Social Democratic Minister of Railways, after previously having served in other posts. He was also deputy prime minister, and the Enabling Act served to increase the responsibility and power of this position. Those Social Democrats who were antagonistic toward him therefore had an additional reason to oppose the Act.

Bechyně's self-declared "implacable, bitter enemies" were deputies Josef Macek, Antonín Remeš, and Antonín Srba. They wanted him to lose his minister's chair and among themselves agreed that if possible, "we'd like for him to disappear" altogether.¹⁹ A difference in political philosophy was the basic reason for their antipathy toward Bechyně. The dispute ran along the fault line separating those Social Democrats who, like Bechyně, promoted closer ties with the Czechoslovak National Socialist party (ČNS), and those who, for a number of reasons, were averse to such efforts. This matter serves to illustrate the poor relations between the two Czechoslovak parties during this time.

Tensions between members of the ČSDS and the ČNS were strained at the local level and at the center of power in Prague. Part of the problem was the attitude toward ethnic relations, for many National Socialists had scarcely any

¹⁹ Archív UTGM, 10.5.1933.

interest in the state's German minority and disapproved of the Social Democrats' support of a German minister (Ludwig Czech) in the government. In turn, Social Democrats who were dedicated to international socialism scorned the ČNS because it was a non-Marxist party. Besides this consideration, political power entered into the picture as well.

Members of each party fought for control of local political posts, and in many cases the struggle was protracted and bitter. In Znojmo (south Moravia), for instance, National Socialists had plagued the Social Democratic mayor for fifteen years by attacking his character and his conduct in office. A July 1934 speech by the mayor to his supporters offers a glimpse of the increasing level of animosity between the parties, as he swore that his detractors would lose the next election, adding excitedly, "and then we'll kick their asses!"²⁰ At the top level of the parties the same story of rivalries and power struggles existed. Several ČNS members of parliament said openly that better relations with the Social Democrats was not in the interest of the party, but was only good for one element of the leadership, namely Edward Beneš.²¹

At the turn of the century, as a very young man, Rudolf Bechyně had joined the National Socialist party, and even

²⁰ SÚA MVP X-P 225-868-1, carton 868, 30.7.1934.

²¹ Archív ÚTGM, 9.5.1933.

thirty years later some Social Democrats held this fact against him.²² Another likely source of trouble was Bechyně's vanity and egotism, which prompted him to make some grand statements about reforming his ministry, which he then failed to accomplish.²³ Bechyně sometimes behaved condescendingly and exaggerated his importance. A rumor that Macek passed on to the president's adviser illustrates this characteristic: During the summer of 1933 Bechyně paid a visit to the country estate of the former prime minister Antonín Švehla, elder statesman of the Czechoslovak Agrarians and one of the most able and respected figures of the day. Due to illness Švehla had had to retire from his duties, but there had been speculation that he had recovered. Bechyně supposedly told Švehla that if he wanted to return to an active role in politics, he would best succeed with Bechyně's help. President Masaryk and most other leaders valued Švehla's great political skill, and the idea that he would need such help at all was ridiculous. It was only a rumor, but according to Macek "it is precisely such a story that reveals the truth about Bechyně."²⁴

Bechyně was a journalist and had important connections in this field, such as with Ferdinand Peroutka, publisher of

²² AKPR 994/21, report of 16.11.1928.

²³ The newspapers of rival parties reported the instances of friction between Social Democrats. In this case, *Lidové listy*, the paper of Šrámek's Czechoslovak People's Party, 1.3.1931.

²⁴ Archív ÚTGM, 30.8.1933.

the state's leading liberal periodical, *Přítomnost*. Bechyně regularly contributed to Peroutka's journal, securing favorable publicity for the party; he was also a mainstay of the Social Democratic press. He wrote proposals for resolutions and additions to the platform that were adopted at important party congresses. To many observers, however, he gave the impression of being unable to manage his ministerial responsibilities. Bechyně held several portfolios during the First Republic, and doubts about his competence made their way back to Hampl from different quarters. In fact at one time Masaryk insisted that Bechyně resign from the Railways post,²⁵ probably because of the massive annual deficit of that ministry.

Hampl, however, supported Bechyně against his detractors. The chairman obviously valued Bechyně's writing talent and wanted to keep him in the Social Democratic fold. There was a chance that he would switch to another party, probably the National Socialists. Bechyně could not manage his personal finances and chronically was near bankruptcy; had he lost the income from his minister's position his circumstances may have forced him to offer his services to a party that could relieve him of his distress.²⁶

In 1933 Bechyně's wife compounded his difficulties by seeking a divorce. He also suffered a debilitating illness

²⁵ Archív ÚTGM, 5.5.1933.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

which prevented him from addressing the delegates at the party's general congress in October. As if this were not enough, not long before the congress Bechyně's enemies uncovered his involvement in a scandal.

A secret bank account apparently had existed for several years. Allegedly the noted economist Karel Engliš had placed money in the account for Bechyně's use, although it is not clear why. In several different governments Engliš had been Minister of Finance, and he was quite distinguished in his field. Despite serving in parliament as a Czechoslovak National Democratic deputy, he was not a professional politician.²⁷ Therefore it is unlikely he was trying to set up Bechyně for blackmail or corrupt him for the benefit of another party.

Regardless of the reason why the money ended up in the account, Bechyně's Social Democratic enemies saw no reason to refrain from using the story against him. They forced the attention of the party leadership onto this affair, in an attempt to compel him to resign his office. Josef Macek in particular pursued this case with determination.²⁸ However, Hampl again deflected their attacks, and in the interest of maintaining discipline and the appearance of unity before the congress the matter settled down. Bechyně later reported that he was "satisfied" with the congress.

²⁷ Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," p. 100n5.

²⁸ Archív ÚTGM, 30.8.1933.

Although on his doctor's orders he could not speak to the assembly, the delegates all "applauded for me."²⁹ They also accepted a resolution which he wrote. "Probably none of the plotters [against me] expected this," he mused.

Thus the party's strong tradition of discipline served to dampen internal friction for the important period of the congress. Later, however, a campaign began anew to discredit Bechyně for his ministry's handling of wage disputes and other matters. Yet Hampl's control of the party enabled him to block any drastic action that went contrary to his ideas. Speaking of the "plotters," Hampl made the following observations about the course of a certain meeting:

Macek and company were completely silent today. Believe me, the operations against Bechyně are nothing more than the whim of some men whom I know well, and I will take them down a peg or two.³⁰

Hampl followed through on his pledge. Although he was master of the party, he fell victim to the turmoil and tension present in international, domestic, and party politics. Soon after the party congress a severe attack of stomach ulcers confined him to his bed.³¹ This condition understandably impaired his ability to direct party affairs. Reports indicated that some leading party members were perturbed that Hampl was not devoting enough energy to some

²⁹ Archív ÚTGM, 6.11.1933.

³⁰ Archív ÚTGM, 2.6.1933.

³¹ Archív ÚTGM, 29.11.1933.

important developments. For example, some complaints arose over the growth of "yellow" trade unions, affiliated with right-wing parties, in the Ostrava area. Hampl surely would have been concerned over this situation, especially since he was head of the large, important metalworkers' union. Some of his colleagues privately wondered why he did not "take care of" the problem.³²

Some of top party executives thought Hampl should have put an end to the campaign against Bechyně. However, these individuals may not have been so much Bechyně's allies as they were opponents of the "plotters." Some party leaders disliked troublemakers such as the feisty Josef Macek, and wished for the chairman to humble him.

Macek (born 1887) was an influential economist and a prolific writer, as well as a member of the Chamber of Deputies from 1928-39. He was a professor at the College of Commerce (*Vysoká škola obchodní*) in Prague, and conducted lecture series and other activities for *Dělnická akademie*. Macek also was chief editor of the prestigious review *Naše doba* (Our era), following in the footsteps of Thomas Masaryk.³³

At a meeting of the ČSDS parliamentary club early in 1934, the members heard a report on the extensive and costly

³² Archív ÚTGM, 11.1.1934.

³³ Macek contributed numerous essays and articles to *Dělnická výchova* (Worker education), a series published by *Dělnická akademie*. Macek emigrated to the U.S. in 1949 and subsequently taught at the University of Pittsburgh.

proposals put forth by the Czechoslovak Agrarians. This spurred Macek into action. He rose to his feet and aggressively asked how the party would counter with its own demands. According to a deputy who was present, the question met with "the silence of the grave." Expressing astonishment and disappointment, Macek then requested that it should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting that "the party has no workers' demands."³⁴ Regardless of whether or not this statement was true, none of the other members could have appreciated such a confrontational tone.

Yet Macek had not fully considered why his question had met with such a response, because he was a "hothead" (*bouřlivák*), as Hampl once had characterized him.³⁵ The reason for the deathly silence may not have been due to an absence of new ideas. Perhaps the other members present were willing to look at the Agrarian demands in the spirit of compromise. Macek's belligerent attitude and behavior ensured the presence of enemies among his party. So did his impolitic writings, which questioned the Social Democratic leadership's competence and worthiness to represent the interests of the working class.

In 1933 the readers of Ferdinand Peroutka's *Přítomnost* had the opportunity to learn Macek's opinion of the top level of the labor movement. Peroutka asked Macek to

³⁴ Archív ÚTGM, 11.1.1934.

³⁵ AKPR 994/21, 16.11.1928.

discuss why the Social Democratic parties had not succeeded in implementing their proposals for easing the economic crisis. Since the socialists had been powerless to assert their will in the coalition, Peroutka queried, would it not be more advantageous for them to leave the government?

Macek responded with a series of articles which expressed his doubt that the movement's leadership, both German and Czech, was of a high enough caliber to attain a dominating influence in the political sphere. He said that the leaders had neither a solid, positive program of "what to do today" nor enough people with the talent to carry out such a program.³⁶ Moreover, according to his point of view no other socialist party had a valid program to combat the crisis, so that he also lambasted the Socialist International for its failure to recommend a clear program that could help unite the movement. He said that the lone demand which socialists did share, the shortening of the work period, was simply too narrow to fulfill the objective.

Macek had no intention of boosting the Communists through his polemic. In fact he called them "a dagger in the body of the socialist parties," and lamented that KSC propagandists were able to turn some workers away from supporting Social Democracy because of numerous unpopular tax, tariff, and other government policies that the parties were obliged to support. In Macek's opinion this was a

³⁶ *Přítomnost* (1933) no. 4, p. 52.

"superb weapon" for the Communists, and he recommended that the Social Democratic parties would increase their vitality and their election totals by going into opposition.³⁷

Macek thought that the Social Democrats' current policies would gain little for the labor movement. His hope for the future embraced a vision of achieving the end of capitalism by working toward the moral regeneration of society. He felt that if the parties went into opposition they could take the moral high ground and lead the way to a social revolution, resulting in state control of production and consumption.³⁸

Although Macek generally was critical of Social Democratic leaders he did point approvingly to DSAP chairman Ludwig Czech's speeches in parliament. As Minister of Social Welfare, Czech crafted his message to shake the consciences of deputies, hoping that they would then take action to deal with the terrible plight of the vast numbers of unemployed Germans. Macek pictured Social Democrats carrying out this type of appeal to society on a grand scale. His stance was idealistic in comparison to the more pragmatic orientation of other ČSDS politicians. As he disparaged the wide range of concessions that these politicians made to the other coalition parties, Macek exclaimed virtuously, "I say to the Social Democratic

³⁷ *Přítomnost* (1933) no. 5, p. 72.

³⁸ *Přítomnost* (1933) no. 4, p. 53.

parties: stay in government only so long as this is compatible with your honor and credibility!"³⁹

Peroutka then printed a follow-up to Macek's articles, in the form of a letter he had received from a Social Democratic worker. The journal did not identify the worker, who feared repercussions because he wholeheartedly agreed with Macek's assessment of the political leadership. A typesetter and minor party official, the author of the letter said that he did not have the "clout" to offer such criticism publicly, as could a "bigwig" like Prof. Macek. The letter to Peroutka stated, "You yourself certainly know the way it is in the party: similar expressions [as Macek's] could cause attempts to completely silence me, in order to protect against further criticism." Presumably by this he meant expulsion from the party, not homicide.

The anonymous writer was glad that Macek had finally spoken out about the leadership and party politics, and said that many other workers shared this attitude. He reported that at a meeting of the ČSDS regional committee (*okresní výbor*) in his area a party member had stated: "Macek is speaking to our [socialist] spirit. He is expressing what we have long felt. If only he is not deterred from continuing." Apparently some members thought that the party's tradition of loyalty and discipline would catch up with Macek.

³⁹ *Přítomnost* (1933) no. 5, p. 71.

This letter related that many party members wistfully recalled the period when the party was in opposition. "Then, the party went to the streets to lead demonstrations" against the bourgeois government's seemingly anti-socialist program, wrote the unhappy worker. Now, he lamented, the party was a member of the coalition that was installing new taxes, tariffs, and price hikes, "precisely the bitter medicine that afflicts workers first of all." Younger Social Democrats, stated the author, were dismayed that the party was in the hands of "very old comrades, who don't have a keen enough understanding of today's most acute and burning questions."

This writer declared that Macek was "quite right" to stress the need for the party to have a "clear plan." He wanted it to be known that calls for such a plan and for "clear direction" had become "widespread" in the party. The author perceived that too often the leadership simply fell back on Marxist theory to assure workers of their inevitable victory.

In place of a clear program some politicians are satisfied to refer to a very far-off and rosy brightening of the economic picture, and the gradual evolvment of a better life for the working class. They are completely silent about the objections that each economic boom largely means a new strengthening of capitalism, not trouble for it. When will it be possible to expect a new future for socialism?⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Přítomnost* (1933) no. 7, p. 111.

Interestingly, Social Democratic leaders received criticism both for allegedly relying on theory, as in the case of this letter in *Přítomnost*, and for apparently having abandoned it to effect compromises with the bourgeois parties. Such widespread complaints indicate that the leadership was not communicating effectively with a certain segment of the movement. Possibly the leaders expected the rank and file to possess greater faith in their ability to advance the interests of the working class. Whether or not criticism of party leaders and opposition to their tactics were reasonable or justified, they existed and posed some danger to the Social Democratic leadership's control of party affairs and policies.

During 1934 international events compelled Social Democratic leaders in Czechoslovakia to deal with the pronounced trend toward the creation of united anti-fascist fronts. The most prominent development for the European Left was the new era of cooperation between the socialist and Communist parties in France; for the labor movement in Czechoslovakia, the most chilling example of fascism's danger in that year was the decimation of the socialists in neighboring Austria.

Czech and German party leaders staggered from the confluence of alarming news on 12 February 1934. On that day, by force of arms, the Dollfuss government smashed the paramilitary wing of the Austrian Social Democrats; and

Communists and socialists in France decided to participate in a joint strike to protest what they perceived was a burgeoning fascist threat against the French republic. Several other events reflected the notion circulating within the European labor movement that it would be prudent and indeed necessary for working-class parties to unite in order to offset fascism.

International attention focused on the issue of the Saar territory in 1934. An area valued for its huge coal deposits, it had been under the administration of the League of Nations since the Versailles peace treaty. The arrangement specified that a plebiscite would be held in January 1935. The population of the territory would then choose among annexation by France, restoration to Germany, or the maintenance of the status quo. The Saar Communists and Social Democrats obviously could not abide entry into the Nazi Reich, and they agreed to cooperate in a joint campaign to continue the administration of the League.⁴¹

The issue of united front work also was topical in neighboring Poland, where some rank and file workers showed themselves to be much more favorable toward unity than were leaders of the Socialist and the Communist parties. Groups that supported a united front withdrew from their respective parties to found a new Workers' Socialist Party. Their action responded to the authoritarian threat they saw

⁴¹ *International Press Correspondence*, July 1934.

advanced by the signing of the non-aggression pact between Poland and Germany in January 1934.⁴² Representatives of the underground Socialist and Communist movements in Italy signed a united front pact in August 1934.⁴³ In Spain, solidarity also became a reality among Socialist and Communist workers.⁴⁴

The establishment of the French united front made a vivid impression on many European socialists. The downfall of Social Democracy in Germany and Austria had already created great anxiety and the desire for an effective remedy against the threat from the right. A major revamping of Moscow's foreign policy, in favor of building collective security with democratic states against Germany, also prompted calls for unity.

The Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in September 1934, and within six months had concluded mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia. This compelled Moscow to change directions regarding the character of its long-standing initiatives against socialist leaders, whom it for years had denounced as "social fascists" and the primary enemies of the working class. The

⁴² E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), pp. 268-71.

⁴³ See Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, 1914-1943* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1967), vol. 2, p. 476.

⁴⁴ See Martin Blinkhorn's chapter on Spain, in Stephen Salter and John Stevenson, eds., *The Working Class and Politics in Europe and North America, 1929-1945* (London and New York: Longman, 1990).

new policy line, emanating from Josef Stalin himself, became a drive to effect a united front from above, with the socialist leaders and not against them.

European socialists began to consider the possibilities that could result from this new Communist policy. They were certainly conscious of the vast ideological and tactical differences between the two divisions of the labor movement that would have to narrow before they could achieve unity. Socialists also had serious concerns about whether to trust an alliance with Communists, who previously had pledged to infiltrate and destroy the socialist camp.

Before the French Socialist party entered into the agreement which the French Communists had proposed, the Socialist leader Léon Blum published a series of articles that discussed the dangers that might ensue after linking up with the Communists. He put forth some anxious questions:

Are we not taking the party into a dangerous adventure? Are we not running the risk, if not of destroying its unity, at least of upsetting it - the unity upon which the whole working class depends? What are the real motives of this sudden move by the Communists? What is hidden behind this painted face?⁴⁵

Such fears typified the dilemma of socialists who were contemplating joint anti-fascist action. The fact that the united front in France did occur despite such qualms exhibits the conviction of socialists there that

⁴⁵ Blum's articles from the paper *Le Populaire* are reprinted in *L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum, 1934-1937* (Paris: A. Michel, 1964), vol. 3.

circumstances would force Communists to act as honorable and reliable partners.

It was furthermore easier for some socialists to trust Moscow upon consideration of the behavior of some "Western capitalists," who had displayed apparent sympathies for the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy. This factor helped many notable European socialists, such as the Austrian, Otto Bauer,⁴⁶ to conclude that the only great power which the international working class could rely upon to champion its interests was the Soviet Union. The corollary of this belief was that working-class unity was an imperative, necessary both for defense of the Soviet Union and against fascist aggression on the home front.

This issue caused great turmoil within the Socialist International; the crisis atmosphere that the matter of a united front generated was duplicated in most of the International's member parties. The International had launched a debate on the merits of negotiating an alliance with Communists at its meeting in Paris in August 1933. Most of the 142 delegates to this conference decided that the question was pointless, since at the time the Communist International, under orders from Stalin, adamantly rejected any offers from the socialists.

⁴⁶ See Bauer's *Zwischen zwei Weltkriegen? Die Krise der Weltwirtschaft, der Demokratie und des Sozialismus* (Bratislava: Eugen Prager, 1936), pp. 310-35.

The Social Democrats from Czechoslovakia, as well as the socialist parties from Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland, argued that a united front would not strengthen the working class, but instead would weaken its power. They claimed that ties to the Communists would put socialist parties under the disagreeable burden of association with the Soviet Union's terrorist dictatorship, under which all resistance to Stalin was crushed brutally and an organized famine had killed millions of peasants, thereby causing estrangement among sympathizers.⁴⁷

However, the conference did acknowledge that in states where the Communist movement had a considerable base of support, such as in Czechoslovakia, the situation caused by the growth of fascism certainly required working-class unity. Proposals for encouraging talks with the Comintern did not receive a majority of votes, but the conference passed a resolution affirming the desire of the International "to do all in its power to reunite the divided forces of the workers."⁴⁸

The executive council of the International met in November 1934 and heard appeals from united front proponents who urged direct negotiations with the Comintern for joint action. In countries where socialists considered themselves to be under siege, such as France and Spain, the impetus for

⁴⁷ Braunthal, *History of the International*, pp. 398-402.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

unity was very strong. Similar feelings existed among representatives from Germany, Italy, and Austria, where fascism had already plowed under socialism. The same members who had condemned negotiations a year earlier continued to voice strong opposition; among them were František Soukup of the ČSDS and Anton Schäfer of the DSAP.⁴⁹ Since it was unable to reach consensus on the matter, the executive passed a resolution which gave the leadership of individual parties the right to cooperate with the Communist party in its own country.

This outcome effectively killed any attempts at direct negotiations in Czechoslovakia, since Social Democratic leaders there wanted no part of a united front. However, this ban on joint action did little to erode the strong sentiments for unity that were common among Czechs and Germans in the Social Democratic movement. An intense debate on the creation of an anti-fascist front took place in certain arenas.

Since the official newspapers of the Social Democratic parties staunchly upheld the policies of party executives, these organs did not feature discussions and analyses of tactics. On the Czechoslovak side, the main forum for the united front debate was *Dělnická osvěta* (Workers' culture),

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 482; Lewis J. Edinger, *German Exile Politics. The Social Democratic Executive Committee in the Nazi Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956), p. 147.

the periodical of the *Dělnická akademie*, the "workers' academy" for socialist cultural and educational pursuits affiliated with and sustained by the ČSDS.

Dedicated to the mental and moral "improvement" of the working class, the *Dělnická akademie* had been founded at the turn of the century by a group of workers in collaboration with Thomas Masaryk, who was then a professor at the Czech University in Prague.⁵⁰ Since 1927 the *Dělnická akademie* had been the party's designated center for fulfilling the socialist mission of creating the "new man" by means of education.⁵¹ Yet this organization was more left-oriented than was the relatively conservative leadership of the party. This was inevitable within an institution whose staff consisted mostly of educators who were imbued with socialist spirit, for whom theory took precedence over the concerns and necessities of pragmatic politics.

At times Social Democrats complained about the radical tendencies of the academy and the leftist orientation of its leader, Václav Patzak. He was accused of being a disciple of Zdeněk Nejedlý, a prominent historian and cultural critic who promoted the bolshevik political line and after the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948 became Minister of Education. According to reports submitted to President

⁵⁰ For a short history of the *Dělnická akademie* see František Soukup, *Revoluce práce*, part 2, pp. 1614-17.

⁵¹ Helmut Gruber's *Red Vienna* details similar efforts to build the "neue Mensch" by the Austrian Social Democrats.

Masaryk that were based on conversations with prominent Social Democrats, Patzak's wife was even more radical than her husband, and he was completely under her sway.⁵²

Patzak upset some Social Democrats by inviting speakers such as Nejedlý to *Dělnická akademie* lectures. As an example of the destructive tendencies inherent in Patzak's endeavors, these party members with revulsion pointed to the poetry found in a pamphlet distributed at a lecture where Nejedlý spoke, which contained such lines as:

I spit at life,
I spit at mankind,
I spit at the world.
And if only I could plunder it!

Despite such complaints the party leaders did not revamp the operation of the *Dělnická akademie*, probably because it successfully conducted a large number of educational activities in all of the major industrial areas. Party leaders knew this was to the benefit of the movement, for as workers became more educated they also tended to develop greater technical skills, and skilled workers most often elected to shun Communism and gravitate toward Social Democracy.

It is apparent that the editors of *Dělnická osvěta* did not shrink from publishing articles critical of party policies. Therefore, the discussion devoted to the Social Democratic stance and working-class unity that the journal

⁵² AKPR, carton 4, *Politické strany*, 16.9.1930.

initiated in 1934 was by no means one-sided. The editors even invited Communists to take part.

Stanislav Budín, chief editor of the KSC̣ newspaper *Rudé právo*, accepted the invitation and heralded his party's desire for a united front. The Czechoslovak Communists had proposed a move toward unity earlier in the year, with the unchanged slogan of "going over the social-fascist leaders' heads," after the success of the alliance in France.

"Communists are proud that we are the initiators of the drive to bring both camps together," he wrote. Budín concluded that "the example of France is a great one for the workers of Czechoslovakia." He used the situation in France and the Saar in an attempt to prove that the Communist initiative was not merely a ploy, as some Social Democrats objected.⁵³

Budín also stated that it was necessary to unify working-class organizations, especially unions, but the Communists insisted on maintaining their opinions because they were sure that their theory was correct: "We live on the brink of a new era and we are near a revolutionary situation, and we won't gain victory without a revolutionary, bolshevist, Leninist party." Furthermore, the Communists were convinced that the coalition politics of the Social Democratic parties offered no protection against fascism, because as they saw it a considerable portion of

⁵³ *Dělnická osvěta* (1934), pp. 308-10.

the bourgeois parties in the government had to be designated as fascist.⁵⁴

These were completely predictable statements from a Communist functionary, and they illustrate why the Social Democratic leadership could not deviate from its tactical course. In Czechoslovakia the KSČ had instigated the united front idea, and Social Democrats knew that its realization would raise the prestige of Communists. The party leaders did not want unions and associational groups such as cooperatives to unify, for they figured that there was no reason to trust the Communists now any more than there had been in the past.

Many participants in the *Dělnická osvěta* discussion mocked the Communists' assertion that they would be reliable allies. "The Communists discredited the united front slogan," declared the trade union official Jaroslav Straus, "and socialists have no trust in them." Judge the Communists by their actions, Straus urged, pointing to their (as yet) unmitigated belligerence toward Social Democratic leaders, and their attempts to invade Social Democratic organizations by means of "cells" of agitators.⁵⁵

Straus and other discussants also stated that an alliance with an anti-democratic, revolutionary party would spell danger, for it would generate a "united front of

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-06.

bourgeois-fascist" opponents, which would attempt to provoke class warfare. This coalition would follow Hitler's example and seize control of the state, nullify the constitution, and repress the labor movement.

According to the Social Democrats who decidedly were against the KSC, fascism was a result of communism. To the extent that political extremism prompts an opposing extreme, this assessment was correct. These socialists supported compromise and cooperation with the bourgeois parties:

Evolution, not revolution! Does it go slowly? The basis of the democratic political process is patience. *We don't want to gather unripe fruit - it's sour!* By evolution, we are preparing revolution.

This cadre of participants in the debate also examined what they called the "tactical mistakes" of socialists in Germany and Austria. The SPD in Germany not only suffered from the "senseless" politics of the German Communists, but also its "traditional, radical verbal Marxism" was ill-suited to the political realities of the Weimar republic. So the "reputed strong theoretical power of the SPD was old junk of no use."⁵⁶ Similarly, the Austrian Social Democrats "valued programmatic purity more than practical politics." Theorists led the party to rely on "unfortunate tactics," such as the creation of its armed formations (*Schutzbund*), with disastrous results.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-61.

The lesson for Social Democrats to learn: an obsession with theory (no compromise with bourgeois parties) and radical/insurrectionary action, led either by socialists or Communists, was dangerous. Articles in *Dělnická osvěta* also mentioned that some refugee German and Austrian Social Democrats were now in Czechoslovakia, and were attempting to influence the political discourse in the republic. The authors said that in an effort to advance the overthrow of the regimes in their homelands these exiles wanted to denounce the "bankruptcy" of moderate reformism, and turn to revolutionary tactics. "We hope that we have shown what tactics really are bankrupt," they averred.⁵⁷

Although these Social Democrats were completely in step with the movement's leadership, and condemned the tactics of the Communists, most of them nonetheless expressed the idea that something should be done to effect working-class unity. They thought that it was not possible to give up the idea of creating a united front, despite the "almost insurmountable differences" present in the labor movement. They recognized that workers "of all political stripes want a united working class." How this ideal could be realized, they did not know. Implicit within the writing of these Social Democrats was the notion that it was up to the leaders to work out the details, and that there was some room for negotiating. This is why even the moderate Jaroslav Straus included the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

observation that "some [Social Democrats] directly indict (vinit) the leaders of their organizations for being against unity due to personal, or party-oriented (*stranický*) reasons."⁵⁸

The discussion in *Dělnická osvěta* revealed that even stalwart followers of the anti-Communist line of thinking within Social Democracy pined for class unity. One effect of this condition on Social Democratic leaders was to induce them to maintain their tactical status quo, in order to appear unwavering and firmly in control of the movement.

Other party members who contributed to the journal's discussion took positions that did not openly challenge the politics of the leadership, but were obviously based upon a different interpretation of what tactics were correct to follow. For example, the trade union leader Arno Hais wanted all of the various union centers that were affiliated with the Social Democratic parties, the Czechoslovak National Socialists, and the KSČ respectively to unite into one organization. "The problems involved in this are great," Hais wrote, "but the goal is worth it." This plan was contrary to the ideas of the party leadership.

In the previous decade Hais had been an important figure in the Communist Red Unions; and his father Josef had headed the Communist All-Trade Union Organization in Czechoslovakia (*Mezinárodní všeodborový svaz - MVS*). In

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 302.

1929 the victorious bolshevizing faction within the KSC^ě expelled Arno Hais from the party. He also lost his position in the Communist union movement, as both the MVS and the Profitem, the international Communist union organization, ejected him from their ranks. Arno Hais became a member of the Right Communist opposition and later joined the ČSDS. He and his viewpoints were typical of the ex-Communist element within the ČSDS that party leaders sought to contain.

Bohuslav Ečer also fit into this category. Born in 1893, he was in the Social Democratic movement before 1914 and departed with the Radical Left in 1920. After 1929 he was back in the ČSDS. Ečer was a highly skilled lawyer with great organizational and public speaking talents. His connections in Brno, where since 1924 he had been a member of municipal administrative boards, were valuable to the party. In 1935 he would become deputy mayor of Brno.

A frequent contributor to *Dělnická osvěta*, Ečer used the discussion of the united front as an opportunity to advance his viewpoint, which did not faithfully support the party line. He actually did not discuss an alliance with the Communists. His opinion on the matter had already been established, for as a guest speaker at a DSAP conference in Brno he had advocated a pact between the Socialist International and the Comintern.⁵⁹ His article was a

⁵⁹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 8.11.1933.

rebuttal of the argument of those comrades who fully backed the leadership's coalition politics and urged participation in the government, no matter what compromises had to be endured. Ečer argued that coalition politics could not be a basic principle of the movement. The party had to employ it as a tactical maneuver, and as such, the party had to periodically evaluate and reconsider the effectiveness of government membership.

Ečer reflected back upon the successes of the international socialist movement, which he noted had grown because of "decades of celebrated activities in opposition." He answered those comrades who championed "constructive" politics by declaring that this could also mean the politics of opposition. Finally, Ečer disputed the belief that the working class should not resort to civil war and revolution, if necessary, to defend socialism.⁶⁰ The article was not an open confrontation with the decisions of the party leadership. Ečer did not have enough authority to attack the policies of the top Social Democrats, but he must have had some measure of influence within the party, for in 1937 he became a member of its executive committee.

Ečer's article, as well as the entire *Dělnická osvěta* debate on working-class unity, raised questions about tactics. For party leaders the matter of tactics was all-important at this time. Since theory had receded to the

⁶⁰ *Dělnická osvěta* (1934), pp. 336-43.

background, tactics naturally became the leading factor in guiding decisions. Because the left and right wings of the movement examined the choice of the correct path to take so closely, and each side claimed that tactical errors had led to the defeat of Social Democracy in Germany and Austria, both the left and the right within each party became more entrenched in its position. For the leadership, the risks of losing prestige and party discipline were factors which tended to eliminate innovations in developing strategies and economic planning.

Intraparty opposition affected political decisions on the German side of the movement as well as among the Czechs. Top officials of the DSAP, starting with Ludwig Czech, insisted that the party's presence in the coalition together with the ČSDS was important for German workers. Czech pointed out how, as Minister of Social Welfare and later Minister of Public Works, he was helping to channel state funds into the distressed German areas. Material published by the party, especially leaflets and posters for elections, regularly advertised the sums of money that Czech's offices had doled out to needy Germans, in an effort to show that the activism of the DSAP was the correct policy to follow. Ironically, the party's educational organization received state support due to Czech's patronage but harbored opposition to the policies of the party chairman, similarly to the case of *Dělnická akademie* and the ČSDS.

The *Zentralstelle für das Bildungswesen der deutschen sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei* carried out the mission of developing the "neue Mensch" for the DSAP. One of the association's directors was Dr. Emil Franzel, who was also responsible for editorial supervision of the *Zentralstelle* annual, *Arbeiter-Jahrbuch*. Franzel was one of the chief opposition figures within the party. During the first half of the 1930s his orientation was to the left, so that he favored the united anti-fascist front. Later, he cast his lot with those party members who advocated a brand of socialism that was more geared to a nationalist outlook.⁶¹

Up to the parliamentary election in May 1935 the DSAP leadership reckoned that the main threat to the party, and by extension to German workers, was the left opposition. The leaders certainly regarded the burgeoning strength of German nationalism to be dangerous. However, at the time they saw it as a threat external to the party, in that German and Czech fascists could ally in an attempt to cancel Social Democratic influence in the government, possibly leading to the same scenario as had happened in Germany.

There was no warning signal that alerted the DSAP to the disaster it would suffer in 1935. In fact, the party received generally comforting news from the results of the December 1934 municipal elections. It had not lost many

⁶¹ For Franzel's activities see Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 115-17, 147-48, 165-66.

votes to Konrad Henlein's recently formed *Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront*; as the Social Democrats had anticipated, that *völkisch* grouping cut in to the totals of the German Agrarian party and secured the votes that had previously gone to the German National Socialists and German Nationalists.⁶²

Therefore the DSAP leaders had no pressing reason for diverting most of their attention from the very real problem of dissent within their own ranks. The tendency of top-ranking Social Democrats to concentrate upon defeating their leftist opposition received an even greater impetus from a similar struggle among the socialist exiles who had escaped arrest in Germany and Austria and had found refuge in Czechoslovakia. Between 1933 and 1938 several thousand of these defeated Social Democrats converged in the major cities of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. Many of them did not remain in the state for very long, using it only as a transit stop on the way to their final destination in western Europe. For those who did stay, Prague became the center of activity for those Germans from the Reich who were directing resistance efforts against Hitler, while the Austrian exiles made their headquarters in Brno.⁶³

⁶² *Central European Observer*, 14.12.1934.

⁶³ Edinger, *German Exile Politics*; Erich Matthias, *Sozialdemokratie und Nation. Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der sozialdemokratischen Emigration in der Prager Zeit des Parteivorstandes 1933-1938* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1952).

The DSAP (and to a lesser extent the ČSDS) concerned itself with the welfare of the exile groups, providing legal and financial assistance to its unfortunate comrades. In turn, these refugees participated in daily affairs of the party.⁶⁴ Therefore it was inevitable that the strident conflict between the exile community's left and right wings had an effect on political practice within the DSAP.

Reports of intraparty conditions filed by the Czechoslovak state police indicate that opposition to the established leadership existed not only in the party itself, but also in affiliated unions and groups such as cooperatives. The reports state that the opposition was "completely under the influence of the Communist party."⁶⁵ The police officials who compiled these reports often relied on party members for information, so it is possible that this characterization of the opposition was skewed. Nonetheless, numerous reports from a variety of districts confirm that German leaders thought of their opponents as radicals. Many reports name Emil Franzel as a leader of the left wing of the party, and assert that he stood "very close to the KSČ."⁶⁶

The despair of young German Social Democrats over the policies of the older generation that was in control of the party found an outlet in the periodical *Sozialistische*

⁶⁴ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 109-10.

⁶⁵ SÚA, fond Zemský úřad Prahy (ZUP), 207-759-12.

⁶⁶ SUA ZUP, 207-760-4.

Aktion, which appeared beginning in June 1934.⁶⁷ Franzel regularly contributed lead articles to this publication, which found a wide readership in some parts of Bohemia, such as the Social Democratic stronghold of Cheb. Some reports charge that if the group associated with *Sozialistische Aktion* had its way, the DSAP would link with the Communists and form an anti-fascist paramilitary force, on the order of the Austrian *Schutzbund*.⁶⁸ Calls for an armed unit of this type, with the possible mission of fighting state forces in a revolutionary action, were contrary to the wishes of both German and Czech leaders. The DSAP did have a military-style force, the *Rote Wehr*, but its purpose was protection for party members against violent attacks by Communists or Nazis. Members of this unit did not carry arms in public, but police were aware that they did have weapons.⁶⁹

The mid-1930s saw the rise to new heights within the DSAP of the parliamentary deputy Wenzel Jaksch, the man who would eventually wrest control of the party from Ludwig Czech. Jaksch (born 1896) benefited from the clamor of young party members for new blood and fresh ideas among the leadership. A member of the executive committee since 1921, he was careful not to mount an outright challenge to the

⁶⁷ See Bachstein, *Wenzel Jaksch und die sudetendeutsche Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 72-75; and Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 111-21, for the intent of the founders of this publication. The latter citation also provides a broader discussion of internal DSAP opposition.

⁶⁸ SÚA ZÚP, 207-759-12.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

"old guard," and always condemned the Communists as untrustworthy negativists. However, it was no secret that from the time of the party's 1932 congress, when the left opposition had so forcefully attempted to change the course of the DSAP's politics, Jaksch had been developing closer contacts with prominent members of that dissident faction.⁷⁰ At the 1935 general congress, after the party's devastating losses in the parliamentary elections, Jaksch became deputy chairman.

The picture of conditions within the leadership of the DSAP during this time is that of tumult, and of the established leaders' determined resistance to proposals for change. President Masaryk's political observers submitted reports indicating that the strain on Ludwig Czech at this time was such that he could not handle his work as Minister of Social Welfare. Czech's age (born 1870) was working against him. Some ČSDS leaders thought that another German Social Democrat, such as general secretary Siegfried Taub, should relieve him in the minister's post. However, Czech and Taub reacted decisively to stop speculation about this move, declaring that it was "a matter of prestige" for the chairman to remain in the cabinet.⁷¹ One reason for this decision was Czech's realization that he should muster as

⁷⁰ Bachstein, *Wenzel Jaksch*, p. 56.

⁷¹ AKPR, 5.9.1933; ÚTGM, 7.9.1933.

much prestige as possible with his dual roles, in order to deter challenges to his leadership.

During the campaign for the 1935 parliamentary election the German Social Democrats emphasized their support for democracy and the republic, and the practical results which accrued to working-class Germans from following an activist course. On the instructions of the party leadership, . . . speakers concentrated on voters who were not extremists, but were still "under the influence of Communism." The party hoped to convince such citizens that a stronger DSAP translated into greater influence and better living conditions for German workers. Campaign rhetoric thus intended to portray voting for the KSC as folly, even if one's heart would beat faster at the mention of the world's lone "workers' state":

...the Communists are actually working contrary to the needs of the Soviet Union, which for its own protection must ally itself with [Western] states that must remain democratic in order to do Russia any good. Therefore, how foolish is the Communists' constant abuse (*Geschimpfe*) against our coalition politics, which serves to protect democracy!⁷²

Thus leftist workers who were committed to the victory of international socialism and who disparaged the German activist policy of participation in the government received the message that if they cared about the Soviet Union, they

⁷² *Die Wahlen 1935! Eine Rede-Anleitung für Referenten* (Prague: Verlag DSAP, 1935), pp. 18-20.

should do everything possible to preserve democracy in Czechoslovakia.

The campaign strategies of DSAP leaders did little to protect the party against the enormous losses it suffered in the May 1935 election. Compared to the previous election in 1929, almost half of the party's constituency did not choose its message of activism. Similarly, the percentage of Germans who deserted the KSC^h was about half.⁷³ These working-class voters had gone over to Konrad Henlein's newly constituted aggregation of nationalist Germans, the *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (SdP), which captured two-thirds of the total German electorate. A month later, at the DSAP general congress in Brno, Ludwig Czech continued unabated the leadership's condemnation of the party's Communist foes. Citing problems caused by the propaganda that equated socialists with fascists, as well as the divisiveness imprinted upon the working class by years of enmity, Czech blamed the Communists for the Social Democratic weakness that enabled the SdP to inveigle so many German workers with nationalist demagoguery.⁷⁴

This signaled the German party leadership's determination to maintain an embargo against applications for closer relations with the KSC^h, leading to a possible

⁷³ Jiří Sláma and Karel Kaplan, *Die Parlamentswahlen in der Tschechoslowakei 1935-1946-1948* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986), pp. 17-25.

⁷⁴ *Sozialdemokrat*, 22.6.1935.

united front. With over ten percent of the total vote in the election, the KSČ still had respectable overall strength. Because Moscow had jettisoned the "social-fascist" line, and Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union had concluded a mutual assistance treaty on 16 May 1935, the Communists had converted to supporting the existence of the republic. To some Social Democrats this seemed to remove a large obstacle from the path toward an alliance against fascism.

Communists began appearing at some joint meetings of Czech and German Social Democrats, propagating the united front message.⁷⁵ In the Ostrava area, where the sentiment for unity was strong among the mixed population of German and Czech workers, some leaders of local Social Democratic organizations accepted Communist offers of cooperation. This resulted in their agreement not to attack each other in regional communal elections in the second half of 1935, and in a large united public demonstration in October that protested against changes in the insurance provisions for miners.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ SÚA PMV-X-P, 225-1166-22, carton 1166.

⁷⁶ Milon Dohnal et al., *Přehled dějin KSČ v severomoravském kraji do roku 1948 - Ostravsko* (Outline of the history of the KSČ in the north Moravian area up to 1948, Ostrava region) (Ostrava: Profil, 1981), p. 79; Karel Jirík and Blanka Pitronová, *Dějiny Ostravy* (History of Ostrava) (Ostrava: Profil, 1967), p. 498; this source indicates that 18,000 workers joined in the protest.

At the June 1935 congress of the DSAP party leaders acknowledged that "many Social Democrats had high hopes of an end of the fraternal battle" with the Communists. The congress reviewed proposals of the KSC^Y for negotiations toward a united front, but since they required the DSAP to leave the government, party leaders condemned the arrangement. The German leadership declared that the Communists were not sincere in their efforts to form a partnership, and that their offer "has turned out to be merely another ploy." They added that the Social Democrats' withdrawal from the coalition was "just what Henlein wants."⁷⁷

The world congress of the Comintern in Moscow during the summer of 1935 also drew the attention of the working class to the ideal of unity. On this occasion the Comintern officially changed its line, and issued a comprehensive appeal for a united front. Government participation alongside bourgeois parties still remained outside the realm of possibility for anti-fascist partners. An address by Klement Gottwald, leader of the KSC^Y, to the congress emphasized the determination of the Czechoslovak Communists to uphold this tenet. Gottwald also condemned the Czechoslovak government's "oppression" of the state's German and Ruthenian minorities.⁷⁸ The congress prompted an

⁷⁷ *Fünf Jahre Kampf und Arbeit!*, p.81.

⁷⁸ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, p.409.

increasing number of Social Democrats to weigh in on the side that supported negotiations with the Communists.

During the ensuing months Social Democratic leaders found numerous occasions to advertise their party's decision to reject the united front. At many public meetings, for instance, Wenzel Jaksch asserted that the Communists still practiced "subversive politics."⁷⁹ The DSAP leadership tirelessly declared that participation in the government was necessary if the party was to protect democracy and the interests of German workers.⁸⁰ In the ČSDS, chairman Hampel directed the policy which refused to entertain Communist proposals for joint speeches or other public activities.⁸¹

From today's vantage point one may find it puzzling that ominous circumstances did not force Social Democratic leaders to relent and to have been more accommodating to the voices of opposition within their parties. There were also some sections of democratic society outside of the parties that favored an understanding between the spokesmen of the working class: articles in *Národní osvobození* (National liberation), a newspaper with close ties to the circle around President Masaryk, and in the National Socialist paper *Český směr* (The Czech way) thought that the time had come for a discussion of the Communists' offers of a united

⁷⁹ SÚA PMR-S, carton 98, report of 12.2.1936.

⁸⁰ *Sozialdemokrat*, 24.3.1936.

⁸¹ Archív ČSDS, fond 71/19, 1.10.1936.

front.⁸² After all, it seems as if the fascist threat, apparent from events in Germany, Italy, Spain, and especially from the tremendous electoral success of Henlein's SdP, would have made the pressure on Social Democratic leaders much more intense, forcing them to capitulate. Why did this not happen?

Those leaders who advocated coalition politics and rejected the united front held their ground because they were able to argue that fascism would not triumph in Czechoslovakia. There was some basis for this contention, so these leaders could have felt justified in continuing to serve the working class in a way they thought was best.

The most important factor for this argument was the election of Edward Beneš to the presidency in December 1935 with broad support across the political spectrum. This victory appeared to sustain the view that the extreme right could not take control of the state. Upon Thomas Masaryk's resignation of his office, for reasons of illness and infirmity, the right wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarians enacted a campaign to defeat Beneš as Masaryk's designated successor.⁸³ This effort failed, and Social Democratic leaders could plausibly argue that an anti-democratic fascist bloc was not about to dominate the government.

⁸² Horak, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party," p. 74.

⁸³ See Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," pp. 155-56.

Rudolf Bechyně, writing in *Přítomnost* under the name "Amicus," presented this point of view and urged the "pessimistic" opposition within the Social Democratic parties to moderate its demands for a united front "offensive" against purported reactionary forces.⁸⁴

There were also some indications that the growth of Henlein's movement could be halted, and even reversed. During the spring and summer of 1936 Beneš toured the German areas of the state in order to discuss economic and social problems with the citizens there. His speeches in their language, which favored equality of rights for those who were loyal to the republic, made a good impression on the Germans.⁸⁵ Thus there was hope that the SdP had amassed what amounted to a large protest vote, and that many Germans were not solidly committed to that party. Municipal elections in December 1936 served to fortify these hopes. Social Democrats pointed to the areas where the DSAP had improved its position, and used the results to claim that "the rise of the SdP has stopped."⁸⁶ Similar declarations of success followed elections of stewards to industrial committees for mines and factories, where Social Democratic candidates prevailed.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Přítomnost* (1936), no. 3, no. 4.

⁸⁵ Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, p. 242.

⁸⁶ *Sozialdemokrat*, 9.12.1936; *Právo lidu*, 10.12.1936.

⁸⁷ *Zpráva o činnosti ČSDS 1933-1936*, p. 164.

The results favorable to Social Democracy in these elections manifested the internal strife that had gripped the SdP after its great success in the parliamentary election.⁸⁸ The Henlein party had won the support of big industrialists, middle-class nationalists, and a segment of handicraft and wage earners. Henlein also had gained endorsements from aristocratic families such as the Hohenlohes and the Kinskys. With such a disparate constituency, it was inevitable that social conflicts would surface to rend the supposed unity of the German nationalist movement. When they did, Henlein and his colleagues failed to gauge the strength of these dissident forces and then were unable to devise an effective response to them. The schism in the nationalist camp remained open until 1938.

Henlein's theories for the nationalist movement were based upon the concepts of the Viennese academician Othmar Spann. These teachings emphasized elitist ideas of a true *Volksgemeinschaft* that would follow the commands of its "natural" leaders. These spiritually united men, Spann claimed, could regenerate the nation, after "un-German" ideologies such as Marxism had weakened the *Volk*.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ For the story of this battle within the Henlein movement see César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, chapters IV-V; and Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem*, chapters IV-IX.

⁸⁹ Othmar Spann, *Der wahre Staat. Vorlesungen über Abbruch und Neubau der Gesellschaft* (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1931).

The SdP assured the working class of its importance to the project of national re-invigoration. When Henlein spoke to audiences that included workers he told them, "you are the backbone of my movement!" The party had some ideas for helping unemployed Germans. For example, SdP members who had jobs were to pay a one percent assessment of their wages into a fund for the support of workers, without regard for the recipient's political affiliation. The party belatedly organized a workers' council, but Henlein and his contingent kept control of it. Only two of the council's six members were considered to be representatives from the working class.⁹⁰ Dissidents criticized Henlein's ties to German industrialists, and publicized the gifts taken in by the party leader, such as the luxurious Horch automobile he received from a factory owner in the Reich. This type of agitation kept many workers uncertain as to whether the Social Democrats or the SdP would better serve their interests.⁹¹

Dissident nationalist labor leaders cautioned German workers that their interests would not prevail in the future. Under "Sudeten German socialism," as with other collectivist systems, the controlling authorities would take over the means of production. Unlike Communism, of course, the authorities would base all decisions about labor on the

⁹⁰ César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol.2, pp. 358-59.

⁹¹ Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, pp. 265-66.

advancement of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, not on the care of the working proletariat. This meant, for example, that one could not choose what work he did, and that the community took precedence over any collective labor agreements.⁹² Henlein and his circle of associates thought that their intellectual qualifications and strength of character set them above the masses in the working class; this group accordingly tried to exclude nationalist labor leaders from participation in the SdP's political decision-making processes.

A labor-oriented opposition to Henlein's leadership vigorously directed attention to the SdP's neglect of the German worker. Heading this contingent were men who had been important figures in the outlawed DNSAP, such as Rudolf Haider and Rudolf Kasper. Quarrels and tension within the SdP magnified to the extent that Henlein nearly resigned as leader in December 1935. When the party threatened the dissident labor leaders with expulsion, disgruntled workers publicly declared: "when they go out, we do too."⁹³

While many of these former DNSAP adherents were radical in their nationalist outlook, they also obviously were

⁹² For the party's attitude toward labor see *Arbeit für 300.000; Schutz der Arbeitlosen vor ärgster Not. Ein Sofortprogramm der SdP* (Karlsbad [Karlovy Vary]: K. H. Frank, 1935); *Der Arbeiter und sein Recht* (Karlsbad: K. H. Frank, 1936). Dr. Karel Engliš, governor of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia in 1938, discussed these concepts in "*Der deutsche Sozialismus als Programm der sudetendeutschen Partei* (Prague: Orbis, 1938), pp. 75-82.

⁹³ Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem*, pp. 153-54.

unwilling to subjugate their class interests to the yoke of the pan-German ideal. The extent of the frustration with Henlein is evident in the treachery some of the dissidents perpetrated against the SdP: in order to promote turbulence within the party, these Germans went to the government with information about the pernicious activities of Henlein's followers.⁹⁴ With these tensions crimping the effectiveness of the SdP's message, it is no wonder that its working-class element was not loyal, so that the DSAP managed to find some good news in the 1936 elections mentioned above. Therefore the DSAP leadership kept the party moving on the same course, emphasizing Social Democratic cooperation, participation in the coalition, and a disavowal of the united front.

The Czech leaders, as well as the German, saw no reason to panic in the period up to 1936, even after the DSAP had lost so much of its parliamentary strength in the 1935 election. The leaders considered that fascism was a formidable problem, but one that still was manageable, and in fact possibly would recede. On the other hand, they knew that their chronic nemeses on the left were eager to exert a controlling influence over the Social Democratic movement, and possibly would have achieved this status if the parties began to change their policies. It was necessary for the parties to remain in lockstep. In the succeeding years this

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

perception remained truer than ever, although the nature of the German leadership's opposition already was undergoing a transformation.

Chapter V: A Threat from the Left and the Right

The problematic relations among Czechs and Germans increasingly captured the attention of Western observers during the period between 1936 and the Munich Agreement at the end of September 1938. Hitler's demands to the Czechoslovak government on behalf of the allegedly oppressed Sudeten Germans turned the Czech Lands into a potential combat zone, and created a climate of tension and fear of war. These sensational developments compelled scores of journalists from Europe and North America to ensconce themselves in the state to report on the story.¹ The unfolding drama also drew adventuresome and inquisitive young people from Western countries to the heart of Europe, to learn for themselves what was taking place and to see the sites which threatened to become the focal point for a new European war.²

Hugh Seton-Watson was one of these young observers. Recently graduated from Oxford, the future historian traveled to western Bohemia during the summer of 1938 as the

¹ As a small sample of the books produced by these writers see Sydney Morrell, *I Saw the Crucifixion* (London: Peter Davies, 1939); and Vincent Sheean, *Not Peace but a Sword* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., Inc., 1939).

² John F. Kennedy was one of the curious youths who traveled to Czechoslovakia, although he arrived shortly after Munich. His father Joseph, the American ambassador to London, directed Foreign Service officials in Prague to facilitate Kennedy's trip, including his transit across the German lines. This incurred the wrath of George F. Kennan, then a staff member of the American legation in Prague, who unenthusiastically fulfilled this task. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (New York: Pantheon, 1967), pp. 91-2.

guest of some German Social Democrats. He learned of the pressures on his hosts and witnessed the harassment and the threats that their Henleinist enemies inflicted upon them daily. The young Englishman also noted the unity of anti-fascist Czechs and Germans. With his German friends, Hugh Seton-Watson attended some of the joint activities that had brought the two nationalities together and bolstered their determination to fight the fascist threat:

[We] marched through the streets of Pilsen (Plzeň) in July 1938 to a meeting with Czech Social Democrats to pledge their loyalty to the Czechoslovak republic. Crowds of Czechs lined the streets, many ranks deep, calling out, "Long live our German friends!"³

Events and activities of this type, promoted by both Social Democratic parties, succeeded in establishing fraternal bonds between German and Czech workers. This is evident from Social Democratic publications and memoirs. Whereas in earlier years, "it would have been inconceivable for [Germans] to mix socially with Czechs" in cities such as Plzeň, many more members of each group now sought out each others' company.⁴

The DSAP obviously had lost thousands of voters to Henlein's party, but the Social Democrats still retained a substantial core of dedicated adherents who were committed to living and working with Czechs. To some observers the

³ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The "Sick Heart" of Modern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 49.

⁴ Max Adler, *A Socialist Remembers* (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 159. This author was a journalist from Plzeň, not the noted Viennese sociologist Professor Max Adler.

party's cause seemed lost, yet the number of party members actually grew between 1931 and 1938.⁵ This growth indicates that among the rank and file the pervasive nationalism of past generations was receding, and a true interest in national cooperation existed.

Workers caught up in the spirit of solidarity even vowed to learn the language of their comrades. So pledged one Jiří Devatý, who took part in the big July 1938 parade in Plzeň, formed a friendship at that time with a German worker from Cheb who was attending the gathering, and felt moved to write a letter about this experience to his union newspaper. This letter expressed the admiration and praise of Czechs who appreciated that Social Democratic Germans remained loyal to the republic:

You live, work, and heroically uphold your democratic feeling, although your area is the worst hell of Nazi propaganda....You paraded up to the town's statue of Masaryk, and placed laurel wreaths of faith and love on it to honor his memory. We won't forget this!... You and I are at home in this land, like the trees of our forest lakes....We became brothers that night, even though words were difficult to find.⁶

Such displays of solidarity against threatening forces were common during that year of tension.

⁵ *Funf Jahre Kampf und Arbeit! Bericht an den in der Zeit vom 18. bis 21. Marz 1938 stattfindenden Parteitag in Reichenberg* (Prague: Verlag des Parteivorstandes der DSAP, 1938), p. 233. The number of local party organizations had climbed slightly, to 1,397; the membership total had increased by a few thousand to 82,425.

⁶ *Zájmy kovodělníků* (Metalworkers' interests) 10.8.1938, "Dopis českého dělníka německému soudruhu" (A Czech worker's letter to a German comrade).

Given such apparent harmony within the ranks of the movement, plus the penchant of party leaders for effecting tactical maneuvers, leads one to ask a question pregnant with possibility: why did the parties not undergo a merger? Such a husbanding of strength could have established a party larger even than the Czechoslovak Agrarians, boosting the prestige of the Social Democrats both within the republic and on the international level. Their status could well have led to a significant increase in political power.

The idea of a merger in fact did surface in March 1938. The Czech side tendered it after a leadership change had occurred in the German party, as the aging, embattled chairman Ludwig Czech was unable to prevent his younger rival, Wenzel Jaksch, from taking command of the DSAP. However, instead of propelling the movement forward, the proposal for one large party created friction. Jaksch and his supporters bitterly resented the suggestion that the party should cease to exist as an independent entity. This episode manifested the residual national differences within the leadership of the movement.

The German side imagined that the Czechs had put forth the proposal not for the mutual benefit of both national groups, but in order to dominate and control the affairs of those Germans who still were opposed to Henlein. The new German leaders were susceptible to the fear that their

organization would become subsumed within a much larger grouping.

The Czech leaders who backed this plan claimed that it was sensible in light of the recent *Anschluß* and subsequent defection of the German Agrarians and German Christian Socials from the ranks of the activist parties, i.e. those loyal to the government, to the SdP. Yet these ČSDS leaders had not put forth their proposal when Ludwig Czech was still chairman of the DSAP. It appeared that the idea was a reaction to Jaksch's leadership and his plans to steer his party's politics in a more nationalist direction, in order to help offset the radical pan-German rhetoric of the Henleinist camp.

In 1938 Czech leaders mistrusted Jaksch's commitment to the program of cooperation, as they considered that he would move away from a Marxist, internationalist conception of socialist principles for the DSAP. The Czech leaders anticipated two disasters arising from this threat: Jaksch would eventually forsake participation in the government, ruining the Social Democratic solidarity that supported the authority of the party leaders; and the German working class, once they became accustomed to a more nationalist message from their Social Democratic politicians, would invariably abandon the DSAP in favor of the most *volkisch* exponent, Konrad Henlein.

Thus the Czech and the German leadership spent the fateful year 1938 wary of each other. This problem diverted their attention from the challenges posed by their adversaries on the left and right. The residual nationalism of the party leaders forestalled a dramatic anti-fascist maneuver such as the creation of a Czech-German party. Although the program of cooperation remained in force until the end of the First Republic, and many of the rank and file forged personal, fraternal bonds in recognition of a common enemy, the interests of the top leaders in each party diverged.

During the period from 1936 up to the end of the First Republic, both Social Democratic parties continued a vigorous, prolific campaign of joint activities as an expression of their policy of solidarity. In all mixed-nationalities areas of the state the parties' local organizations coordinated rallies and demonstrations to proclaim Social Democracy's commitment to defend democracy and the republic. ČSDS organizations actively supported German efforts to portray the DSAP as a viable political entity, at least while Ludwig Czech was chairman, despite the overwhelming numbers that the SdP had scored in the last parliamentary election in 1935.

The parties in particular called upon their gymnastic organizations to take part in joint parades and exhibitions. This display of national harmony also projected the message

of discipline and youthful vigor, useful for countering the Henleinist propaganda that featured the same themes.

In June 1936 in Tachov (western Bohemia), for example, Czech gymnasts from this town and from Plzeň joined their German counterparts to participate in a "Kreistag der Arbeit," organized by the DSAP. Their parade of nearly 5,000 led to a rally at the town's main square, at which Ludwig Czech spoke. He assured his listeners that Social Democracy remained steadfast as a safeguard against war and fascism, and pointed out that in Tachov the strength of the party had grown since the election of the previous year. He attributed this to the corrosive schism within the SdP.⁷ A spokesman for the Czechoslovak party then followed Ludwig Czech, reinforcing the latter's message, to the boisterous approval of the crowd.

According to the police reports of these joint activities, the audiences greeted all references to national cooperation with great enthusiasm. Jaksch spoke at an open-air assembly in Nýrsko (southwest Bohemia) in September 1936, after a parade of German and Czech gymnasts. Emphasizing cooperation and equality, Jaksch stated that German Social Democrats were fighting to overcome national differences and build a more developed society, whose motto was "live and let live." When he added that "we carry out

⁷ SÚA PMV-X 225-1015, carton 1015, 8.6.1936. For details of the friction within the SdP see chapter 4 of the dissertation.

this struggle together with our Czech comrades," the crowd cheered "Bravo!" lustily. Jaksch then addressed the Czechs in the audience in their language. Thanking them for their participation, Jaksch stressed that not all Germans were in the fascist camp, and that "the German worker is willing to shed blood for the republic." He ended his speech with a bilingual cry saluting freedom, "*Freiheit-Nazdar!*" The report indicates that "thunderous applause" followed.⁸

Social Democratic union members of both nationalities upheld the practice of cooperation by conducting joint conferences. One of the largest such gatherings took place in Liberec in May 1938, starting the day after huge local May 1st Labor Day functions had drawn thousands of German and Czech Social Democrats together to demonstrate their solidarity. Over 120 unions participated in the conference.⁹ The consumer cooperatives affiliated with the parties also displayed their support for Social Democratic unity. For example, in April 1938 representatives from the administrative center for the German cooperatives in Prague, the *Verband deutscher Wirtschaftsgenossen*, met with their Czech counterparts in the *Ústřední svaz československých družstev*, to honor the latter organization's thirtieth anniversary. The celebrants praised the positive efforts of

⁸ SÚA PMV-X 225-1015, carton 1015, 27.9. 1936.

⁹ *Právo lidu*, 3.5.1938.

the cooperatives toward establishing contacts and working together over the years.¹⁰

Most of these common activities featured praise by Czech speakers for the Germans' resistance against the onslaught of terrorism from SdP backers that they faced in their communities. The fascist adversaries of the German Social Democrats plagued them by means of physical assault and various forms of psychological harassment. The DSAP's attempts to schedule political meetings often were futile because Henleinists effectively disrupted the gatherings. Police reports demonstrate that in some cities, such as Rumburk (north Bohemia), twice as many fascists as Social Democrats showed up for meetings. Fighting between the groups inevitably broke out, and subsequently the police cancelled the meeting.¹¹

Henleinists repeatedly avowed that anti-fascists would suffer after the inevitable passage of the German areas to the control of the SdP. "The day is coming!" (*Es kommt der Tag*) was the catch-phrase of the fascists. The Social Democrats heard it constantly, either shouted at them in a political harangue or whispered menacingly behind their backs. The Social Democrats furthermore faced constant reminders of the presence of a hugely powerful adversary located nearby in the Reich, an enemy whose hatred of them

¹⁰ *Právo lidu*, 5.4.1938.

¹¹ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1165-4, 21.3.1937.

was constant and who could possibly attack and conquer the border areas within a matter of days. The media kept this disturbing fact directly in the mind of the anti-fascist German. Along the border he actually could see the menace.

One might consider some of the minor incidents of harassment that took place between the rival camps to be funny, were the consequences not ultimately so tragic. For example, a confrontation occurred in late July 1938 between German Social Democrats and Reich Nazis at the border town of Načetín (northwest Bohemia). The DSAP had organized a rally in the town, and this political function was distinguished by the presence of foreign guests: an American woman journalist named Leclair, and a Finnish parliamentary deputy. When Social Democrats from another town arrived by bus to take part, a group of twenty Nazis standing just on the other side of the border saw them and then attempted to provoke a confrontation. They did this not with mere words, but with the most outrageous insult imaginable. The Nazis all turned their backs and slapped themselves on the buttocks, a vilifying gesture conveying the command "Lick my ass!" The police report indicates that the Social Democrats did not erupt, but chose to ignore the provocation.¹² Although the event was innocuous, it helped diminish the resolve of anti-Henlein Germans to maintain their beliefs.

¹² SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, 1.8.1938.

The demoralizing effect of relentless psychological pressure was a chilling climate of tension that strained nerves to the utmost.

Besides publicizing specific incidents of violence and taking their general anti-fascist message to members of the working class, the Social Democrats carried out the battle against the Henleinists within the halls of political power. For example, at public meetings in Brno, German and Czech Social Democrats touted their cooperation on municipal boards as a positive force against fascism.¹³

Czech Social Democrats tried to use political influence to help their German comrades withstand the SdP's campaign of threats and intimidation. For example, Czech party officials used their contacts within the president's office in an attempt to support the beleaguered Social Democratic deputy mayor (*místostarosta*) of Karlovy Vary, Franz Hollick, by securing an audience for him with President Beneš. Reporting that the SdP had made Hollick a scapegoat for the woes of unemployed Germans, the Czech supplication revealed that under Henleinist terror Hollick was losing his nerve, but "an audience would restore his confidence and firm resolve, which in turn would boost the morale of others in his coterie." This appeal to the president went on to state that many German activists were quitting politics because of the terror, and that the situation was compounded by their

¹³ SÚA PMV-X 225-1165-4, 26.11.1936.

feeling that not enough support and understanding for their plight was coming from Prague. This Social Democratic effort on the behalf of Hollick met with failure.¹⁴ Such refusals were not only a symptom of Social Democratic weakness against a powerful fascist organization, but also an indication of the government's unwillingness to monitor the strife in the border areas and guarantee the safety and civil liberties of all citizens.

Deputies from both parties continued to stand together on legislative proposals. In order to stimulate the economy, for instance, the Social Democrats favored a policy of devaluating the Czechoslovak currency.¹⁵ This action would have led to a greater volume of exports and higher employment in predominantly German areas. Both parties also sought to improve living conditions for the working class by demanding improvements in collective bargaining agreements, and tighter restrictions on cartels, such as on the livestock cartel.¹⁶

The Social Democrats intended that the costs of their economic proposals largely would fall upon Agrarian interests. However, they did not call for an end to the grain monopoly, the program that most directly benefited

¹⁴ AKPR, sign. D13444/38, report of 27.4.1937. Hollick himself earlier had sought an appointment with the president, but the request bluntly was denied, in a letter to him from the KPR dated 21.4.1937.

¹⁵ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, 11.10.1936, 21.10.1936.

¹⁶ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1165-1, 18.3.1937.

those interests while harming those of their own constituency. Although the grain monopoly meant higher food prices, which the distressed families of workers could hardly tolerate, Social Democratic leaders worried that without price supports too many small farmers would lose their holdings. This could have resulted in a severe reaction against the industrial working class:

The real danger of the fascistization of the agricultural village was averted by our agreeing to the grain monopoly. If there are some undesirable aspects of this measure, we are trying to reform it. However, it allows us to avoid a bigger problem.¹⁷

The Social Democrats did not always acquiesce to the grain monopoly's policies. In July 1937 both Czech and German leaders opposed the demand for a fixed price for grain, which would have meant a staggering ten percent rise in the cost of flour and bread. This opposition created a deadlock in the cabinet, so that the government had to resign.

Yet the Social Democratic party leaders basically had agreed to accept the grain monopoly; and this decision supported an effort to expand the Social Democratic constituency on the right. Similarly to social democratic parties in other smaller European countries, the leadership of the movement hoped to construct an economic program that would be palatable to middle-class electorates, as well as

¹⁷ *Protokol XVIII sjezdu ČSDS, 15.-17.5.1937, p. 50.* The speech was by Rudolf Bechyně.

provide relief for the Depression's effect on the working class.¹⁸ At times some Social Democrats advocated changing their party's name to emphasize the fact that not only the industrial proletariat, but rural workers as well should support its efforts. Both parties had agricultural committees that devised proposals that would appeal to small farmers and the working population of the countryside. Among their ideas was a scheme to provide social insurance for small farmers and agricultural workers, rural cottage workers, and rural businessmen. The posters that the parties circulated in rural areas before elections advertised such proposals and usually also carried a message declaring the party's loyalty to the republic.¹⁹

In 1937 leading Czech Social Democrats accommodated German party leaders' requests for assistance not only to offset threats inflicted upon them from Henleinist forces, but also to alleviate problems from government offices that were under Agrarian control, such as the Interior ministry. That agency wished to concentrate all of the émigré Social Democrats from Germany and Austria in specified locations in

¹⁸ For a comparison to the situation in another small European state, the Netherlands, see Erik Hansen and Peter A. Prosper, "Political Economy and Political Action: The Programmatic Response of Dutch Social Democracy to the Depression Crisis, 1929-39," in *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 (1994): 129-54.

¹⁹ For instance, before the May 1938 municipal elections the ČSDS poster for rural Dolní Počernice assured the voters that "We are Czechs and Czechs we shall remain." SÚA D sign. A12, carton 8.

Moravia, and to ban publication of their anti-Nazi journals in Czechoslovakia. Czechs and Germans demanded that the ministry prove that legitimate reasons for these measures existed.²⁰ The Social Democrats seemingly discounted the pressure applied by Berlin on the Czechoslovak government to control the movements and activities of the émigrés.

Czechs lent their support to the efforts of German comrades, and Germans from other activist parties, which culminated in an official pledge to improve conditions and opportunities for minority nationalities. The government announced an agreement to this effect on 18 February 1937; it became known popularly as the Memorandum of that date. The agreement amounted to an assurance that the constitutional rights of the minorities would be enforced fairly and equitably. It promised to correct the abuses perpetrated by nationalist Czech officials who sabotaged these rights within their domain.

With this agreement the government also heralded its renewed commitment to increase state aid to distressed German areas through the subsidization of public works and buildings. This would be accomplished by tighter control of government contracts, to ensure that the work was awarded to local employers and workers. This addressed the numerous German complaints that contracts often had ended up being secured by purely Czech-owned firms from the interior parts

²⁰ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, p. 371, 14.10.1937.

of the state. These companies then transplanted Czechs into the border areas to do the work.

The ČSDS leaders who held cabinet portfolios cooperated by pushing through more appointments for Germans within their ministries. The efforts of Rudolf Bechyně in Railroads, Ivan Dérer in Justice, and Jaromír Nečas in Social Welfare were successful enough so that within one year after the announcement of the Memorandum more than 5,000 additional Germans had found positions in public service.²¹

In addition to the united Social Democratic position against the threat from the right, the top leadership of both parties sustained their long-standing condemnation of the KSČ. These leaders unrelentingly forbade cooperation or joint activities with Communists. This policy remained strictly in force among Czech leaders until the end of the First Republic. During the summer months of 1938 the German party tended to ignore the idea of a Communist threat, since all of its attention was focused on the fascists.

The civil war in Spain forced party leaders to confront the issue of working together with the KSČ. The matter of international assistance to the beleaguered Spanish Republic stimulated calls for working-class unity against the danger of fascism. Such appeals for brotherhood and solidarity

²¹ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 152.

were especially attractive to the more idealistic young people within the labor movement.

The Soviet Union had embarked upon a large-scale intervention in the war, and communist parties in many European states and in other parts of the world followed suit. They actively recruited young volunteers who traveled to Spain to join the fighting. The KSČ placed a great emphasis on activities designed to promote help for the anti-fascist cause. The Communists prominently solicited money and emergency equipment to be sent to Spain. Many working-class families responded to these appeals. For example, in 1937 workers' voluntary contributions of more than 500,000 crowns established and maintained a field hospital. These donations came in at a time when the average wage for many workers was only about 14-16 crowns per day.²²

In general, German party leaders had a positive attitude toward help for Spain, while their Czech counterparts stood aside from the matter. This reflected the fact that Czech leaders had greater concerns about the potential deleterious effects of Communist propaganda on their members, particularly the youth. Despite the standard warnings of the German "old guard" against the Communist

²² Wage figures cited in SÚA MVP 225-1165-1, p. 67. A Communist publication, *International Solidarity with the Spanish Republic* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp. 107-24, contains information on the KSČ's activities for Spain.

threat to the working class, realistically the Germans were aware that their young people would be more likely to fall in with the Henleinists.

DSAP leaders did refuse to permit their members to cooperate with the first groups that were organized to send help to Spain, since the KSČ had established and exerted complete control over these organizations.²³ Later in 1936 a more diverse group of anti-fascists formed the "Committee for Aid to Democratic Spain" (*Společnost pro pomoc demokratickému Španělsku*), a large, state-wide society. The German Social Democrats supported the work of the Committee, such as its contribution drives and the informational programs that provided reports of the latest conditions in the war-ravaged areas. Noted party members such as Senator Heinrich Muller; Ernst Paul, leader of the party's defense cadre, the *Republikanische Wehr*; and the journalist and editor Karl Kern spoke at public meetings and wrote extensively of the events they had witnessed as they traveled in Spain.²⁴

The DSAP proposed to Czech leaders the idea of sending a joint delegation to Spain, under the auspices of the Committee. Upon discussing this proposal, the Czechs decided it "was not advantageous."²⁵ The ČSDS was not officially represented on the board of this organization.

²³ SÚA PZÚ 207-1278-8, p. 121, 10.8.1936.

²⁴ *Funf Jahre Kampf und Arbeit!*, p. 90.

²⁵ Arch ČSDS fond 71/19, p. 360, 1.9.1937.

Because the League of Nations had resolved that no member state would directly intervene in Spain, Czechoslovakia was obliged to maintain a neutral stance. As a government party the ČSDS correctly avoided open support for the Loyalist side. To do otherwise would have embarrassed and perhaps antagonized President Beneš, who at the time was also president of the Assembly of the League. This reasoning also provided a convenient way out of a dilemma for the Czech party leaders, since they did not want to take part in joint activities with the Communists who were active in the Association. Individual Social Democrats did serve on committees within the Society. However, they were among the party's left-wing contingent, such as Václav Patzak, chairman of the *Dělnická akademie*, and his wife.

By the end of 1937 the work of Czech Social Democrats had raised the profile of their party in the Association. At that time the organization altered its name to "Society of Friends of Democratic Spain," and a left-wing Social Democrat, Josef Fischer, became its chairman.²⁶ Some officials of Social Democratic unions also prominently served on the group's committees. The public meetings of the Society frequently resulted in occasions when Social Democrats and Communists shared a speaking platform. When

²⁶ Fischer, an instructor in sociology at Charles University, was a leading member of the Social Democratic intelligentsia. He worked closely with the *Dělnická akademie*.

ČSDS party leaders discussed this unwelcome news, they criticized these party members for their lack of wisdom.²⁷ This participation reveals the extent of the sentiment among ČSDS members for united anti-fascist work, and the determination of party leaders to isolate the membership from Communist influences. The leadership in Prague wished to minimize maverick joint operations for Spain among Social Democrats and Communists, such as were taking place around Ostrava.²⁸

Czech party leaders carefully monitored the activities of their youth cadres regarding the war in Spain. For instance, at times ČSDS youth groups asked party executives for permission to organize week-long exhibitions (*výstavky*), in order to promote help for the democratic forces in Spain. Party leaders decided that such public affairs were too difficult to control, for Communists could have infiltrated or invaded them in order to exert their influence. Party leaders would only agree to speeches by youth leaders, since they were not likely to get out of hand.²⁹

This watchfulness over activities relating to a foreign conflict reflected the overall preoccupation of the Czech party leaders with their membership's innate longing for class unity. The leaders were aware that most of the party accepted the fact that liaisons with the Bolsheviks were

²⁷ Arch ČSDS fond 71/19, pp. 404, 406, 13.1.1938.

²⁸ SÚA PZÚ 207-1278-8, p. 39, 12.8.1937.

²⁹ Arch ČSDS fond 71/19, p. 350, 8.7.1937.

taboo, yet wistfully yearned for the ideal of solidarity. This atmosphere increased the chances for restlessness and dissatisfaction with the leadership.

Therefore, throughout 1936, 1937, and most of 1938 Social Democratic leaders sought to remain in control of the labor movement by excluding Communists and left-oriented Social Democrats from a policy-making role. Party leaders still were concerned that their membership included proponents of a united front with the KSČ. For example, in March 1936 Bohuslav Ečer, the Social Democratic deputy mayor of Brno, publicly favored a future for the republic which included that party. Ečer spoke gratifyingly about the Communists' decision to vote for Beneš in the previous year's presidential election,

...and with this sanction his foreign policy, including here Soviet Russia. Even if [KSČ leader Klement] Gottwald turns away from us, we can take this as a temporary tactic and say that for us the future holds only a joint position in all questions of foreign and domestic politics.³⁰

Ečer referred to Gottwald's penchant for propaganda that labeled Social Democratic leaders as stumbling blocks in the workers' path to a socialist victory.

Such rhetoric could only serve to reinforce the attitude of leaders such as Antonín Hampl that the Communists could not be trusted to share power. Hampl's public message regarding the Communists featured their

³⁰ SUA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, 12.3.1936.

unreliability: they could not lead the working class to a better future because they only knew how to attack, not how to build. In late 1936 Hampel spoke of the dangerous possibility that Communist demagoguery could sway the unemployed:

We have the duty to look after each worker, so that he does not cross over to another camp. The poor have only one enemy: their ignorance. We will continue to fight for our goals and ideals; there must not be fighting among us and the poor must belong only to us.³¹

There obviously was a substantial amount of sentiment among a portion of the ČSDS for cooperation with Communists. This faction, which wanted the party to go to the left, sustained a level of opposition to the leadership. Party leaders responded by strictly maintaining the traditional rigid party discipline against insubordination.

In the matter of upholding discipline the expulsion from the party of one Jaroslav Rouček, an official in Brno, is an example of the leadership's "management style". In September 1937 Rouček was a member of the party's regional committee (*zemský výbor*). His duties included supervising employees of local party organizations and of unions affiliated with the ČSDS. Many complaints of party members against Rouček's failure to perform his supervisory duties attest to his inattention to abuses by employees. Yet this was not why he was forced from the party.

³¹ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, 5.11.1936.

For example, Rouček took no action in the case of Josef Váška, a union secretary who severely abused his office. Váška dealt out jobs to those who agreed to loan him large sums of cash, which he never repaid. According to complaints filed by party members Váška was living well above his means, and often visited "night-time entertainment venues." There was a deficit of several thousand crowns in the ledger of his office when he finally was removed.

Rouček was supposed to deal with this problem in a timely fashion, but neglected it. He likewise failed to deal with complaints from other organizations affiliated with the party, such as the regional medical institute, that favoritism in hiring practices was a problem. Rouček's inaction made the party look bad to those workers who suspected that the real interest of many Social Democratic employees and officials was not in the labor movement, but in securing their own salary and pension. Complaints against Rouček reached party headquarters in Prague. However, the party took little notice of him until he challenged the leadership's authority. In September 1937 Rouček lost his membership due to "disrespect for the unanimous resolutions of the party's decision making bodies."³²

Rouček was a left-oriented Czech Social Democrat who disavowed the party's stance against the united front. He

³² SÚA MVP 225-1165-3, pp. 94-5, 162.

was among the Radical Left faction that split from the party in 1920, then later returned as a member of the Communist Opposition. Some of these prodigal sons eventually assumed a significant position in the ČSDS' regional apparatus. As long as these members remained subordinate, party leaders were willing to make use of their support. However, his superiors ousted Rouček when he sided with the Brno faction that was sympathetic to the united front, the group in which Bohuslav Ečer's voice was the most provocative.

With Hampl setting the tone, the chairman's followers within the ČSDS actively warned against the Communists' debilitating effect. Soon after Hampl's speech a regional party congress took place in Brno. Delegates to the meeting offset Ečer's favoritism of the Communists by emphasizing Hampl's characterization of the KSČ:

...there may not be many members in KSČ-organized groups, but there are plenty who work for the Communists. Even if they are not paying contributions directly to the KSČ...they have devoted a great deal of themselves toward weakening us.³³

Czech Social Democratic executives remained vigilant against Communist activities and influence upon the Social Democratic movement. Among themselves the leaders frequently spoke of the "base and immoral" character of the Communists. Why was there such a considerable amount of

³³ *Zpráva sekretariátu 6. župní sjezd strany sociálně-demokratické konany 5. a 6. prosince 1936 v Brně* (Secretary's report of the sixth congress of the ČSDS taking place 5.-6.12.1936 in Brno), p. 47.

"preaching to the chorus"? It is possible that sentiment for effecting a modus vivendi with the Communists did at times surface among some of the Social Democratic leaders. This may be the reason why there were so many condemnations: party executives wanted to go on the record as being resolutely loyal anti-Communists. Party leaders frequently reported on Communist skulduggery, as if to remind each other of their enemies' inherent "immorality." For example, in December 1937 the KSC³⁴ announced that it had received a communiqué from the Social Democrats, agreeing to the establishment of a united front. However, ČSDS general secretary Vojtěch Dundr assured his colleagues that the letter which supposedly agreed to the united front was fraudulent. He reported that somehow the Communists had obtained stationery and an official hand stamp from his office, and had used them to commit forgery. Dundr thoroughly condemned the Communists for their "lack of morality."³⁴

At joint public meetings Czechs and Germans presented a unified message against the destructive presence of their working-class nemesis. ČSDS deputy František Němec declared that the Communists "should stop portraying parliament as nothing but a gab-fest (žvanírna) where only hot air is produced...the KSC³⁴ must stand on the basis of the republic and positivism." At this same meeting in Brno Wenzel Jaksch

³⁴ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, p. 395, 7.12.1937.

brought up another dimension of the Communist menace: Nazi propaganda clamored about a Bolshevik threat to Europe that emanated from Moscow and supposedly was spreading from within Czechoslovakia, enabled by the state's failure to repress it. Domestic right-wing elements also repeated this charge, prompting Jaksch to point out how the Communists were intensifying reactionary pressures on the working class: "The republic is threatened by Bolshevism, but from [its effect on] the Right, and in no way from the Left," he avowed.³⁵

On other occasions Jaksch firmly disputed the Nazi charge that Czechoslovakia harbored a Bolshevik menace. After Hitler focused on this alleged threat in a March 1937 speech in Nuremberg, Jaksch countered at a rally in Karlovy Vary. He said that when Hitler spoke, many news editors in the republic "catch parrot fever (*Papageienkrankheit*) and repeat it." Jaksch insisted that "we need not fear Bolshevism, for we know that [here] it is in disarray." Jaksch also claimed that Western observers were not "buying" Hitler's propaganda; he had seen for himself in a recent trip to England that Czechoslovakia's defensive pact with the Soviet Union was viewed with understanding, "even among conservative elements" there.³⁶

³⁵ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, 13.10.1936.

³⁶ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1165-4, 16.3.1937.

Such statements may prompt one to ask why exactly was Jaksch contending that "we need not fear Bolshevism." Was this actually a challenge to the DSAP leadership circle around Ludwig Czech, who chronically condemned the Bolshevik threat to the working class and the republic? Did Jaksch mean to extend this challenge to the ČSDS, implying that top Social Democrats were disproportionately concerned with a movement that was "in disarray"?

Jaksch's assessment of the Bolshevik threat was accurate, if he was referring only to German Communists. In Czechoslovakia a significant and unbridgeable gap existed among German members of the KSČ and their German adversaries within the Right Opposition Communists, a group that was part of the rightist International Communist Opposition of the 1930s.³⁷ The Opposition had formed after the fierce struggle for control of the KSČ in the 1920s, which in 1929 culminated in victory for Klement Gottwald's "Bolshevik" faction and the expulsion of the party's right wing, comprised of both Germans and Czechs.³⁸ After a few years the Opposition became segregated on a national basis. In 1933 its Czech members joined the ČSDS, leaving the German contingent to continue the battle to reform the worldwide communist movement. Throughout the 1930s this faction

³⁷ For further information on this international movement see Robert J. Alexander, *The Right Opposition* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1981).

³⁸ Discussed in chapter 2 of the dissertation.

relentlessly attacked the policies of the KSČ and the Comintern. The German Opposition Communists were strong in Aš, in extreme western Bohemia, while Liberec was the headquarters for German members of the KSČ.³⁹

Thus one legitimately could argue that among Germans the Communist movement was fractured. It does appear that Jaksch's rhetoric was a challenge to the established Social Democratic leadership. He was determined to focus more attention on the true problem for the German Social Democratic movement, as he saw it. Jaksch figured that his party was not in danger of losing voters to the KSČ, but to the pan-German message of the SdP. For him it was urgent that his party attend to this neglected dimension of its program. He did see the Communists as a problem for the DSAP, but for the reasons that he mentioned in Karlovy Vary. Thus Jaksch did not favor a united front with the KSČ, since this would increase the right-wing reaction against the labor movement. Jaksch's way of thinking challenged the Czech leaders of the ČSDS because his agenda would have accentuated national differences between the parties and prompted a divergence from the parties' hitherto common path. In contrast to Jaksch's view of German needs, the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 269-72. *Revolutionary Age and Workers Age*, journals of the International Communist Opposition movement published in the United States, fielded regular reports of the Opposition in Czechoslovakia.

Communists and the leftist cadres within Social Democracy were the biggest problem for the Czechs.

Apart from Jaksch's intention to influence party politics, at the time it was necessary for the Social Democratic rhetoric regarding the Communist threat to undergo a change. International events and the domestic activities of the KSČ caused this to happen.

Moscow became Prague's ally after the May 1935 initiation of the Franco-Czechoslovak-Soviet plan for building a barrier to thwart any moves by Hitler to expand Germany's territory. As loyal government parties, the ČSDS and DSAP therefore had to modify their habitual condemnation of their Marxist enemy. Party leaders started to play down the message that the KSČ was the servant of a malignant foreign power. That power was, after all, a means of protection for the republic, and Social Democratic rhetoric often reminded workers that the parties worked toward positive accomplishments, such as the alliances that provided safety.⁴⁰ Social Democrats furthermore had to stop drawing attention to a link between Moscow and the KSČ because that was precisely the point that Hitler and other anti-Bolshevik commentators tried to make in their diatribes against Prague. As did Minister of Justice Dérer in a speech on 22 January 1938, party leaders were obliged to help inform international public opinion of the respect for

⁴⁰ *Protokol XVIII sjezdu ČSDS*, p. 105.

the rule of law in a state where "Communism constitutes no danger."⁴¹

The Social Democratic leadership did not entirely refrain from assertions that the KSČ "does not have the freedom to decide politics for itself."⁴² Additionally, the right wing of the movement heaped abuse upon Moscow after Stalin initiated the Great Purges with the August 1936 public trial of his supposed Trotskyist opponents. The right wing Social Democrats tacitly directed their focus upon Stalin's criminal abuse of his dictatorial powers at the Sovietophile left wing of Social Democracy; it was for the right a golden opportunity to aggravate the disarray within the leftist opposition in Czechoslovakia that the Moscow trials caused.⁴³

Since the Soviets were now an ally, the rhetoric of the Social Democratic leadership sought to disassociate the KSČ

⁴¹ R. G. D. Laffan, *Survey of International Affairs 1938, Volume II: The Crisis over Czechoslovakia, January to September 1938* (London-New York-Toronto: Oxford UP, 1952), p. 52.

⁴² *Protokol XVIII sjezdu ČSDS*, p. 11, Hampl's speech.

⁴³ The Moscow trials caused rifts between KSČ members and some of their earnest sympathizers within the Social Democratic parties. See František Hrbata, "Uloha Československo reformismu v protifasistickém boji dělnictva (1933-1938)" (The role of the Czechoslovak reformists in the anti-fascist struggle of the working class), p. 254-55, in František Červinka et al., *O reformismu v Českém dělnickém hnutí* (On reformism in the Czech working-class movement) (Prague: Nakladatelství politické literatury, 1964). For an analysis of the dilemma which the trials caused the left wing of the ČSDS see Ivan Pfaff, *Česká levice proti Moskvě 1936-1938* (The Czech left against Moscow) (Prague: Naše vojsko, 1993), especially pp. 16-21.

from Moscow in the minds of workers. The leadership did not want the Communists to gain an advantage from being linked to Moscow. Social Democrats accordingly stressed the Communists' aversion to democracy and the concomitant frustration of workers' hopes for better living conditions. The Social Democrats presented to workers the message that the KSC was actually an anomaly within the Communist universe. They pointed out that the KSC retained a fundamentally anti-democratic orientation, while the new "Stalin Constitution" showed that the Soviet Union itself was moving in a direction that was much more sympathetic to democracy.⁴⁴

The phrasing of the new constitution, which Stalin publicly presented in November 1936, was supposed to:

...appeal to Russians and minority peoples who had fought and hoped for democracy in the past, and it was intended to be misconstrued by statesmen, scholars, and ordinary citizens in Western countries which Soviet foreign policy, by way of the Popular Front, was at that time attempting to influence.⁴⁵

Of course, the new constitution did nothing to diminish the absolute power of the Communist Party of the USSR, as Stalin himself assured other top party members, and Soviet society was no closer to democracy than before.

⁴⁴ Social Democratic speakers claimed, for instance, that the Soviets had "full respect" for words such as democracy, state, and homeland. SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, carton 1166, p. 95.

⁴⁵ Donald W. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 267.

It is unlikely that the Social Democrats believed that the Soviet Union was beginning to establish democratic principles. However, they found it useful to pretend that this was so, in order to highlight the supposedly paradoxical nature of the KSČ. At the May 1937 statewide conference of the ČSDS, Hampel demeaned the Communists' efforts to establish a united front:

We refuse to ally with the Communist party because we know that they have not changed their basic attitude toward democracy. There is no guarantee that they will conduct positive activities in the field of economics and social care. [The KSČ] is weighed down to a considerable extent by its past....⁴⁶

Yet could the Social Democrats effectively characterize the KSČ as anti-democratic at this time? Since the conclusion of the Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance, the Communist party had stopped promoting the dissolution of the republic. In the December 1935 presidential election, the Communists had departed from their usual, futile practice of supporting their own candidate and instead had voted for Beneš. This made them appear to be a "normal" party, practicing a standard variety of politics. Furthermore, the KSČ had announced that it was now willing to jettison its fundamental role as an opposition party to enter a governing coalition with other socialist parties.⁴⁷ These apparent changes by the Communists in their basic practices made it more difficult for the Social Democrats to establish

⁴⁶ *Protokol XVIII sjezdu ČSDS*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ See Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, p. 140.

criteria by which they could condemn their enemies as being unfit to share the responsibilities of leading the working class.

To mount the most effective anti-Communist strategy the Social Democrats relied upon the well-worn notion that practical political work yielded the tangible results that best served the interests of the working class. Social Democratic leaders declared that a policy of pragmatism would achieve the greatest results. These leaders avowed that while the Communists were adept at criticizing, they were incapable of taking on the responsibility of managing programs that would protect and improve the lives of workers. As an example, they pointed out that Communist deputies voted against the state budget, including the money that would go for the defense of the republic.⁴⁸ Holding tight to a strategy which trumpeted pragmatism meant an even firmer resolve on the part of party leaders to stay in the government. Participation in the coalition afforded the greatest contrast between the "active, practical" work of the Social Democrats and the "irresponsible, unrealistic negativity" of the Communists.

Social Democratic leaders used the theme of practical, realistic politics to attack the united front concept. As Rudolf Bechyně explained in his polemics in the party press and speeches at its congresses, the Communist offer to form

⁴⁸ SÚA PMV 225-1165-3, 7.2.1938.

a coalition of the four socialist parties (the KSČ, DSAP, ČSDS, and the Czechoslovak National Socialists) was worthless because such a linkage comprised only a 35 percent minority in parliament. Bechyně declared that the Social Democratic parties had followed the only worthwhile course:

In this land we have organized neither a united front nor a people's front, but on a much wider basis we have organized a great *democratic* front... We need a wider base, thus our determination for coalition politics....⁴⁹

Hápl also repeated the charge that in Czechoslovakia agitation for a united front had no worth, "as the numbers don't add up to much." Hápl dismissed the French example as irrelevant:

Conditions here are different than in France. The lower middle class there, organized in the Radical party, is willing to enter the People's Front. We don't find that same willingness here, so it's not practical to create such a grouping. We've never discussed the possibility of how to make the Communist idea a reality here.⁵⁰

To his message of impracticality the ČSDS chairman usually appended a "character attack" centered on the unreliability of the Communists. He decried their "lack of courage to bear responsibility," stating that this rendered them incompetent to undertake any kind of politics. "Unity cannot proceed," he declared, "as long as the Communists work on the basis of dictatorship instead of democracy."⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Protokol XVIII sjezdu ČSDS*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁰ SÚA D sign.A12, carton 8, Hápl's December 1936 public speech in Kladno.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Among the German Social Democratic leaders, it was for the most part the "old guard" supporters of Ludwig Czech who spoke out against the proposals that the KSC^Ě tendered to the German working class. In German cities such as Cheb and Liberec, where there was noticeable support for Communism, the Communists actively courted confrontations with Henleinists, as KSC^Ě leader Klement Gottwald accomplished at a rally for the united front in Cheb in January 1937.⁵² Communist leaders intended for this policy to portray themselves as the only vigorous anti-fascist element in the republic. Therefore, to downgrade the Communist presence Ludwig Czech's allies, such as party secretary Siegfried Taub, declared that the Communists efforts were a sham, or at least out of touch with reality:

We refuse a united front...and also their offer to hold meetings and to march together, and thus to pretend to the working class and the [general] population that full unanimity exists between us and the Communists. Entering into such a process means nothing other than to deceive the working class, a process to which under no circumstances do we agree.⁵³

The leaders of both Social Democratic parties professed that their pragmatism was exemplary. However, this mattered only as far as pragmatism could be applied against the Communists. When Wenzel Jaksch argued that the times called for his party sensibly to adopt a more nationally-oriented brand of socialism, the "old guard" leadership of the DSAP,

⁵² César and Černý, *Politika německých buržoazních stran*, vol. 2, p. 356.

⁵³ *Sozialdemokrat*, 3.7.1937.

centered around Ludwig Czech, condemned the idea as ideologically unsound. Czech Social Democrats likewise had nothing positive to say about the merits of this proposed new direction for the Germans, a concept which Jaksch called *Volkssozialismus*.

This brand of socialism emerged in the 1930s as a reform movement, in opposition to the Marxist, internationalist course to which Ludwig Czech and his backers adhered. *Volkssozialismus* contained elements of nationalist ideology and expressed some of the non-Marxist socialist traditions established by Ferdinand Lassalle in the nineteenth century. Jaksch likened it to the policies of the Swedish Social Democratic Party that had helped Sweden overcome the worst effects of the depression. He and Emil Franzel, one of the directors of the party's educational organization, were the main advocates of the program within the DSAP.⁵⁴

After the party's 1935 congress these men attempted to shepherd its politics in a more nationalist direction. However, their efforts faltered due to their personal and ideological association with Otto Strasser, an erstwhile Nazi leader in Germany who had been one of Hitler's early associates. Having fallen from grace in 1933, he lived in exile in Prague. When Strasser's influence on Jaksch

⁵⁴ For a detailed report on the phenomenon see Martin K. Bachstein, "Der Volkssozialismus in Böhmen: Nationaler Sozialismus gegen Hitler", in *Bohemia* 14 (1973): 340-71.

received closer public scrutiny, the debate within the party over the merits of *Volkssozialismus* became more caustic and the positions more polarized. Jaksch's efforts foundered due to fierce resistance from the "old guard" socialists in his party. The exiled members of the German SPD in Czechoslovakia also chimed in with denunciations of the program's similarities to Nazism.

The fact that many of the top executives of the DSAP were Jews greatly complicated attempts to revise⁵⁵ the course of German Social Democracy. Beginning with Ludwig Czech; secretary Siegfried Taub; senator and treasurer Carl Heller; and the prominent deputies Robert Wiener, Fanni Blatny, and Irene Kirpal; the Jewish presence in the party was strong.⁵⁶ These members supported Ludwig Czech in his determination to thwart Jaksch's ideas from supplanting the party's traditional, internationalist program. This resistance to Jaksch must have stemmed from a combination of ideological and personal impulses. A more *völkisch* orientation would have meant the exclusion of Jews from leadership positions. Of course, since Jaksch was a Gentile, he also must have had some personal reasons for sponsoring *Volkssozialismus*.

⁵⁵ Johann W. Brügel has labeled Jaksch's efforts as "revisionist." See Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ For further information on Jewish leaders in both parties see Johann W. Brügel's "Jews in Political Life," in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), vol. 2, pp. 245-51.

Czech Social Democratic leaders did not actively join in the debate over reform, apparently wishing to avoid the charge of meddling in the problems of their German comrades. The Czech side's basic lack of trust in the nationalist character of Jaksch's program did not emerge publicly until after Jaksch had taken control of the DSAP in March 1938, when Czechs began to complain that the new leadership of that party "cannot appeal so much to German feelings, and must put more emphasis on the idea of socialism."⁵⁷ As long as the orthodox German Social Democrats appeared to be controlling Jaksch and his followers, there was no need for Czech leaders to interject their opinions. However, Jaksch realized that ČSDS leaders were not extending any support or understanding to his reform movement. He did not publicly comment on their tacit rebuke of his efforts, but on occasion complained to President Beneš' advisers that Czech leaders "did not appreciate the true state of today's political affairs, and don't realize the danger the republic is in." He felt that the ČSDS leadership was "too old and comfortable," and that Czech leaders were "not sufficiently dedicated to the effort" of improving relations between the nationalities.⁵⁸

Why were Czech leaders unfavorable to this new trend? It is true that the tenets of *Volkssozialismus* were far to

⁵⁷ *Zájmy kovodělníků* 30.3.1938. This was the paper of the trade union headed by Antonín Hampl.

⁵⁸ AKPR sign. D13444/38, reports of 7.4.1937, 24.4.1937.

the right of orthodox Social Democracy, but in the 1930s the Czechs themselves had embraced tactics, not ideology. They also were attempting to expand their constituency on the right, instead of restricting the party's appeal to industrial wage earners. Jaksch furthermore seemed to offer leadership that was consistent with ČSDS aims: He had declared that there could be no cooperation with the KSČ. As he promoted his plan to renew the strength of his party he said nothing about taking it into opposition, instead declaring that it was critical for all of the Social Democrats to work together.

Jaksch's reform program must have threatened the Czech side's sense of security over the future of Social Democratic cooperation. A lack of unity between the Germans and Czechs would have spurred Communist propaganda attacking the Social Democratic leadership. Even more troublesome, disunity would have boosted the intraparty opposition. Czech leaders could see that Jaksch was trying to cut into the SdP's support among workers who perceived the government as ineffective or indifferent (if not worse), and the Czechs probably assumed that the aggressive and ambitious Jaksch sooner or later would call for his party to oppose the government.

The Czech leaders then likewise would have had to leave the coalition, an action they resolutely opposed, or else take steps to defuse the intense criticism that their

leftist opposition was sure to level against what had turned out to be a failed policy. The tactics of the Czech leadership would have appeared faulty. Because the leadership had proclaimed tactics to be all-important, a failure in this area would have been devastating to its prestige. Leaving the coalition hardly would have been preferable to facing this criticism, for the stock of the leftists would have risen and possibly taken them to the ultimate leadership of the movement.

Some Czech leaders also felt that *Volkssozialismus* would not result in a gain for Social Democracy, but would only cause more workers to forsake the DSAP. Viewing the situation from their own inherently nationalist perspective, these Czechs assumed that the German worker was likewise a nationalist, and when given options among a range of *völkisch* representatives he would naturally choose the most radically pan-German. It seems as if folk wisdom from the village guided these Czechs in their convictions: they declared that when Germans compared Jaksch with Henlein they inevitably would end up in the latter's camp, since "it's better to go straight to the blacksmith rather than his apprentice."⁵⁹

In the final year of the First Republic the residual national feelings of party leaders stood in the way of effective progress and protection of the working class.

⁵⁹ *Zájmy kovodělníků*, 30.3.1938.

Relations between some of the leading officials of the two Social Democratic parties took a sharp drop after March 1938. The changing of the guard in the DSAP, as Jaksch replaced Ludwig Czech as chairman, ushered in not only new leadership for that party but also a period of acrimonious tension between Jaksch and the ČSDS. The pressure exerted by the demands of the SdP upon the government was the main cause of the resulting strains among Social Democratic Czechs and Germans. A contributing factor was the ineradicable national feelings of these Social Democrats, which interfered with their ability to deal with the crisis brought on by the Henleinists. The nationalism of some of the Czech leaders rendered them incapable of devising a perspicacious, effective response to corresponding national feelings among some of the Germans. Thus when the Czech side issued a statement to the effect that the German party should become subsumed within a Czechoslovak organization, it expressed this notion indelicately and, from the German point of view, imperiously. Furthermore, Jaksch became irate and threatened to break off the policy of cooperation after perceived mistreatment by Czech leaders in the matter of naming a German Social Democrat to replace Ludwig Czech, who had resigned his post, in the cabinet.

Although the two parties did not go their own way, hostility among some of the leaders persisted. While Czechs and Germans in the lower levels of the parties marched

together and conducted many joint activities, some of their leaders were antagonists. Friction among political leaders undoubtedly restricted the ability of the Social Democrats to combat the pressures inflicted upon democracy by the SdP and authoritarian forces on the Czech right.

Jaksch took over as party chairman at what became the final congress of the DSAP, 26-27 March 1938 in Prague. Within three days the newspaper for the metalworkers' union headed by Hampl decried *Volkssozialismus* and called for the end of an independent DSAP. The editors did not offer this opinion subtly, but emblazoned it at the top of the front page.⁶⁰ Given Hampl's acknowledged control of the union, it was apparent to any well-informed observer of the labor movement that this opinion originated at the very top of the organization.

Jaksch's agitation over this suggestion was profound. The idea manifested a long-standing fear held by many of the Germans that they were in danger of becoming a "meaningless appendage of the Czech labor movement."⁶¹ According to historian Martin K. Bachstein, Jaksch thought that the DSAP was now under attack not only from the fascists, but from the Czech Social Democrats as well.⁶² Only two months

⁶⁰ *Metallarbeiter*, 30.3.1938. This was the paper for the German-speaking members of the union.

⁶¹ Archiv ÚTGM, carton 161, report on "Die Konzeption der tschechischen Staatspolitik und die Situation des deutschen Aktivismus", September 1937.

⁶² *Wenzel Jaksch*, p. 162.

earlier, at a joint celebration commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Smíchov congress, the leaders of both parties had praised the depth of conviction for solidarity among Czechs and Germans. However, at that time Ludwig Czech and his cohort still were in charge of the DSAP and the top leaders of each party were comfortable with one another. With Ludwig Czech leading his party, the nature of German Social Democracy was a known entity to the leaders of the ČSDS. Since the delegates to the DSAP congress had elected Jaksch to lead the party, the Czechs could not be sure how "German" their comrades would ultimately become. This prompted the Czechs to withhold support of Jaksch and his attempts at reform.

Although the Czechs' tacit denunciation of Jaksch angered the new chairman, he refrained from an immediate counterattack. Instead, Jaksch coordinated a prompt and very significant measure of cooperation among Social Democratic deputies in parliament. Thus on 5 April the two parties jointly tendered a large-scale proposal for public relief of the distress caused by severe unemployment in German areas of the republic, demanding that the government provide an additional 500 million crowns for public works projects in these regions.⁶³ The two parties also

⁶³ *Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích Národního shromáždění republiky Československé*, 5.4.1938, pp. 10-13. At this time the value of Czechoslovak currency was approximately 29 crowns to the U.S. dollar.

coordinated plans to present joint candidate lists in certain localities for the municipal elections that were to take place at the end of May.⁶⁴ However, before the elections occurred Jaksch unleashed a sharp attack against the Czechs for alleged perfidy in the matter of naming a German Social Democrat to the cabinet.

On 18 May Jaksch sent Bechyně a letter which made no effort to conceal his anger and dismay over Bechyně's part in the "betrayal" of not only German Social Democrats, but also of "the interests of democracy." These charges resulted from the appointment of a Czech National Democrat, František Ježek, to head the Ministry of Health and Physical Fitness, the post which Ludwig Czech recently had resigned. Jaksch thought that his party had an agreement with prime minister Milan Hodža, whereby a German Social Democrat would receive a cabinet position at the same time Ježek was appointed. Hodža supposedly agreed to this deal in discussions with DSAP functionaries on 12-13 April, talks in which Bechyně also participated.⁶⁵

The letter claimed that Bechyně had assured Jaksch that the Social Democrats were "thoroughly united" on the substance of the agreement. Furthermore, the cabinet minister Msgr. Jan Šrámek, chairman of the clerical Czechoslovak People's Party with which both Social

⁶⁴ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, p. 451, 4.5.1938.

⁶⁵ Archív ÚTGM, carton 161, Jaksch's letter with salutation "Werter Genosse Bechyně!", 18.5.1938.

Democratic parties had enjoyed a harmonious relationship since 1935, also firmly supported the deal.⁶⁶ Jaksch stated that numerous expressions of support for a German Social Democratic minister had been made public by the Czech side, such as an emphatic pronouncement on 8 May by the Plzeň district organization of the ČSDS. All indications had given Jaksch the impression that the deal would go forth. That was why, stated Jaksch in his letter, that the subsequent manner of proceeding, on both Hodža's and Bechyně's part, "constitute[d] an outrageous breach of promise."

Jaksch portrayed the scenario of the alleged betrayal as he had heard it "from a very reliable source": When the cabinet met on 10 May, Hodža asserted that Jaksch had relinquished the deal which had assured his party of a cabinet post with a portfolio. Therefore, the prime minister continued, he would proceed with Ježek's appointment without an accompanying post for a German Social Democrat. The DSAP chairman emphatically protested that Hodža's claim was "100 percent untrue," and went on to lambaste Bechyně for his alleged malfeasance:

You have kept silent about this incorrect assertion. Dr. Šrámek, who was very surprised at this sudden

⁶⁶ The People's Party allied with the Social Democrats in order to counter the anti-democratic tendencies of the right wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarians. See Miloš Trapl, *Political Catholicism and the Czechoslovak People's Party in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1938* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1995), pp. 93-103.

collapse of the socialists, looked questioningly at you. Then you acknowledged the [supposed] validity of Hodža's misleading account with a nod of your head, and the resolution on Ježek's appointment passed.⁶⁷

Jaksch admitted that he could not supply "formal evidence" for this account of what had happened, but affirmed that his "adherents" within the DSAP gave it total credence. Although Bechyně had explained to DSAP secretary Taub that the Czech side would maintain "on principle" a demand for a German Social Democrat in the government, Jaksch condemned this "principle" as having little value to the Germans.

The letter went on to predict that the most dire consequences would result from Bechyně's alleged retreat from Social Democratic solidarity, as Jaksch charged that it "must be branded as the work of digging the grave of the republic." The irate German leader furthermore insisted that Bechyně was supporting Agrarian control of politics, and that a socialist minister tragically had helped forge "a link in the chain of the government's capitulation to the wishes of the Henlein party."

It would be difficult to argue against Jaksch's belief that Hodža was trying to accommodate the Henleinists: Representatives of the SdP indeed had met with the prime minister in early April, and vociferously had denied

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

approval for a German Social Democrat in the government.⁶⁸ Additionally, the right wing of Hodža's Agrarian party was clamoring for an appeasement of Henlein's demands; this had been apparent since Agrarian party leader Rudolf Beran published a letter to this effect on 1 January 1938. The prime minister obviously was under great pressure to avoid providing any type of boost for the DSAP in the days preceding the municipal elections.

However, Jaksch's emotional reaction certainly missed the mark regarding the aims of ČSDS policies. There is no evidence which demonstrates that Bechyně colluded with the prime minister to deny the Germans a post, in fact this behavior would have been contrary to the goals of the Czech Social Democrats. Top executives of the ČSDS did not wish to exclude their comrades from the government. On several occasions they expressed their support for a German Social Democrat in the coalition. After Hodža doled out the ministerial post to Ježek, Czech leaders were not indifferent to the composition of the cabinet, for they wanted Hodža to explain how he would add a German Social Democrat to his government.⁶⁹ Yet it is possible to speculate that the Czechs did not want Jaksch himself to sit

⁶⁸ The protocol of this meeting is published in a collection of documents edited by Václav Král, *Die Deutschen in der Tschechoslowakei, 1933-1947* (Prague: Nakladatelství ČSAV, 1964), pp. 180-82.

⁶⁹ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, p. 438, 13.4.1938; p. 441, 20.4.1938; p. 457, 11.5.1938.

in the cabinet, and reasoned that a delay in the process might promote ferment within the German party. This would explain why Bechyně acquiesced silently during the 10 May cabinet meeting, if Jaksch's account of the meeting is correct.

Jaksch seems to have had the impression that the top Czech functionaries had decided to subvert his authority as chairman of the German party. As he considered this to be the case, the only option for Jaksch was to circumvent the Czech leadership by making an appeal to the rest of the Czech Social Democrats, in the hope that they would press their leaders to relent and accept him as the leader of the Germans. The letter to Bechyně made it clear that Jaksch was prepared to make an "end run" around the Czech leaders:

As we are convinced that the overwhelming majority of our Czech brother-party does not agree with your manner of proceeding, I reserve the right to make a copy of this letter available to my friends in the Czech labor movement....

He eventually sent a copy of the letter, in Czech translation, to 300 regional functionaries of the ČSDS. Jaksch also threatened to bring the matter to the attention of the Socialist International, since he would soon attend a meeting of that body's executive in Brussels. Jaksch was determined to force the Czech leadership to accept him, even at the cost of wrecking the ten years of solidarity that the parties had maintained since the Smíchov congress.

The new German party leader was in apparent disfavor among his Czech colleagues. In the period prior to Hodža's announcement that no German would receive a cabinet spot, some Czech leaders privately asserted that it was Jaksch himself who made the question of a German Social Democrat in the cabinet more difficult. The stated reason for this assumption was the vague complaint that "at one time" Jaksch had been against the participation of his party in the coalition.⁷⁰ It is unclear why this obscure criticism was such a problem, since all of the German Social Democrats at one time (in the 1920s) had opposed cooperation with bourgeois parties. Jaksch had supported the DSAP's presence in the government since the party's 1929 congress. The discussions that these Czech leaders had about Jaksch indicate little support for him as DSAP leader.

Jaksch had made Czech leaders wary of his nationalist intent by promoting *Volkssozialismus* in association with the exiled Nazi Otto Strasser. He further aroused the suspicion of the Czechs by meeting on 2 April 1938 with a prominent member of Henlein's party, Dr. Josef Pfitzner.⁷¹ A historian at the German University in Prague, Pfitzner earlier had published a book on Sudeten German unity, in which he praised the efforts of younger Social Democrats such as Jaksch to reform their movement along more

⁷⁰ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, p. 449, 27.4.1938.

⁷¹ Pfitzner's recollection of this meeting is reproduced in Král, *Die Deutschen in der Tschechoslowakei*, pp. 169-72.

nationalist lines.⁷² Pfitzner became deputy mayor of Prague under the Protectorate, the 1939-45 period when the Reich directed the affairs of the Czech Lands.

Jaksch and Pfitzner met openly in a café on Prague's most conspicuous thoroughfare, Václavské náměstí (Wenceslaus square). The new DSAP chairman must have arranged the location in order to forestall accusations that he was dealing secretly with the SdP. His intent, he claimed later, was to explore the possibilities of luring some of the anti-Henlein opposition away from the SdP.⁷³ The meeting undoubtedly drew the attention of interested observers, so the Czech Social Democrats eventually must have learned of it. Their lack of sympathy toward Jaksch's reform efforts probably led them to think the worst of this meeting, imagining that the Henlein party would soon capture the remainder of the German Social Democrats.

When members of the executive committee of the ČSDS first discussed on 25 May the protest letter which Jaksch had sent to Bechyně, they declared that the complaints were "uncalled-for" and "improper," and that Jaksch had misinterpreted the situation. Hampl stated that he would meet with DSAP leaders to explain the Czech side of the matter. Hampl did not seem very concerned about how Jaksch

⁷². See Radomír Luža, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans. A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962* (New York: New York UP, 1964), p. 24; Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, p. 165.

⁷³ Wingfield, *ibid.*

had reacted.⁷⁴ The problem of DSAP representation in the coalition apparently was not a high priority for Czech leaders, for it did not again receive mention at an executive committee meeting until 22 June.

In the middle of May 1938 antagonism between Jaksch and Czech leaders had disrupted the process of Social Democratic solidarity, yet the program of cooperation did not break down. Just at the moment when relations seemed about to crumble, two overwhelming events occurred which served to ameliorate tensions. First, the partial mobilization of the Czechoslovak armed forces, against a purported threat of invasion from the Reich, thrilled and encouraged the German Social Democrats. Then, in the May municipal elections, the DSAP survived annihilation by Henlein's party, which allowed the Germans to regain some measure of hope for the future.

The "mobilization crisis" occurred as Prague responded to intelligence reports of ominous movements of Nazi troops near the Czechoslovak border. On 20 May military commanders quickly called up almost 200,000 reservists. Together with the standing army, they marched into the frontier areas and fortified those regions against the danger of a surprise attack from the Reich. However, the reports of a large concentration of Nazi forces were erroneous, and at that time there was no likelihood of an invasion.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, 25.5.1938.

⁷⁵ On the "May crisis" see Keith Eubank, "Munich", in Mamatey and Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*,

This incident had important effects on the developing crisis between Czechoslovakia and the Reich that culminated in the Munich Agreement. Prague's immediate, vigorous response to an apparent threat and the obvious preparedness and effectiveness of the army made an impression upon politicians, journalists, and other observers throughout Europe. The British government suspected that the *Führer* intended to invade, and sent Berlin a warning against precipitating a conflict. An enraged Hitler imagined that his prestige had declined. Although he already had decided to wage war against his neighbor in 1938, Hitler now was even more firmly resolved to ignore those of his generals who reported that the German army needed more time to prepare for an invasion. He now wrote that it was his "unalterable will to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future."⁷⁶ The position of the British and French governments during the crisis reinforced Czechoslovak president Beneš's belief that he always could depend upon Paris and London's support against aggression from the Reich. This induced Beneš to persist in a stalemate with

pp. 244-45; Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler. The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), pp. 143-57; Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Germany and Munich", in Maya Latynski, ed., *Reappraising the Munich Pact: Continental Perspectives* (Washington: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1992), pp. 11-12.

⁷⁶ International Military Tribunal. *The Trial of the Major War Criminals*, vol. 25 (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1947), pp. 434-35.

Henlein over the latter's demands for virtual control over the border areas.

The mobilization gave the German Social Democrats reason to hope that the government would not allow fascism to take over the border areas and destroy their movement. The swift and massive military response thoroughly impressed Jaksch. He still harbored serious resentment against the Czech party leaders. However, when he attended a meeting of the Socialist International in Brussels at the end of May, as the representative of all Social Democrats in the republic, Jaksch did not attempt to crucify his Czech counterparts before this assembly of socialist leaders. Instead, he enthusiastically praised "the courage of the Czech nation," which he said safeguarded his party and the movement, as well as democracy itself.⁷⁷ After he had returned to Czechoslovakia from this trip, he publicly asserted that the republic would fight for its freedom "to the last man."⁷⁸

In the May municipal elections the voters who previously had supported the German Christian Social and the German Agrarian parties, which dissolved themselves after the *Anschluß*, transferred their ballots to the SdP. Nationalist fervor was intense after the Reich absorbed Austria; the excitement smoothed over the most serious rifts

⁷⁷ Brügel, *Tschechen und Deutsche*, p. 375.

⁷⁸ *Lidové noviny* (The people's news), 10.7.1938.

within that burgeoning party, leaving Henlein as its unchallenged leader. A small group remained opposed to Henlein, but the political situation forced it to splinter away from the party. Friedrich Kopatschek, the leader of this opposition, published a brochure in which he vowed, "I shall bring down Henlein!" In the spring of 1938 the German Social Democrats negotiated with his faction in an attempt to gain its support.⁷⁹

The result of the elections emphatically demonstrated that most Germans backed the nationalist movement. However, the menacing atmosphere in the German areas compelled many residents to vote for Henlein, so the election cannot be called free. Some analyses of the elections contend that he had over 90 percent of the German vote,⁸⁰ which he certainly did in some communities, but probably the SdP received around 82 percent of the overall German vote.⁸¹ The German Social Democrats held on to about 13.5 percent of the total. In cities such as Ústí nad Labem, Podmokly, and Nejdek the DSAP received around 20 percent, and in several communities the party had a majority of the total German votes cast. The Communists gained about five percent of the German vote.⁸²

⁷⁹ César and Černý, pp. 437-38.

⁸⁰ Joseph Rothschild claims that the SdP received over 91.4 percent of the German vote, but does not cite any sources. *East Central Europe*, p. 129.

⁸¹ Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler*, p. 146.

⁸² *Sozialdemokrat*, 14-15.6.1938.

The partial mobilization, carried out immediately before the elections, undoubtedly affected the results. The action must have assured some Germans that the government would not allow fascism to have free reign in the border areas. Therefore, some loyal anti-fascists did not feel that they had to give up on the Social Democrats. Before the "May crisis," the German Social Democrats may well have felt that, given the prevailing conditions, their party might not reach even five percent of the total German vote. Therefore party leaders looked upon the number of votes they did receive as a victory of sorts, and they anticipated that their support would increase, once the population realized that the fascists would not assume command of the German areas.

Jaksch and other German leaders, buoyed by their "victory," understood that their fate was in the hands of the government, and they were keenly aware that the cabinet essentially was a Czechoslovak entity. To encourage further shows of government strength against the threat of fascist aggression and thereby nurse the fragile health of his party, Jaksch decided that the German Social Democrats should maintain a profile of friendliness, warmth, and cooperation toward Czechs and Slovaks. Therefore he praised "the Czech nation," even though he still was angry at Bechyně and other ČSDS leaders.

Privately, Jaksch had locked himself in an intense personal battle with his Czech counterparts. On 1 June Jaksch indignantly told a presidential adviser that in the matter of the cabinet post his party had been "conned" (*napálena*) by the leadership of the ČSDS.⁸³ He reported that he had made good on his vow to send copies of his protest letter to 300 ČSDS officials. Taking the offensive against the Czech leaders, he demanded that Hampl's metalworkers' union newspaper publish a retraction of the editorial that had called for the end of an independent DSAP. Jaksch pledged that if this demand was ignored, his party would not participate in an extremely important ČSDS showcase: the upcoming gala celebration of Social Democracy's 60th anniversary as a political movement in the Czech Lands.⁸⁴

This action clearly perturbed Hampl, who told his party's executive committee that Czech Social Democrats had met with their German counterparts and had protested Jaksch's conduct.⁸⁵ There may have been strained feelings behind the scenes, but for the next several months the Social Democrats continued to work together as they had before. In fact, in public Jaksch worked energetically to portray Social Democratic cooperation as reality. Despite

⁸³ Archív UTGM, carton 161, report of conversation with Jaksch 1.6.1938.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Arch CSDS, fond 71/19, p. 470, 22.6.1938.

his angry statement to Beneš's adviser, Jaksch did not endanger the unity of the movement.

The parties collaborated in joint activities throughout the summer. These events complemented the successful May Day parades and demonstrations that Czechs and Germans had supported in numerous cities and towns. *Právo lidu* reported that on 1 May in Ústí nad Labem "the Czechoslovak state flag waved in front of 25,000 German Social Democrats, who joined Czechs in crying 'Long live the republic!'"

The massive ceremonies of 4-6 June 1938 honoring 60 years of a Social Democratic presence in the Czech Lands were a showcase for Czech-German solidarity. Jaksch did nothing to discourage his party from joining the Czechs in the commemorations, which took place in many areas of the republic. The largest events occurred, naturally, in Prague. According to party sources, a cast of 150,000 participants convened there for the celebrations that turned out to be "the last hurrah" for Social Democracy before the ultimate triumph of the Nazis later that year.

Organizers of the activities in Prague coordinated a vast array of Social Democratic groups into an enormous parade that took almost five hours to pass by the reviewing stand on Václavské náměstí, where party executives and other dignitaries looked on. President Beneš and other noteworthy guests attended, such as the leaders of the British Labour

Party.⁸⁶ On this occasion Czech party leaders lavished praise on the German Social Democrats. "Mere words cannot go far enough to honor the work they have done to preserve democracy and the republic," said chairman Hampl. Deputy Alfred Meissner echoed these words, and singled out Jaksch for the latter's "straightforward, honest" conveyance of the nationalities situation in Czechoslovakia to political leaders in Western countries during his frequent trips abroad. The Czech leaders undoubtedly wanted to mollify Jaksch after the previous month's disturbance.

During the rest of the summer the parties planned many more joint activities around the 60-year anniversary theme, frequently adding ceremonies honoring the twentieth anniversary of the republic's founding. For example, at the end of August both parties used these themes to organize a weekend festival in Prostějov, in central Moravia. German party members from nearby Šternberk arrived to contribute their strength. Various Social Democratic groups had constructed vehicles which displayed allegorical scenes related to the labor movement and the independent republic, and these wagons formed the heart of a large parade which wound through the town. Between five and six thousand party members attended the public rally (*tábor lidu*) after the parade. Local party officials who spoke before the crowd

⁸⁶ *Zpráva o činnosti ČSDS v letech 1937-1938*, pp. 44-8; *Central European Observer*, 24.6.1938, p. 196.

gave their presentations in both languages. Their ability to do so reflected the plenitude of bilingual speakers among the general population in Moravia. Rudolf Bechyně traveled from Prague to the festival to deliver the keynote address on Sunday afternoon. The festival concluded with a ceremony at the town cemetery in honor of deceased party members.⁸⁷

Among the biggest joint activities of the summer were the July events in Plzeň that Hugh Seton-Watson witnessed, at which the Czech worker Jiří Devatý of Plzeň befriended his German counterpart, Josef Winterling from Cheb. It is not possible to determine precisely how many participants joined forces there. Social Democratic sources claim that "tens of thousands" of anti-fascist Germans from throughout northern and western Bohemia went to Plzeň to mingle with the Czech population of this ČSDS stronghold. Police reports indicate that crowds of over 12,000 were present at many of the individual public gatherings.⁸⁸

The gymnastic organizations of both parties as usual played a major role on this occasion, conducting a torchlight parade through the streets and athletic performances at some of the city's theaters. The Czech Social Democratic Minister of Social Welfare, Jaromír Nečas, arrived from Prague and spoke to assemblies in both German and Czech.

⁸⁷ SÚA PMV-X-P 225-1166-22, p. 92, 29.8.1938

⁸⁸ SÚA PMV-X-T 225-1272-1, pp. 12, 15-16, 16-17.7.1938.

Jiří Devatý 's account of the activities in Plzeň that July evokes a scene of fevered emotion as thousands of Germans made their way through the streets to the main square, all the while cheered by the city's Czech population. "A single word," wrote Devatý, "again and again thundered from your assemblage: '*Frei-heit! Frei-heit!*'"

Devatý also reported his pleasure with the strong impression Jaksch made as he came forward from the crowd of Germans to address the huge gathering. The Czech worker declared that Jaksch was "very appealing" to the Czech working class in Plzeň, and offered extravagant praise for the German leader's character:

...he is thoughtful, wise, and his life's work is selfless. He is the incarnation of your ideals, feelings, and faith in the united socialist program. Such a human consciousness is never false and is always alert. We [Czechs] can see that with our own eyes.⁸⁹

Devatý's letter to his union newspaper emphasized the great measure of approval that Jaksch enjoyed among Czech workers.

It is possible, of course, that Devatý himself did not write the letter. Its lyrical style leads one to question whether a machinist at the Škoda defense works in Plzeň would be capable of such expressiveness. However, even if the newspaper's editors planted the letter or substantially altered what Devatý submitted, the letter still indicates that Jaksch had a major role to play in the Social

⁸⁹ *Zájmy kovodělníků*, 10.8.1938.

Democrats' anti-fascist program that summer, and that the Czech party leaders were aware of this. For if Devatý wrote the letter, it showed that the Czech workers approved of Jaksch and expected him to be at the center of things. If the staff of *Zájmy kovodělníků* supplied the writing, it means that Hampl instructed his editors to concoct a flowery encomium to the German leader, perhaps in order to flatter and appease him, and deflect his demand that the newspaper retract its call (in its German-language edition) for the end of an independent DSAP. In either case, it is clear that Czech leaders knew that Jaksch was too important for them to bypass, even though they condemned his brand of *Volkssozialismus*. The parties continued to march together.

Despite a decade of concerted effort to employ tactics that would benefit the movement by bringing together Germans and Czechs, the program for cooperation became submerged, in the months and years that followed the Munich Agreement, within a morass in the relations between the nationalities. This entanglement was caused by the breakup of the state, the horrible crimes perpetrated during the War, and the subsequent expulsion of the German population from the post-War republic. There exist many accounts of the background to the diplomatic crises that resulted in the Munich Conference and the subsequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, so there is no need to repeat the sequence

of events here.⁹⁰ The Social Democrats continued along the same path of joint activities in support of the republic, and in opposition to the demands of the SdP. As always, the leadership of the ČSDS vilified the Communists and resolutely discouraged any form of united front work. The Czech party leaders held their ground on this postulate until the end. The DSAP, however, began initiating forms of anti-fascist cooperation with Communists in German areas as the heat of summer added to the tension.

The Czech leaders did not alter their strategy because they still considered the Communists to be their most important enemy. The KSC had done well in Czech urban industrial centers in the May elections. In Prague, the party had gained about 100,000 votes over the total it received in the previous municipal elections.⁹¹ Furthermore, during most of the summer months the Czechs did not feel that there was a strong possibility of an invasion by the Reich, thus their domestic problem remained paramount.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler*; Latynski (ed.), *Reappraising the Munich Pact*; Telford Taylor, *Munich: The Price of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1979); Keith Middlemas, *The Strategy of Appeasement: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972); Hubert Ripka, *Munich: Before and After* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969); Keith Eubank, *Munich* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma UP, 1963); Boris Celovsky, *Das Münchener Abkommen 1938* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1958).

⁹¹ Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, p. 151.

Throughout most of August executives of the ČSDS still entertained such thoughts as: "...there is considerable safety for the republic...the alliances are firm....The standpoint of the French government is very favorable for us...A possible cantonal system will take care of [Henlein's] autonomy demands."⁹² During this month Lord Walter Runciman's diplomatic mission had arrived in Czechoslovakia from Britain, seemingly to mediate between the government and the Sudeten Germans, and the Czechs assumed that negotiations would lead to suitable compromises and a relaxation of tensions.

At the end of the month members of the ČSDS party presidium had lost some of their optimism, and their feeling was that "the danger of war with Germany stands out more considerably" than it had before. Rudolf Bechyně blamed "the mood in Berlin" for this threat. It was becoming more apparent to the Czechs that Hitler had instructed Henlein to thwart negotiations by refusing to modify any of his key demands.⁹³ To the dismay of the Czechs, Runciman and his team seemed unwilling to prod Henlein to compromise, and were instead applying pressure to the government. Thus it

⁹² Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, pp. 477-78, 18.8.1938.

⁹³ The SdP's strategy for conducting talks with the British emissary was to convey the impression that the government's unjust minorities policies had led to a situation "so confused and difficult that it cannot be cleared up by negotiations or diplomatic action, that the blame for this lies exclusively with the Czechs, and thus that the Czechs are the real disturbers of peace in Europe." See Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler*, p. 185.

mattered little that the Czechoslovak ambassador to London, Jan Masaryk, had sent word that "public opinion in England is in favor of the republic." The Social Democrats realized that the British government was not interested in an equitable, just compromise, but in forcing Prague to accommodate Hitler. The presidium discussed the implications of the fact that "the outcome and conclusions of Runciman's mission are completely unclear."⁹⁴

The Czech Social Democratic leaders started making plans for the eventuality of war. Their instincts were to negotiate with their powerful right-wing adversaries, the Agrarians. Hampl recommended meeting with them in order to establish a truce, in the face of an outside threat.⁹⁵ There was no question of the possibility of a similar agreement with the KSČ, for party leaders remained concerned about the threat that the Bolsheviki posed to working-class cohesiveness. To the consternation of the Social Democrats, their enemies were making hay from the republic's current turmoil. As Henlein's minions had intensified their violent sprees in the border areas, the public's faith in the authority of the government had plunged. The corollary of this crisis was that the popularity of the Communists was climbing.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/19, pp. 480-81, 25.8.1938.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 482.

⁹⁶ Arch ČSDS, fond 71/6, p. 120, 6.9.1938.

During the summer months there were a significant number of incidents when Czech Social Democrats conducted anti-fascist demonstrations with Communists, in defiance of their party leaders. The inconstant nature of the anti-Communist rhetoric issued by the leadership may have contributed to the malaise of its constituency. This message sometimes declared that the Bolsheviks were as anti-democratic as the Henleinists, and at other times asserted that the Communists were working with the Agrarians to defeat the Social Democrats and sabotage working-class interests.⁹⁷ Attempting to link the Communists first with one menace and then another possibly diluted the overall effect of the message.

A mood favoring united anti-fascist manifestations of solidarity obviously was growing during the last months of the First Republic. From various sources it is possible to document numerous cases of Social Democrats, both German and Czech, organizing activities with Communists. Since the areas where Germans constituted a majority were subject to the terror instigated by followers of the SdP, cooperation among the parties began there first.

For example, by the end of July in northern Bohemia anti-fascists had formed a "Democratic Committee" whose work was supposed to carry on without partisan political

⁹⁷ *Večerník práva lidu*, 9.7.1938. This paper was an evening edition of the party's main organ.

considerations (*nadstranickou*). Since German Communists had initiated the establishment of this grouping, it is uncertain how well the committee upheld this pledge. The track record of the Communists makes this appear doubtful. After some German Social Democrats joined the committee their Czech comrades did too. Members of other Czech organizations then decided to come on board, even those that had a Czech nationalist character, such as the National Socialists, Sokol gymnastic groups, and the *Národní jednota severočeská* (National union of Northern Bohemia).⁹⁸ The committee's tasks encompassed protection against Henleinist terror, demonstrations against the fascists, and a campaign to protest against the SdP's activities to the government.

This pattern was widespread in all of the German-majority areas. Sometimes Communists would initiate the action, at other times it was Social Democrats who organized public gatherings. The local Czech minority organizations then joined the activity. Since the mass demonstrations nearly always resulted in the drafting of an anti-fascist resolution which was sent to the president, it is possible to learn which groups had become united in this endeavor. Often these messages urged Beneš to ensure that the government remained firm, as it had during the May

⁹⁸ SÚA PZÚ 207-1278-8, pp. 1,3.

mobilization crisis, and to count on France and the Soviet Union as reliable allies.⁹⁹

This type of cooperation with Communists occurred not only in organized demonstrations, but in factories as well. Through their factory committees, some workers concluded agreements among themselves whereby they donated their labor to a collection for the defense of the state. Usually the workers arranged to work several hours each week without pay, and the firm then contributed money to the collection for them.¹⁰⁰

During the summer months neither Jaksch nor his adherents within the DSAP disparaged the Communists, for the Germans had fixed their attention on the SdP. The Czech leaders never rescinded their decree which rejected cooperation with the Communists.¹⁰¹ It became blatantly obvious that this decision was completely ineffective, particularly in September, in the final few weeks before Munich. In fact, cooperation for the defense of the republic's territory became the rule across the political spectrum during that month.

⁹⁹ AKPR D 8922/1938, D 386/1938, D 9800-132/1938. Police reports of public demonstrations also exist. See SÚA PMV X-S 7/1, PZÚ 207-8-1, carton 760. A two-volume compendium of documents and contemporary newspaper articles, *Chtěli jsme bojovat* (We wished to fight) (Prague: Nakladatelství politické literatury, 1963), presents many examples.

¹⁰⁰ *Dělnické listy* (Workers' paper), 9.9.1938, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Horak, "The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party," p. 86.

The whirl of events spun inexorably toward breakdown on 12 September with Hitler's speech at the Nuremberg party rally, during which the *Führer* demanded the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans. The speech sparked widespread violence in the border areas, and the Czechoslovak government was forced to send in troops to restore law and order. The fighting severely unnerved the French and British governments, since Hitler could have used it as an excuse to declare war. In order to forestall this calamity British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain decided to arrange a personal meeting with Hitler at Berchtesgaden, and the Nazi leader agreed to receive Chamberlain on 15 September. This conference resulted in a British and French proposal for Czechoslovakia to cede to Germany all areas with more than fifty percent German population.

In the Czech Lands partisan politics at the local level became suspended when the news of this proposal reached the public. The imminence of catastrophe compelled all Czech and German groups that were against the SdP and Hitler to cooperate. In hundreds of communities members of local party organizations, from the extreme left to the chauvinistic right, hastily organized joint demonstrations of their unity and resolve to withstand external forces. This resulted in the remarkable spectacle of German and Czech Social Democrats marching not only with Communists and Czech National Socialists, but with the clerical People's

Party, the Agrarians and the business-oriented Tradesmen's Party (*Živnostenská strana*), and even the fascist Czech National Union (*Národní sjednocení*)!

These groups hoped that their display of unity would fortify the government against capitulation. Rallies varied in size from several hundred participants in smaller locales to tens of thousands in municipalities such as Ostrava.¹⁰² These demonstrations continued throughout the period from the Berchtesgaden conference to the meeting of Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, and Mussolini at the end of the month. They ceased when hope ran out after Beneš acquiesced to the commands set forth in the Munich Agreement.

During the tense final weeks before Munich the Czech party leaders, still eschewing the idea of working in unison with Communists, implemented joint public appearances, demonstrations, and other activities that they hoped would help prevent war. In a notable effort to preserve the republic, Jaromír Nečas, the Czech Social Democratic Minister of Social Welfare, and his prominent German comrade Robert Wiener traveled to Paris in September 1938 to meet with Léon Blum, leader of the French Socialists. They pleaded with him to seek a change in France's apparent policy of appeasement, in order to relieve Western pressure

¹⁰² SÚA PZU 207-1278-8; *Chtěli jsme bojovat*, vol. 2, chapter V, *passim*.

on Czechoslovakia during the Munich crisis. Of course, Blum was unable to help.¹⁰³

The violence in the German areas that followed Hitler's speech at Nuremberg was a signal for Henlein and his immediate circle to quit the republic, and flee over the border into the Reich. From there he broadcasted messages to his followers, exhorting them to continue fighting the authorities so that all Germans could go, as he had, *Heim ins Reich*. After this treasonous speech the government immediately dissolved the SdP. Yet many Germans were disgusted, rather than excited by Henlein's action, since he was in safety and had left them to face the authorities alone.¹⁰⁴

This situation opened the way for Jaksch to make a bid to gather the remaining Germans who wished to remain loyal to the state into a new movement. Reaching out beyond his party, on 15 September Jaksch announced the formation of a National Council of Peace-Loving Sudeten Germans, which urged a continuation of efforts to settle the problems of Czech-German relations. He used the radio to extend a frantic appeal: "Fellow citizens! Everything is at stake! You are all faced with the choice: equal rights won in peace or annihilation through war."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ See Brügel, *Czechoslovakia before Munich*, pp. 248-49.

¹⁰⁴ Keith Eubank, "Munich," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 247.

¹⁰⁵ Wenzel Jaksch, *Europe's Road to Potsdam* (New York and London: Praeger, 1963), p. 306.

Understandably, the German Social Democrats carried their fight for survival against their fascist enemies to the limit of their abilities. On 21 September *Sozialdemokrat* demanded firmness on the part of the government, in the face of the proposal to cede territory that had resulted from Chamberlain's meeting with Hitler, and rejected any thought of surrender. Yet even while Germans anxiously were reading the newspapers, government ministers and President Beneš were agonizing over a new *ultimatum* that the French and British ministers had delivered to Beneš at 2:15 that morning. This note demanded acceptance of the earlier Anglo-French suggestion and threatened that Czechoslovakia would stand alone against the Reich if it refused. If one participant's memoir of this nerve-shattering meeting is accurate, then the Czech Social Democrat Rudolf Bechyně was nearly "hysterical" in arguing that resistance to the ultimatum was impossible.¹⁰⁶ In complying with the demand, the government reasoned that a fight against Germany's military power would be suicide for the nation. Of course, this decision was made in consideration of the Czechoslovak nation. With no German representative on the ministerial council, it seems to have

¹⁰⁶ See František Ježek, "Z paměti o mnichovské krizi roku 1938" (Recollections of the Munich crisis in 1938), in *Historie a vojenství* (1969/4), pp. 692-93. Ježek was the National Democrat who received Ludwig Czech's position, after the latter had resigned earlier in the year.

excluded the democratic Germans from its plans for survival. Surely these ministers realized that capitulation would spell doom for all Germans who had opposed Henlein. Albeit under extreme pressure, the government allowed the sacrifice of thousands of citizens, so that "the nation" could exist.

Later on 21 September the news of the government's surrender spread to the general public, sparking enormous protests in Prague and other cities, during which the crowds insisted on fighting the Nazis. These outbursts caused the Hodza cabinet to resign the following day, and Beneš appointed a non-political cabinet of administrators under General Jan Syrový.¹⁰⁷ Then the disintegration of the state was arrested by the conflict between Hitler and Chamberlain, due to the increased demands of the *Führer*, at their Godesberg conference on 22 September. This compelled the British and French governments to muster the will to resist Hitler; with their approval, Syrový ordered a general mobilization of the armed forces, pleasing both Czechs and democratic Germans.

German Social Democrats obeyed their orders to mobilize with as much zeal as did their Czech counterparts.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps this enthusiasm should be taken for granted, because what else were these Germans, at the edge of the precipice, to do? Yet their willingness to revive their hope and

¹⁰⁷ Mamatey, "The Development of Democracy," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁸ Ripka, *Munich: Before and After*, p. 137.

participate in the defense of their homes, when all had appeared to be lost, indicates a firmness of character and a belief that the seemingly eternal nature of their homeland, as a place where two nations lived together, would endure. Despite the resolve of these Germans, and the feverish efforts of Czech officials and civilians, the Munich Conference began on 29 September and its principals awarded the German areas to the Reich. By noon on 30 September Prague had accepted the terms of the agreement, of which it had had no part.

Of the republic's major socialist organizations only the Communist Party demanded unconditional defense of state territory. The KSČ fomented passionate demonstrations, in order to denounce the agreement concluded at Munich and Beneš for deferring to it.¹⁰⁹ The Communists' refusal to join the other parties, who had dutifully assented to the president's decision, allowed the KSČ to reap a propaganda windfall that increased their popularity. Nonetheless, the activities of the KSČ were banned in the Crownlands on 20 October and on 27 December 1938 the party was dissolved.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ *Chtěli jsme bojovat*, vol.2, pp. 375-421.

¹¹⁰ Theodor Prochazka, "The Second Republic, 1938-1939," in Mamatey and Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 262. After 1945 the Communists untiringly reminded the populace of their stand against Munich, which helped the KSČ to a strong finish in the first post-War election (26.5.1946).

The DSAP forlornly gave in to the reality of the devastating new circumstances in the German areas.¹¹¹ Within a few days the executive committee formally expelled all party members who lived in the annexed areas, in an attempt to provide safety for them against retribution by the fascists. As the Nazis occupied the border territory, they dissolved Social Democratic groups such as the hiking club (*Die Naturfreunde*) and the gymnastic organization (ATUS). By mid-October Hitler had demanded that all German Social Democrats (and Communists) who had fled to the interior be returned, to face their punishment. He included DSAP deputies and senators within this requirement.

German Social Democratic officials began the arduous task of finding the means to spirit the party's most endangered members out of what remained of Czechoslovakia. The government balked at providing passports for Social Democrats who had fled the ceded territories. The Interior Ministry, headed by Jan Černý, declared that these refugees were now citizens of the Reich! However, ČSDS members of parliament helped DSAP deputies work out a compromise with Černý, so that these Social Democrats could emigrate, but not return. About 3,000 managed to leave. Most went to

¹¹¹ *Sozialdemokrat*, 2.10.1938.

Great Britain and Sweden, and a sizable contingent ended up in Canada.¹¹²

The DSAP executive committee held its final meeting in the former Czechoslovakia in February 1939, after which it disbanded the party. Most of the top officials were able to leave the country. Jaksch escaped through Poland and spent the War years in London. Ludwig Czech, however, was too feeble to attempt an illegal flight and died in the concentration camp at Terezín (Theresienstadt). Almost 7,900 German Social Democrats were jailed or placed in similar camps.¹¹³

After Munich the Czech Social Democrats had to accommodate themselves to the obvious fact that their rump state now would have to follow the wishes of Berlin. One requirement was the simplification of the party system, so that two large parties, for the left and the right, eventually emerged in the state. By the end of 1938 the ČSDS had dissolved itself and joined the National Labor party. Antonín Hampl retained his position as a working-class leader by acting as chairman of this party, until the Gestapo arrested him in 1941 and confined him to a Berlin prison, where he died. The trade union movement also underwent a required unification, so that Czechoslovak

¹¹² Andrew Amstatter, *Tomslake. History of the Sudeten Germans in Canada* (Seattle and Saanichton, B.C.: Hancock House, 1978), p. 46.

¹¹³ Wingfield, *Minority Politics*, pp. 181-83.

National Socialist unions and Social Democratic unions amalgamated.

The gloomy post-Munich circumstances of the Czech Social Democrats were evident in the general decision to forgo a celebration of Czechoslovak Independence Day on 28 October 1938, the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the state. Instead, it was a day of work. One writer no doubt expressed the mood best by observing: "In work lies the future of the nation and a return to better days generally, and it is in this conviction that the whole people today are concentrating on their daily task."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ *Central European Observer*, 28.10.1938, p. 347.

Conclusions

In January 1927 the Czechoslovak and German Social Democratic parties both were in opposition to the "gentlemen's coalition" (*panská koalice*) of bourgeois and clerical parties that governed the state and intended to create legislation unfavorable to the working class. Despite these conditions, the Czech and German Social Democratic party leaders had not established a working relationship, and the national problems that long had created friction among them remained unsolved. That January the presidium of the Czechoslovak party met to discuss a proposal, which their German counterparts had tendered, for cooperation on behalf of the working class. The power of the governing coalition had not inspired this idea. The party leaders were responding to pressure from the Communists, whose vigorous and demagogic message for united class action against the bourgeoisie was capturing the attention of workers in the Social Democratic camp.

Some Czech leaders disagreed with the proposal, arguing that the Germans' national feelings ensured that they never would become trustworthy supporters of the republic. Party chairman Antonín Hampl agreed with this criticism of the Germans, but did not think that it was wise to bypass the suggestion for cooperation. Hampl expressed his fear of the greatest danger to the movement:

...it is not possible to ignore that we have the disadvantage of the Communists. It's a question of high tactics, for we must go from defense onto the attack. This is possible on one hand with enlighten-

ment and guidance [of the workers], and on the other with tactical maneuvering....I recommend thus an internal agreement [with the Germans], which would allow us to strike the propaganda weapon from the hands of the Communists.

This emphasis on tactics instead of ideology is emblematic of the main considerations for the leaders of both parties throughout the period of this study. Leading functionaries of the Czech and German parties organized their policies on the basis of pragmatism: they had to undercut the threat from their working-class revolutionary adversaries. They were not inspired by a genuine feeling or spirit of internationalism, one of the guiding principles of the Social Democratic world view, but one that inherently was subject to interpretation by an ethnic group or nationality. Due to the legacy of nationalism within the movement, the Czech leadership had no illusions that solidarity was inherent to the parties. Yet the Social Democrats remained unified throughout a decade of extreme social turbulence brought on by the devastating effects of the Depression.

It is tempting to assume that in the 1930s the Social Democrats readjusted their strategy to center their parties' attention on the right-wing adversaries of the labor movement. By 1929 the Communist party's influence among working-class voters appeared to be on the wane. Furthermore, right-wing forces in Czechoslovakia were growing powerful enough to pose a threat to the republic's democratic system. Heading up these forces was the

burgeoning nationalism of disaffected Germans, who began assembling under the banner of Konrad Henlein's Sudeten German Party. For the most part Henlein's demands for German autonomy and his fascist rhetoric excited his followers, but in many cases Germans came into the party because they felt threatened by intimidation and terror. Additionally, the right wing of the state's largest party, the Czechoslovak Agrarians, promoted authoritarian and anti-socialist solutions to economic and political problems. With socialism having been smashed in neighboring Germany upon the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, and in Austria a year later, with right-wing regimes in place in Poland and Hungary, it seems logical to declare that the Social Democrats were united in order to man the ramparts against fascism.

Social Democratic rhetoric certainly addressed this potential danger, and advertised cooperation as the most effective countermeasure. However, domestic right-wing forces were not able to subvert democracy; and without the genuine possibility of an invasion, which the republic's system of alliances kept at bay until 1938, fascism was only an *indirect* threat to the well-being of the movement. In the eyes of the party leaders, the greatest worry was the presence of the Communist party and a left-oriented opposition within the Social Democratic parties themselves. This combination threatened not only to unseat the leaders

and upset their moderate brand of politics, but also to create the conditions of social tension that could have led to civil disturbances and a regression of the labor movement's status and accomplishments. Furthermore, Moscow would have exerted a strong influence over such a conglomeration of Communists and left Social Democrats, possibly undermining the republic's sovereignty.

Social Democratic leaders were mindful of the sentiments of the rank and file. Pressure from "below" for unity against the governing coalition compelled party leaders to move forward with plans to effect a program for cooperation. Workers made themselves understood by means of mass demonstrations in protest of government policies and through demands for joint conferences and other activities by working-class organizations, including the Communist party. The efforts of Social Democratic leaders culminated in the January 1928 meeting of all Social Democratic parties in Czechoslovakia, held in the Prague working-class district of Smíchov, which inaugurated the program of political cooperation between the German and the Czechoslovak parties.

The decision by Germans and Czechs to work together had rapid and desirable results. Cooperation in parliament enabled the parties to forestall the government's attempts to revamp measures, such as social insurance plans, and protect working-class interests. The parties also coordinated activities outside of parliament, organizing

joint parades, demonstrations, and speeches, during which party officials touted the new program while they denounced the workers' adversaries on the left and the right of the political spectrum. As a component of the strategy for solidarity, cooperation in the form of joint activities ensued among Social Democratic associational groups, such as women's auxiliary organizations and gymnastic clubs.

The Social Democrats quickly observed that cooperation led to increased political payoffs. The 1929 general election was a triumph. The Czechoslovak party was second-strongest in the state; its counterpart was the leader among all the republic's German parties. Additionally, the Communists had lost a significant number of votes in comparison to their impressive showing in the previous parliamentary election (1925). Social Democratic leaders naturally attributed their success, and the decline of the Communists, to the program launched at the Smíchov congress.

This positive outcome encouraged party leaders to rely upon the concept of pragmatism as a useful tool. The rhetoric of the parties transmitted to the workers the message that cooperation yielded concrete results. Because of their election gains, the leaders felt ready to extend their power in the political arena by entering the government. This move made sense for two reasons: As partners in the coalition, the parties would control the ministries that were directly responsible for the welfare of

workers. Also, participation enabled the greatest possible contrast between the Social Democrats and their intransigent, revolutionary enemies.

The party leaders had a crucial need to advertise and accentuate this contrast, for it helped them in their struggle with the element that began looming as the chief threat to their power, and control of Social Democratic politics: the left-oriented opposition within the parties themselves. This faction disputed the movement's apparent turn away from ideology and protested its supposed conservatism, in the form of government participation and the concomitant politics of compromise with the bourgeoisie. As a rule, the members of the opposition were younger and more imbued with a socialist spirit than were the more realist, moderate party leaders. The opposition was impressed by the Soviet Union's supposed advancement of socialist ideals, and advocated links among Social Democrats and Communists.

The moderate party leaders damned the Communists as outcasts and forbade contact with them in an attempt to insulate the Social Democratic milieu from what the leaders considered to be the pernicious influence of Communist activities. While these executives sought to control the attitudes and opinion of the entire working class, they particularly were concerned that Social Democratic youth were susceptible to propaganda. The Communists, for their

part, pledged that they would undermine and eliminate Social Democracy by infiltrating its organizations, so the party leaders certainly were justified in placing their avowed enemies beyond the pale.

Social Democratic participation in government was the issue through which the moderate leaders of each party kept control of party affairs; and the program of cooperation became an essential strategy for the fulfillment of the leadership's agenda. The leaders could downgrade the influence of the left opposition within the movement through their policy of coalition politics. Conversely, if the parties had withdrawn from the coalition, the status of the leftist cadres would have risen and the authority of the moderate leadership would have diminished. Similarly, if *either* of the Social Democratic parties had dropped out, the program of cooperation might have appeared to have been a sham, or at least faulty. Had the ideal of cooperation between the nationalities, the centerpiece of the movement's accomplishments for the past several years, proved to have been a futile exercise, the opposition certainly would have taken the opportunity to castigate the policies of the leadership. Because the leaders had placed such a premium on strategy, their prestige and power would have suffered if their tactics were vulnerable to intense criticism. Therefore, the leaders had a great interest in keeping their parties in the cabinet.

Of course, coalition politics would only enhance the leadership's authority if the workers were reasonably sure that the government was helping them. With the onset of the Depression economic conditions between the Czech and the German worker began to differ, as the latter experienced a great deal more long-term unemployment and penury. When conditions for each nationality diverged, the nature of the threat to Social Democratic leaders also became dissimilar. The German working-class population's distress led to the proliferation of radical German nationalism, and to the movement of many former Social Democratic adherents into the ranks of Henlein's Sudeten German Party. International factors also played a part in these shifting allegiances, for the Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933 further inspired large numbers of German workers to embrace a nationalist cum fascist ideology. Whereas the Czechs could and did consider their main threat to be on their left, the German party was losing out to dynamic forces of the authoritarian right. Yet there was no irrefutable evidence of these conditions until the parliamentary elections of May 1935 revealed the overwhelming preference of German voters for Henlein's party and the shrinking base of support for the Social Democrats. Thus there was no compelling reason why the German leaders should stop focusing upon the Communists as the gravest danger to the German working class and to the democratic system of the state.

The left opposition drew the attention of the leadership because of the energetic challenges it mounted to official policy and to the party's traditional rigid discipline, for example during the 1932 statewide party congress, and in a spate of publications that advocated a change in the party's direction. Furthermore, international events stimulated political agitation on the Left (as they did on the Right). In Spain, and particularly in France, Socialists agreed to cooperate with Communists in popular anti-fascist movements. The Social Democratic left opposition pointed to the French arrangement as a model that would serve working-class interests in Czechoslovakia well.

The May 1935 election decimated the strength of the German Social Democrats in parliament. Afterward the party chairman, Ludwig Czech, continued to dwell upon the Communists as a problem. He blamed them for the election calamity, citing their corrosive effect on the unity of the working class. To the extent that the Communists had polarized the labor movement over the years through demagogic attacks against Social Democrats and the parliamentary system, Ludwig Czech was correct. However, his viewpoint did his party little good at this time, when the Henlein party clearly was a juggernaut that had to be stopped.

The German leaders relied upon their Czech counterparts for support in their bid to retain control of the party

after its terrible showing. They received it in full, as long as they backed the policies so far agreed upon. This attitude served to restrict the Germans' possibilities to increase their appeal to voters.

For example, after the civil war in Spain erupted in 1936, German leaders encouraged participation in domestic efforts to help war victims and the republican forces in Spain. Czech leaders disapproved, and turned down a proposal for a joint Czech-German delegation that would have visited the ravaged country. The Czechs knew that this would lead to joint activities with the Communists, who actively were involved in anti-fascist work connected to the war. The German leadership's willingness to participate indicated its realization that fascism was a formidable danger. However, it also realized that wide-ranging anti-fascist projects inevitably would have established links with Communists, putting the program of cooperation with the Czechs at risk.

Neither could the German leadership have countered Henlein's anti-government propaganda by withdrawing from the coalition to become part of the "loyal opposition." It is true that chairman Ludwig Czech did not want to undertake such a move. He sincerely believed that as a government minister he was working to ease the plight of the suffering German workers. Additionally, he felt that his cabinet post was necessary for reasons of his prestige within the party.

Nevertheless, the desires of the Czech leaders for unity removed considerations of this strategy from the German side's possibilities for action. However, had the leadership of the German party been more flexible in its tactics, it could have done a great deal to make the party more attractive to the German workers who had supported Henlein in 1935.

Suppose the German Social Democrats had decided to change tactics in order to take as many working-class votes as possible from the Sudeten German party. What might have happened if the Social Democrats had left the government after the 1935 election? The party certainly could have continued avowing its allegiance to democracy and to the state. Yet it then could have disassociated itself from the relief programs that had failed in the eyes of many Germans (even though the Social Democratic leaders had pressed for those measures), and waged an energetic campaign, based on labor issues, in opposition.

This tactic would have allowed the party to exploit the social conflict that had surfaced, since the election, to rend the supposed unity of the German nationalist movement. Within Henlein's party, a labor-oriented opposition to his leadership stridently was directing attention to his neglect of the German worker. Quarrels and tension within the party had magnified to the extent that Henlein nearly resigned as leader in December 1935.

By going into opposition the Social Democrats would have forced even more attention onto the Sudeten party's flimsy labor program, no doubt causing many workers to abandon Henlein. Certainly there were German nationalists who would have continued to condemn Social Democracy, but the party would have appeared attractive to the remainder. By causing a deterioration of the nationalist movement, this action would have contributed a great deal to the important objective of refuting Henlein's claim that he was the leader of all disaffected Germans. If the working class opposed Henlein, how could he have justified his demands made "on behalf of the German population"?

The German leadership, however, explored no new options. By the mid-1930s Ludwig Czech's health had deteriorated, due to the strain of his duties and mounting concerns. His condition handicapped his ability to devise fresh strategies, and reflexively induced him to follow the status quo. Given the realities of the *völkisch* ideologies coursing among the German population in the mid-1930s, the chairman's Jewish background also was an obstacle against his party's recovery vis-à-vis the Henleinists.

There were a large number of members in both Social Democratic parties who had a Jewish heritage. Many of them had been long-time advocates of cooperation between Czechs and Germans. The Jewish presence was particularly strong in the top echelon of the German party. These prominent

members were part of the "old guard" leadership that had supported Ludwig Czech's chairmanship for years. They had sided with him in his battle to defeat the left opposition. Then, after the 1935 election fiasco, they helped him stop a new threat: a movement to revise the party's policies along more nationalist lines.

The youthful (born 1896) deputy chairman, Wenzel Jaksch, promoted this new orientation, which he called *Volkssozialismus*. It was supposed to broaden the party's base by appealing to farmers and members of the middle class, as well as to industrial wage earners. These efforts went nowhere because of strong resistance from the "old guard," who condemned the measures as an abandonment of socialism that closely resembled Henlein's program. It was clear that *Volkssozialismus* would have resulted in the aryianization of the party. Jaksch was a gentile, so this new direction would have put him in control.

For years the "old guard" had offset the left opposition's pleas for a greater emphasis on ideology by championing the wisdom of practical, coalition politics. However, when Jaksch argued that the reality of the times called for a revision of the program, that segment of the party leadership attacked and defeated his ideas for being ideologically unsound. Jaksch accepted this censure and bided his time until he became chairman when the party's

devastated circumstances forced Ludwig Czech to resign in March 1938.

During this struggle the prevailing opinion of Czech Social Democratic leaders was to offer quiet support to the "old guard." Although Jaksch rejected Communist designs for a united front and praised Social Democratic unity, the Czechs undoubtedly figured that his attempts to appeal to wider categories of the German population eventually would have separated the two parties. Thus the program for solidarity helped sustain the Jewish presence within the German leadership, when it may have been more prudent for a change to have taken place.

The parties' decision to retain their basic links to Marxism also was an effect of the program for cooperation. After Jaksch began promoting his plans, the "old guard" leaders relied upon a traditional Marxist attack on the capitalist system as the best countermeasure against him. Their Czech counterparts followed suit. This agreement must have occurred in order to maintain unity, and perhaps also because the Czech leaders felt that their party, on its right wing, still harbored potent nationalist impulses. Marxism's internationalist spirit could serve to contain such feelings, as its idealistic message of solidarity prevented workers from asking why they should not embrace a national socialist party.

Was there justification for the opinion that national feeling had imbued the rank and file? German workers indicated their attitude either by remaining loyal to democracy and the party, or by leaving it (disregarding those who yielded to the terror inflicted by Henleinist thugs). As for the Czech workers, this study is not able to answer the question. Further research into sources such as memoirs, trade union periodicals, and minutes of factory committee meetings are necessary to determine whether a significant number of these Czechs retained their traditional enmities.

However, according to archival sources and certain periodicals of the time, it does seem that the program for cooperation, as it played out within the Social Democratic associational groups, brought together many Czechs and Germans and succeeded in forging comradely bonds. Such expressions of reciprocity became more prevalent during 1938, as the threat of an imminent invasion by Nazi Germany spread great anxiety among the Social Democratic rank and file. Many Czechs were moved by the loyalty to the state displayed by their German comrades, especially since the campaign of terror being conducted by some of Henlein's followers had created dangerous conditions in many German communities.

There were many observable signs of Czech-German unity in the lower levels of the movement. The policy of

cooperation had kept both sides together for a decade, despite the period's wrenching economic and social problems. The leaders always wished to use tactics to their best advantage. Given these conditions, one reasonably could ask, why did the parties not establish a merger? Based on the vote totals secured in general elections, this action would have created the republic's largest party, boosting the prestige of the Social Democrats both at home and abroad.

While not an automatic guarantee of political dominance, this status could have led to a significant increase in power; the prime minister traditionally came from the largest party. Also, how different conditions might have been in the German areas, had the Social Democrats been in control of the Interior Ministry! That department, of course, was in charge of the police. In the hands of the Agrarians, these officials were not preventing terror and intimidation against the opponents of Henlein. The Social Democrats often declared that there was a political reason for this ineffectiveness, because right-wing parties were in collusion against them. Perhaps a minister who was fully aware of the need to combat this terror could have secured an atmosphere in which Germans felt safe enough to maintain their allegiance to Social Democracy. Because of the prevailing conditions in German

areas, the municipal elections of May and June 1938, the last campaign before Munich, cannot be called free and fair.

Despite the potential benefits of one large party, Social Democratic leaders never discussed implementing such a measure. The basic stumbling block for such a plan was the residual nationalism of the party leaders themselves. When the idea to merge did surface in March 1938, it only created friction between the two sides. This episode occurred after Wenzel Jaksch became chairman of the German party, which the Czech leaders considered unfortunate, because they distrusted Jaksch's nationalist proclivity. On the German side, Jaksch and his supporters reacted with hostility to the idea that their party should cease to be an independent entity. Publicly, the program of cooperation continued to function as before. Yet behind the scenes leaders on each side were wary of each other, which hampered discussions of mutual strategy. No bold new initiatives for reviving the German side's standing among the electorate was forthcoming.

Until the end of August 1938 the Czechs felt that the republic's system of alliances served to prevent an invasion. Therefore, they continued to focus upon, and attempt to isolate the Communists. The Czechs were all the more adamant in their embargo because a popular mood that favored united anti-fascist demonstrations was growing. Activities of this character began in the German areas, as

Social Democrats and Communists formed committees for such work. The phenomenon eventually became common in other areas, among older, skilled factory hands as well as young idealists. It was apparent that the Czech leaders' ban was ineffective.

In this respect the Czech leadership was out of tune with a powerful mood that was circulating among workers. During a time of crisis, a portion of the membership largely ignored the leaders' authority. Since this development occurred even after the party leaders had spent years attempting to condition their followers against it, should the Czech leaders, in the years before 1938, have been more flexible in their attitude toward the Communists? Should they have treated the suggestion of united front activities differently?

Under the circumstances the Social Democratic leaders (German, as well as Czech) were correct not to enter into agreements with the Communists. The latter were uninterested in a legitimate popular front; they were dedicated to undermining Social Democratic organizations and dominating the labor movement. It is probable that the Communists would have sabotaged any promising projects, had a popular front agreement been in place, and then blamed the Social Democrats for the ensuing failures. Besides the fact that the Communists would not have been faithful partners, an alliance with them would have sharply increased right-

wing attacks against the entire labor movement, both within the republic and from abroad. Such vitriol eventually could have polarized political activities in Czechoslovakia. The relatively moderate policies of the Social Democratic leadership was one factor which helped prevent fascism from gaining currency among the general Czech population.

However, the wall that Social Democratic leaders had constructed to keep the revolutionaries out of their camp could not change an inherent reality: almost the entire Social Democratic membership, even those moderates who themselves did not trust the Communists, nevertheless "pined for class unity." Expressions of this feeling surfaced often, so that party leaders were aware of its existence. All well-informed workers knew that such a task was quite difficult, yet they seemed to expect that their leaders somehow should achieve this dream.

The leaders, perhaps realizing the improbability of such a goal, stifled their members' sentiments. Top officials depended upon their party's traditional rigid discipline to enforce obedience to party programs. It seems as if the party leaders believed that authoritative means were the best for serving their constituencies. These means included retaining positions of power, in the cabinet and in the *pětká*, the extra-parliamentary ruling council where leaders of the coalition parties hammered out agreements for their deputies to implement. The leaders may have felt that

their way was for the best. Yet their path kept the movement relatively immobile within a system that gave the top party, the Agrarians, a disproportionate share of the power. To be second-strongest was not worth enough. If the leaders insisted that power was everything, they should have taken the steps to establish a super-party of both Germans and Czechs.

Would Czechs and Germans ever have been able to form such a grouping? Had the War not intervened and devastated Central Europe, it is possible that a younger generation of Social Democrats could have succeeded in such a monumental endeavor. The endemic nationalism of the interwar leadership prevented considerations of a unified party. Only when Czech and German leaders faced a common, and serious threat to their power were they able to work out the terms of their cooperation. The nominal enemy, the bourgeoisie, did not present an actual challenge, as did the Communist party and then the leftist opposition.

Because the Czechoslovak party was significantly larger and had a more secure standing within the republic's political structure, the Czech Social Democratic leaders would have been the ones to initiate the delicate negotiations necessary for beginning the process of convincing both Czechs and Germans that they should construct a new, supra-national identity. However, there was no impetus for undertaking such an enterprise. The

concept that their nation was a discrete group, and should remain so, seems to have ordered the identities and corresponding actions of the most influential of these leaders, men such as Antonín Hampl, who once declared that "I have never left anyone with any doubt as to the following: I am a Czech first, and a socialist second."

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- SÚA Fond PMR (Presidium of the Ministerial Council)
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Lidové noviny (People's news)

Metallarbeiter (Metalworker)

Národní listy (National paper)

Nová doba (New era)

Prager Presse

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