


# The Break-up of Czech Democracy

BY OTTO FRIEDMAN

with a preface by

BERT MURRAY

who writes:

"I hope this book will be widely read. First, because the tragedy of Czechoslovakia is a thing that 

should never be forgotten . . . A second reason why I value this book is that, so far as I am able to judge, it explains with inside knowledge and with an unbiased wish for truth, the history, step by step, of that great downfall . . . But above all I value this book for the reasons so clearly expounded in Chapter XII. The fate of Czechoslovakia may so easily be the fate of all Western Europe.”

THE BREAK-UP OF CZECH DEMOCRACY

*By the Same author*

**BROADCASTING FOR DEMOCRACY  
INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

# THE BREAK-UP OF CZECH DEMOCRACY

by

OTTO FRIEDMAN

With a Preface by

DR. GILBERT MURRAY, O.M.

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*To the memory  
of my brother and sister  
who together with many other Czechoslovak citizens  
were brutally murdered by the Nazis  
during the Second World War.*

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## PREFACE

I HOPE THIS BOOK will be widely read. First, because the tragedy of Czechoslovakia is a thing that should never be forgotten. It shook the whole Western world to see a nation which we had all regarded as the very citadel of freedom and democracy in Central Europe transformed step by step into a slave state ruled by terror. Of course we might have realized the precarious condition of every small or middle-sized nation in Europe. Anyone who attended the League of Nations in the later thirties could remember how all such nations were in a state of dread, dread of Germany or else of Russia or perhaps of both. But to us in England Czechoslovakia was interpreted by Benes and the two Masaryks, father and son. Those first years of international co-operation gave a world platform to certain great men from small nations: Benes could stand with such men as Nansen and Venizelos and even Smuts. He was quick, constructive, courageous and singularly fair-minded. He was the chief author of the Geneva Protocol; if that policy had been honestly accepted or if, when the Protocol failed, his second line of defence, the Eastern Locarno, had been firmly carried through, we should in all probability have been spared the second great war, and should now be living in a decent world. His mind had been formed by the great Liberal, Thomas Masaryk. Jan Masaryk was his fellow pupil. Jan Masaryk is well described in this book: undaunted, lovable, with a spirit that never failed. I remember a dinner at the Soviet Embassy where he explained his principles. He simply wanted to be free to sing *The Lorelei* wherever he liked—it was forbidden in Germany as being the work of a Jew—and to say in an ordinary voice in an omnibus just what he thought about the Prime Minister. Maisky, the Russian Ambassador, looked on inscrutable. Some years later the victory for freedom seemed at last to be won. Benes and Masaryk went back in triumph to their native land; but they had to go by way of Moscow and they found their native land curiously changed. The habit of submission, of moral cowardice, is a thing that can be learnt

and taught. The long tyranny of the Csars taught the Russians to be obedient slaves to the Bolsheviks. The reign of terror under Hitler and Heydrich taught the Czechs to accept, almost with relief, the slavery of Stalin and Zorin. It was not obvious slavery at first. There was a period of hoping against hope: a delusion that if the democracies "moved to the left" perhaps the Kremlin would "move to the right": a creeping paralysis of freedom, to end in the death of its two chief champions. For Masaryk it was, at the best, suicide, but more probably secret murder; for Benes it was a broken heart.

A second reason why I value this book is that, so far as I am able to judge, it explains with inside knowledge and with an unbiased wish for truth, the history, step by step, of that great downfall. I do not mean that Mr. Friedman is impartial between Stalinism and freedom. He is a patriotic Czech of the Masaryk tradition. But after a great failure there is often a tendency for the leaders of the defeated side to throw the blame on one another and split into hostile groups. There is nothing of this in Mr. Friedman. He can see the weaknesses of President Benes's policy, but also the reasons which made them almost inevitable. He blames the harshness with which the Sudeten Germans were expelled and plundered, but makes one see what a natural reaction this was to the appalling cruelties of the German Nazis.

But above all I value this book for the reasons so clearly expounded in Chapter XII. The fate of Czechoslovakia may so easily be the fate of all Western Europe. Our tradition of freedom is itself a source of danger. I once asked a leading German Social Democrat how it was that, with all their numbers, they had let a Nazi minority beat them. "They had revolvers," he said: "they were ready to kill, and that was to us an unthinkable policy." Like Mr. Chamberlain in his dealings with Hitler, we westerners find it hard to believe that our opponent really means the insane things he says: besides he sometimes says quite the opposite, something sensible. That must be what he really means. We try to understand our opponent's point of view; we think that by a generous con-

cession we can make him content. That system works well in ordinary western life, where differences are temporary and a wish for agreement fundamental. To a determined aggressor it acts as a stimulant, a promise of ultimate surrender. Then our habit of freedom makes us slow to organise. No one can foresee every possibility; why should we bind ourselves beforehand? The United States has a great reluctance to bind itself with treaties. The British Dominions have never been organized. We do not intrigue. We are accustomed to a standard of decent conduct. Our opponent is highly organized, skilled in intrigue, and boasts that he is subject to no check at all, neither from the "opiate of the people" which is called Religion, nor from that talk of good faith and good will which constitutes "bourgeois morality".

This is no place to discuss the problems of British policy. The principles of the United Nations Charter are accepted by all parties and almost all nations; and, if the Security Council has been made useless, it is still possible for the law-abiding members of the U.N. to organise for the collective defence of peace under Articles 51 and 53 of the Charter. But it is time to recognise a change in the Russian attitude. It is not now the revolutionary Bolshevik shouting from the Left that constitutes the chief danger to Europe; it is the Imperialist Dictator, conscious of his unresisted strength, intimidating nation after nation into submission and deriding by insult after insult the impotence of the west. The way to peace for the Western or Christian world is to show its united strength. But for that it must first *be* really strong and really united.

GILBERT MURRAY.

## INTRODUCTION

WHAT HAPPENS TO A COUNTRY when it turns from democracy to Communism? What are the aims of Soviet foreign policy? What are the methods of Communist penetration and seizure of power? And what mistaken ideas and misguided deeds of the democratic leaders have assisted and countenanced the progress and victory of their deadly enemies? The answers to these vital questions have been greatly clarified by the recent history of Czechoslovakia.

It happens very seldom that the limited experience of a little country throws much light upon world issues of this magnitude, but here several historical circumstances combined to make the Czechoslovak case especially significant and instructive.

Under the wise leadership of her great statesman, President Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, Czechoslovakia evolved a political system which in several respects was the most advanced democracy of Central Europe between the two World Wars. If the Communists could strangle Masaryk's democracy, are not other democracies faced with the same peril?

Among the democratic leaders of our time, President Benes was the one who most sincerely trusted Stalin, and in an effort to gain and preserve his friendship, induced the Czechoslovak people to make far-reaching territorial, political and economic concessions to the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia thus became the test case of Soviet appeasement.

Czechoslovak industry had already been nationalized to a large extent when the Communists carried out their putsch. Thereby they demonstrated that their main objective is not merely the change of an economic system, but the wielding of absolute totalitarian power.

The large number of workers and farmers who had given their votes to the Communist Party in the free election of 1946 were dismayed when after the putsch they saw how little Communist deeds corresponded to enchanting Communist propaganda. How an intelligent people could be so profoundly deceived, and how experienced democratic leaders proved no

match for the Communists, before and during the putsch, forms the most tragic, but also the most instructive part of this narrative.

All these circumstances commend the study of Czechoslovakia's post-war development to the reader who is interested in the general political trends of our time. But while the Prague events have a European and world significance, they are embedded in the specific strategic and geographic position of the country, her cultural tradition and pre-war history. These specific conditions therefore must be the starting point of our account.

The political history of a little country is, to a large degree, determined by her foreign relations and by social forces which cannot be controlled even by the most efficient leaders. But within this objective framework, the ideas and the prejudices, the wisdom and the ineptitude, the courage and the cowardice of individual politicians may be decisive. To bring out these individual contributions, actual achievements must be critically contrasted with objective possibilities. The historical writer who does not disclose the errors of his friends, unwittingly magnifies the achievement of his enemies. Besides, the proper lessons for the future struggles of the Czechs and Slovaks and of other nations can be drawn only if the whole available truth is made known. *Magna est veritas et praevalabit.*

## CHAPTER I

### FOREIGN RELATIONS

"BOHEMIA IS A NATURAL FORTRESS erected in the centre of our continent", wrote the German Chancellor, Bismarck. "Bohemia in the hands of Russia would be our enslavement. Bohemia in our hands would be war without mercy or truce with the Empire of the Tsars."\* The strategic importance of Bohemia was thus recognized in the 19th century, but forgotten in the Munich days of 1938, only to impress itself upon the minds of all those who became the victims of Nazi aggression a year later. Having occupied Czechoslovakia, Hitler could turn against both the East and the West. In completely changed circumstances, the consolidation of the Soviet hold over Czechoslovakia by the Communist *coup d'état* of 1948, became the prelude to the Russian attempts to expel Britain, the United States and France from Berlin. Although the importance of the mountain fortifications has been diminished by the development of air power, the strategic position of Czechoslovakia in the heart of Europe remains.

Bismarck's successors dreamt of the Berlin-Bagdad line, which also led through Bohemia. As long as Bohemia remained a part of the German dominated Habsburg Monarchy, which had a military alliance with Germany, it was at the disposal of Prussian imperialism. It was thus in the interests of France and Britain to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the 1914-18 war. Already before the war, the growing spirit of national independence had made itself felt among the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles and Southern Slavs, who were attempting to free themselves from the overlordship of German and Magyar—the ruling races of the Monarchy. The increasing demoralization of the Austrian administration became proverbial in the first two decades of the 20th century,

\* R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of Czechs and Slovaks*, Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., London, p. 5.

and was well characterized by the Viennese dictum that the Austrian situation was "hopeless, but never serious".

It was this demoralization of Austria that finally convinced Thomas Masaryk that the Czechs had to create their own State. He realized, of course, that his small nation, living in a German sea, could free itself only if it were aided in its efforts by the Great Western Powers. The First World War gave him his opportunity and he seized it with exceptional skill. "How two able exiles, Masaryk, the son of a Slovak coachman, and Benes, the son of a Czech peasant-farmer, set alight an agitation for the liberation of the Czechs and Slovaks, with what wholesale desertions from the Austrian army their efforts were rewarded, how French and English brains were enlisted in their cause, with what enthusiasm the evangel of Czech liberation was received in Chicago (the second largest Czech city in the world) and with what sympathy by President Wilson, how 45,000 Czech war-captives in Russia formed themselves into an army, marched across Siberia, and were thence transported to their native country—the narrative of these events constitutes one of the most surprising chapters in modern history."\*

Thus did Czechoslovakia become an independent State. From the outset, the Czechs and Slovaks owed their independence to a great world conflagration. These two peoples, in co-operation with the Poles, the Croats and other Southern Slavs, had been able to obtain some concessions and some minority rights from the Habsburg Emperors in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, but these nations alone were not strong enough to free themselves from the German and Hungarian overlordship in the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The geographical and geopolitical basis of their existence is to be found in the fact that these small land-locked nations have two powerful neighbours, Germany and Russia. Eastern and Central Europe had been the natural hunting-ground for

\* H. A. L. Fisher. *A History of Europe*. Vol. III. Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1935. p. 1155.



these stronger Powers. The tragic fate of Poland which had been three times partitioned in the 18th century—twice by Prussia, Russia and Austria, and once by Prussia and Russia—and again by Germany and Soviet Russia in 1939, shows clearly what it means to be a small Central European nation. Czechoslovakia, being the most Western of these small Central European States, furthest removed from Russia and nearest to Germany, consequently suffered most from the Germans and dreaded them more than the Russians.

The Czech President, Thomas Masaryk, and the Foreign Minister, Eduard Benes, both realized that this newly born country was too small to be able to protect itself against future aggression from Germany. Although they created a powerful and modern army which was trained by a French Military Mission, their main effort was directed towards the building of a network of alliances that would safeguard peace in Central Europe. A Treaty of Alliance concluded with France in 1924 and the French Guarantee of a German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Agreement of 1925 promised automatic help from France in the event of German aggression. Benes was prepared to fulfil his Treaty obligations when Hitler occupied the Rhineland in 1936. He also stood in the forefront of those who attempted to use the League of Nations machinery to stop aggression by Germany, Italy and Japan, even when it was not directly or indirectly aimed at his own country.

Though prepared to live in peace with a democratic Germany and also to conclude a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany, he refused Hitler's offer of a treaty which would have induced Czechoslovakia not to honour her obligations to France. His foreign policy was not narrowly national, but upheld the moral principles of the League of Nations. He devoted much energy to this international organization, but when he witnessed its weakening and decay, he turned his attention to the strengthening of his country's defences. In 1938, the Czechoslovak Army and Air Force were much better prepared for war than were those of any other European democracy.

Czechoslovakia, as Germany's immediate neighbour, was particularly sensitive to German expansionist tendencies. To prevent a second war with Germany, Dr. Benes wanted to include Soviet Russia in the defensive system of Europe. Since 1922 he had endeavoured to cultivate friendly relations with her, and in 1935 he concluded the Russo-Czechoslovak Pact in which the Soviet Union undertook to defend Czechoslovakia against German attack, but only in the event of France's fulfilling her treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia.

The breaking-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into several small countries made close co-operation between them imperative. While economically co-operation, although growing, was not extensive enough to meet the needs of the population, politically Dr. Benes was able to create with Yugoslavia and Rumania a Permanent Council of the States of the Little Entente. According to its Statute of 1933, this Entente was meant to be "a higher international unit open to other States under the conditions applicable to each particular case". Apart from fostering co-operation between the members, the Little Entente was also intended to be a bulwark against the revisionist claims of Hungary. Thus it seemed that everything had been done to keep the two nations, the Germans and the Hungarians, who had lost their dominating position in Central Europe, in their places.

Dr. Benes's foreign policy had taken into account what appeared to be the rational interests of France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. How great must have been his disappointment when the Munich Agreement of September 1938 demolished the house which he had been building for two decades. At Munich, the four High Contracting Powers, Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, cut off a considerable portion of territory from Czechoslovakia and handed it to Germany. Czechoslovakia was neither consulted nor invited to the Munich Conference. To make this agreement more palatable to the Czechs, France and Great Britain promised to guarantee the independence of what remained of the Czechoslovak State. Yet when in March 1939 Hitler occupied the rest

of Czechoslovakia, not the slightest effort was made to implement this guarantee.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, President Benes's foreign policy was concentrated on obtaining a repudiation of the Munich agreement and its consequences, from the leading World Powers. It was not until August 1942 that the British Government gave Benes this satisfaction, whereas the Soviet Union, not being a partner of the Munich agreement, had recognized President Benes's Government-in-Exile as representing pre-Munich Czechoslovakia by a Treaty of Alliance concluded immediately after the German invasion of Russia on 18 July 1941. In May and June 1942 the Soviet Government officially informed the Czechoslovak Government that it supported the restoration of an independent Czechoslovakia with pre-Munich frontiers. This action on the part of the Soviet Government naturally endeared them to the Czechs. It appeared to have given the stimulus to the British repudiation of the Munich agreement, and also to that made by the French National Committee on 29 September 1942.

The identity of interests that existed between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in putting a stop to the German "Drang nach Osten", gave birth to the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of 1943, which became the basis of Czechoslovak foreign policy after the Second World War.

This reliance on Russia was due to a variety of circumstances. In the first place, geographically, Czechoslovakia lies on the eastern side of Germany, and Russia was the nearest of the great World Powers. Her increasingly dominating position in post-war Europe was foreseeable, taking Germany's unavoidable weakening after the war into account. Secondly, since Munich, Soviet Russia appeared to the Czechs as the only great country that had remained faithful to the principle of collective security. Despite the repudiation of the Munich agreement by France and Britain during the Second World War, this fact remained indelibly imprinted upon the minds of the Czechs.

The Russian treatment of Dr. Benes after the German

invasion of the Soviet Union was so skilful that he accepted all their assurances on their face value. He also remembered that, during the inter-war period, Soviet Russia had not interfered in the internal affairs of his country. Soviet Communists had, of course, been in touch with Czechoslovak Communists, but the latter in their shrewdness had supported the election of Dr. Benes as President against the right-wing candidate, regarding him as "the lesser of the two evils". During the Munich days the Communists had favoured resistance to Nazi demands. Admittedly, from the Communist point of view, these had been tactical moves, which then were in accordance with Soviet foreign policy and could be reversed at any time to meet the exigencies of the moment. Nevertheless, Munich had been the supreme crisis of the Czechoslovak nation and so it was only natural to judge a party's or a country's reliability, loyalty or friendship according to the stand it had taken during that crisis. On this score, therefore, interference in Czechoslovak internal affairs was not feared.

Moreover, President Benes believed that the *rational* interests of the Soviet Union demanded peaceful co-operation with her neighbours on the basis of equality and non-interference. He suffered from the illusion that what he thought to be Russia's rational interests were the real intentions of the Soviet rulers. From 1941 onwards, he acted as if this were the case. In 1943 he added to his book on *Democracy Today and Tomorrow* a chapter discussing co-operation between a democratic and a Soviet State. There he developed a peculiar idea of progressive rapprochement between these two States. If a democracy turned "left", that is to say, if it nationalized its basic industries and expanded social reform by developing a system of social security, then it would economically achieve that progress which he thought had been made in Soviet Russia. Being a staunch defender of democracy, Dr. Benes was convinced that these steps could and should be taken by democratic means. On the other hand, he argued, the Soviet regime ought to develop and expand the sphere of political and cultural liberty, and turn, as he expressed it, "to the right".

In this suggestion can be studied the whole mentality of Dr. Benes as political philosopher, his courage and his limitations. He had the courage to criticize the Soviet regime by implication, when he contended that the various democratic freedoms should be developed in Russia.\* But at the same time he failed to consider the conditions under which such political changes could occur. The uninstructed reader of Dr. Benes's book might even obtain the impression that such a development was actually taking place in Soviet Russia or would be easy to achieve. As if the Soviet rulers had decided to embark on this path, as if they ever were determined to relax political restrictions after the war. How cynically Stalin must have laughed when reading this passage!

Indeed, there had been Lenin's theory that the dictatorship of the proletariat and the institution of the State would wither away, once the capitalist danger from within and from outside had been eliminated. But as a matter of fact, the Soviet State had under Stalin's dictatorship become more totalitarian and more restrictive of the liberties of the individual, it had brought an increasing number of its citizens into forced labour camps and showed no signs whatever of reversing this trend of development. But of this trend in the Soviet dictatorship the reader will find no mention in Dr. Benes's pronouncements made in the years after 1941. So that, in effect, Dr. Benes's writing about Russia's "turn to the right" served only to spread illusions about the "democratic" nature and the imaginary democratization of the Soviet regime.

Whenever Soviet policy and the intentions of the Soviet rulers came up for discussion in the crucial years of preparation for a post-war settlement, Dr. Benes threw the whole weight of his prestige as a distinguished expert on Eastern Europe in their favour, for he insisted that Stalin could be relied upon to pursue a policy of peaceful co-operation with, and non-intervention in, the affairs of Russia's neighbours. Although expecting that his country would be at the mercy

\* In the first part of the book, written in 1939, Benes's criticism of Communism—not of Soviet Russia—had been quite explicit.

of the Red Army during and after the liberation, Dr. Benes seems to have deliberately suppressed all the uneasiness that such a thought would normally arouse in a man of his intelligence. Not perceiving any means of obtaining military and political safeguards against possible Russian interference, he kept on persuading others, including President Roosevelt, that Russian interference need not be feared. By persuading others, he seemed to assure himself against any doubts he might have harboured in the depth of his heart—a psychological mechanism which is frequently operative in human beings and from which even statesmen are not immune. Thus, instead of warning others of the dangers that his country was likely to face, he was one of those who inspired that credulity towards the Russians which is mainly responsible for the post-war crisis of Europe.

Whenever a problem arose which indicated that the Russians were determined to exert pressure upon their neighbours, Dr. Benes gave in, hoping against hope that if the future should dispel their "suspicions", the Russians would become more tolerant. Such a problem presented itself when the federation of the small States of Central Europe was discussed. In 1940, before Soviet Russia had been dragged into the war, the Czechoslovak and Polish Governments-in-Exile had reached an agreement on close co-operation between the two countries. Several committees were set up in order to study and prepare a confederation, first of the two States, and later of other neighbouring States. To create a strong and independent Central European Power was imperative from an economic point of view, and necessary also to resist any pressure that might be exerted by Russia and at a later date by Germany. After Russia's entry into the war, these efforts at federating Central Europe were completely abandoned by the Czechoslovak Government. Why? Because Russia let it be known that she considered a Central European Federation to be a hostile act towards her, an attempt to revive the *cordon sanitaire*. That accusation could not withstand scrutiny. Even if the federation comprised, apart from Poland and Czechoslovakia,

Yugoslavia, Austria and Hungary (and of the latter country's participation there was no sign in 1941-43), this bloc of less than one hundred million people could not have represented an aggressive force which would have endangered the security of mighty Russia. Nevertheless, the expression of Russia's wishes was sufficient to induce Dr. Benes to drop the plan—"for the time being".

Minister Ripka, the mouthpiece of the Czechoslovak Government in London, went one step further. He publicly justified the Soviet attitude by declaring: "If Soviet policy adopted an attitude of extreme reserve—if not a negative one—to confederative plans in Central Europe, the reason was that it feared lest, in this new form, the old, anti-Soviet conception of a *cordon sanitaire* might be revived. I do not doubt(!) that the Soviets will regard these plans favourably(!) once there are guarantees that they are not directed against the Soviet Union, that they cannot become an instrument in the hand of any other Great Power, and especially of Germany, and that the nations of Central Europe wish to live in friendly accord with the Soviet Union."\* While generously granting to the Russians the right to be suspicious of their neighbours, Dr. Ripka exhorted the latter to trust the Russians unconditionally: "As I have already pointed out, the Bolshevik Revolution put an end to the imperialistic tendencies of Tsarism, with the result that Soviet policy is characterised by respect for liberty and independence of other nations. . . . We are convinced that the Soviet Government is anxious(!) and ready to respect the independence of those countries" (the national States in Central and South-Eastern Europe). . . . "I have no doubt that events will prove that we were not mistaken in showing our faith in the friendly intentions of the Soviet Government, and its determination to respect the liberty and independence of the smaller nations of Central and South-Eastern Europe."† Thus Dr. Ripka glossed over the fact

\* Hubert Ripka, *East and West*. Published by Lincoln-Prager, Ltd., London, 1944. Page 57.

† *Idem*. pp. 59-60.

that at that time already he and his colleagues were yielding to the Russians in a vital aspect of Czechoslovak foreign policy.

A second test of Russian non-interference in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia presented itself when posts in the Civil Service were offered to the Czechoslovak Communists. In the years 1942-45, many posts, some of them important ones, in the Czechoslovak Ministries in London—including several in the politically influential department which was responsible for broadcasting to Czechoslovakia—were staffed by Communists and fellow-travellers. This was inconsistent with the declarations of the democrats. If they believed that their country would be independent, they had no reason to facilitate the political activities of the Czechoslovak Communists, the enemies of democracy and national independence; or, if they felt compelled by Russian pressure to assist the Czech Communists, they could not feel independent and had no grounds for asserting, as Dr. Ripka declared: "We repeat—the Soviets are not anxious to 'Bolshevise' Central and South-Eastern Europe."\* This inconsistency between words and acts proved to be fatal.

A policy of friendship with Soviet Russia was unavoidable and clearly justified from the Czechoslovak standpoint. The trouble was that it was accompanied by the abandonment of a constructive policy in Central Europe and by the distribution of tremendous political gifts to the Czechoslovak Communists, which, in effect, were paving the way to the downfall of Czechoslovak democracy in 1948. Moreover, if these concessions to Soviet Russia had to be made, then the democrats' purpose would have been better served had they publicly admitted that they felt constrained to make such concessions to a powerful neighbour. By concealing from their followers, and perhaps even from themselves, how much they were conceding, the Czech democratic leaders confused their best adherents. Some of these sincerely believed what they were told, and therefore, were completely unprepared for the internal political struggle with the Communists. On the other

\* Hubert Ripka. *East and West*, p. 61.



hand, those who noted the extent of the concessions, deduced from them that Czechoslovak independence would be precarious, and abandoned as hopeless any defence of it at a time when resistance was still possible. While many publicly professed their belief in the friendly intentions of the Russians, personally they lived in fear of them. By spreading illusions about the Soviet leaders, they hoped to earn their gratitude and thereby come to some arrangement with them, not for their private benefit—though such individuals existed—but for the sake of their beloved people. But that meant sowing defeatism and pessimism before the fight had begun.

In the most lucid minds, as in that of President Benes, the future could be summarized in a formula: Either there will be peaceful co-operation between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union, or woe to us all. Czechoslovakia and Central Europe could live only as long as this co-operation flourished. Should it fail, then the future would be too tragic to contemplate. The spontaneous, independent contribution that the small nations of Central Europe could make towards the fight between democracy and Communist dictatorship seemed negligible to the Czechoslovak politicians. These States, they felt, stood only to lose from any such fight. Consequently, the Czech democrats made no efforts, either directly or indirectly, to curb Soviet Russia and keep her within her frontiers. "We Czechoslovaks make no secret of our genuine satisfaction that Soviet Russia is beginning to participate in European and world politics as a strong world Power. We hoped for this development for the simple reason that we knew that alliance with a powerful Russia, geographically our nearest friendly Great Power, was indispensable to our definitive security against Germany."\* This "definitive security" against Germany was such that when it was finally achieved, Dr. Ripka, the writer of the quoted sentences, had to flee to the American Zone of Germany.

To please the Russians, the Czechoslovak Government in Exile hastened to recognize the Communist controlled Lublin

\* Hubert Ripka. *East and West*, p. 58.

Government on 31 January 1945, twelve days before the Yalta proclamation on the need of establishing a "Polish Provisional Government of National Unity". In this way, the Czechoslovak democrats deserted not only the most right-wing Poles, but also the Polish democrats represented in the London Polish Government with whom in 1940 they had concluded a treaty of friendship and close co-operation.

To express their gratitude for Czechoslovak subservience, the Russians incorporated Ruthenia, the most Eastern part of Czechoslovakia, in the Soviet Ukraine in January 1945. This annexation was a direct breach of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty regarding the administration of liberated territories, concluded in May 1944, and was carried out under the pretext that it was desired by the inhabitants. The people of Ruthenia were, of course, given no chance of expressing their will. At that time, many of them voluntarily offered their services to the Czechoslovak Army, and later a still greater number endeavoured, mostly in vain, to emigrate from the Soviet paradise into Czechoslovakia. The *fait accompli* was legalized in June 1945 by a treaty in which Czechoslovakia "freely" ceded Ruthenia to Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak democrats kept on assuring themselves and the world that the territorial integrity and political independence of their country were guaranteed by Soviet friendship.

The fear of Germany, based on an age-long struggle and exploitation, has blinded the Czechs to a new and more formidable danger. At a time when Germany lay prostrate and the Great Powers of the world had taken far-reaching measures to prevent her from once again becoming a menace to world peace, this fear lacked all factual basis. But so deep-rooted had it become that it befogged the clearest Czech thinkers. The Russians exploited this sentiment in order to blackmail the Czechs into surrendering their essential political and economic interests. When in July 1947 the Czechoslovak Government unanimously accepted the invitation to take part in the Marshall Plan Conference, Stalin and Molotov presented them with an ultimatum: either they should withdraw their accep-

tance of this invitation, or else the Soviet Government would consider the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty to be nullified.

By sheer coincidence a Czechoslovak delegation, consisting of Mr. Gottwald, the Communist Premier, Mr. Masaryk and Dr. Drtina, Minister of Justice and one of the leaders of the National Socialist Party, came to Moscow only a few days after their Government's decision to attend the Paris Conference. Without the knowledge of the other members of the delegation, Mr. Gottwald went to see Stalin and informed them afterwards that Stalin was infuriated by the Czechoslovak Government's acceptance of the Marshall Plan invitation. A few hours later, the delegation met Stalin and Molotov. Although they had come to Moscow in order to discuss trade relations and the proposed Czechoslovak Treaty with France, Mr. Gottwald surprised his colleagues when he opened the proceedings by stating that the first item on the agenda was the Marshall Aid Conference. Stalin told the delegation that the economic side of the Paris conference could not be taken seriously. It aimed solely at the political isolation of the Soviet Union. Thus, if the Czechoslovaks took part in it, they would disrupt the Slav front and become a tool in the hands of the Western Powers against the Soviet Union. In vain the Czechoslovak Ministers argued that their country badly needed dollar help and dollar credits in order to finance their imports of vital raw material from the West. If they did not receive this financial help, the standard of living would inevitably fall. But these arguments counted as nothing with Stalin. The delegates then telephoned to Prague, suggesting that the Government should revoke its decision to attend the Paris conference. (It is perhaps significant that of the three delegates, one has become the Czechoslovak President—Gottwald, one has seriously injured himself by attempting to commit suicide—Drtina, and the third was reported to have committed suicide—Masaryk.) Under this pressure, the Government unanimously withdrew from Marshall Aid. Only Mr. Majer, the Food Minister, who was at that time in Paris, wired to Prague his protest against the reversal of the Government's decision. Why did the

Czechoslovak Government give way? Did they fear an immediate occupation by the Red Army if they disobeyed? No, but by that time they had become so conditioned to obeying Russian orders that they did not even consider acting otherwise. Perhaps they thought that five or ten years hence, Czechoslovakia, if not supported by Russia, could not cope with a re-armed and aggressive Germany. Perhaps they were afraid of independent thinking.

As late as February 1948 Jan Masaryk signed, together with the Foreign Ministers of Poland and Yugoslavia, a proclamation accusing the Western Powers of supporting German Fascists and preparing for German rearmament. Either he believed what he said in this proclamation—and if so, his fear of Germany overshadowed the factual information which he undoubtedly possessed; or he signed this proclamation for the same reason that induced him to vote with the Slav bloc in the meetings of the United Nations and at various post-war conferences—the reason being that Russian demands had to be satisfied at any price.

It seems that in some Czech quarters a peculiar ideology had developed, which can be summarized as follows. If we do whatever Soviet Russia demands in the international field, they will permit us to run our democracy in our own way. What we support in Soviet foreign policy may not be good or right for the world, but we are so small that we do not count. The two giants, America and Russia, will fight it out without regard to what we say. Our support has propagandist value for the Soviet Union—but will it matter in the long run? The stoutest attackers of the Munich agreement suddenly displayed an attitude very similar to that of Hitler's appeasers. They virtually said: if we cannot prevent the evil from gaining a victory, we will support it in order to save our own country. Thus the Czechoslovaks were sinking still deeper into the mire, while their minds were so befogged that they could not grasp the fact that they were digging graves for themselves.

Admittedly, towards the end of 1947 the growing antagonism between East and West made some of them fear the worst,

including a world war. But to see unrelieved gloom is not sufficient for active politicians: they must also see the assets of their own position and conceive the real conditions of strengthening it.

Czechoslovak independence after the Second World War was, though precarious for geographical reasons, assured by more important factors than the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty. Germany was occupied by the Four Powers and unable to be a danger to Czechoslovakia for a long time to come. And if one day there should be a German recovery, Prussian imperialism is not unavoidable; the Germans may yet learn from their defeat in two world wars and establish a democratic Government. At any rate, for the time being Czechoslovakia had no need to fear them. On the other hand, the growing influence of Russia in Eastern Europe, the establishment of Communist regimes, the 1947 *coup d'état* against the Nagy Government in Hungary, should have been a warning to the Czechs. There was a similar danger and against this danger alone they should have been on guard. If the Communist putsch of February 1948 stirred the world, a direct unprovoked occupation of democratic Czechoslovakia by the Red Army might have been a signal for a world war. It probably need not have been feared in 1947 or in 1948. Although the Soviet Zone of Germany and Austria, Soviet Russia and the Soviet satellites of Poland and Hungary adjoin the longest frontier of Czechoslovakia, her western and south-western flank is covered by the American Zone of Germany. Had the Czechs appreciated the fact that they were not entirely at Russia's mercy, had they not been guided by a neurotic fear of Germany, they could have attempted to pursue an independent foreign policy. If Russia wished them well, why should she prevent them from receiving Marshall Aid, which they urgently needed for economic recovery? If she did not, if she intended to undermine Czechoslovak democracy by weakening the country economically, then it was even more imperative for the Czechs to attend the Marshall Plan Conference despite Soviet threats. When the Government yielded on this issue, the common people in

Czechoslovakia knew that they had virtually lost their independence.\* Yet, strangely enough, not a single Minister resigned. Thus the Coalition Government demonstrated publicly how dependent they were on Russia and thereby contributed still further towards the disintegration of political morale. Unshakeable political morale would have been needed a few months later in order to resist the February onslaught of the Communists. Thus, the Czech democrats had defeated themselves, even before they were directly attacked by the Communists. The men who so easily surrendered the independence of their foreign policy were certainly unable to find an idea which would inspire the common people against the Communist attempt to sell out their country completely to the Soviets.

The philosophers of Czechoslovak democracy failed, because they believed that they could preserve the democracy and independence of their own country, whilst supporting, through their foreign policy and propaganda, the expansion of Soviet Communism in other countries. They can, however, claim extenuating circumstances, for they were neither the only nor even the most powerful of those who assisted Soviet expansion. They were amazed when in May 1945 the American General Patton, who could have easily liberated Prague—where a revolt had broken out—stopped his advance in Bohemia, and when the Czechoslovak squadron of the Royal Air Force—whose readiness the B.B.C. had announced to the Prague patriots—never was permitted to come to their rescue. More than two thousand Prague insurgents were killed because they had to wait two more days until they were relieved by the Red Army. Many a Czech thought that once again the Munich story was being repeated. Whether Czechoslovakia was assigned to the Russians as their sphere of influence by a secret agreement at Teheran or Yalta (as President Benes believed), or whether General Patton was halted by General

\* "It was in defence of its independence that Czechoslovakia refused to participate in the Marshall plan" wrote André Simone in the *New Times*, Moscow, of 28 April 1948. Anybody can falsify historical facts, but only dialectically trained Communists can reverse them with such precision.

Eisenhower at the request of the Soviet General Staff (as Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart has asserted), the Czechs rightly felt that they had been let down. Why should anybody suffer one day or even one hour longer from a cruel dictatorship, if forces that can relieve him are available? This experience afforded the Czech Communists the opportunity to launch fantastic attacks on the West for repeating the Munich betrayal, and at the same time strengthened the Czechoslovak belief that never again could they rely on the armed assistance of the Western Powers. No wonder the most ardent Czech democrats felt that in their dealings with Soviet Russia they stood alone and had no alternative but to make the best of a bad job.

The failure of the American army to relieve Prague was, according to Bruce Lockhart, due to General Eisenhower's wish not to antagonize the Russians.\* Thus he missed the opportunity of demonstrating publicly to what degree Czechoslovakia and Central Europe owed their liberation to the Western armies. The Russians, on the other hand, knew well why they insisted upon liberating Prague. Henceforth, they would claim that theirs was the only army which had the well-being of the Czechoslovak people at heart, and, as they said (and continued to say) in many a broadcast, the only force that had liberated Europe from Nazi oppression. The propaganda value of this and similar events, so frequently underestimated by the democracies, was fully appreciated by the Russians and exploited up to the hilt.

If the foregoing analysis of Czechoslovak foreign policy is correct, then it would follow that the Czechoslovak democrats defeated themselves by their own wrong appreciation of the real assets and the dangers of their position. Their mistaken ideas, however, were fostered by skilful Soviet diplomacy and propaganda, and by the lack of foresight, constructive policy, and psychological warfare in the west.

\* Bruce Lockhart's letter in the *Spectator* of 5 March 1949.

## CHAPTER II

### CONFLICTING CULTURES

THE VARIETY OF CULTURES in Central Europe is much greater than in the west. Whereas in England and France the previous racial and national minorities were almost entirely assimilated, so that State-hood and nationality became identical, in Central Europe, States are—or were until 1945—composed of people of different nations, and members of the same nation lived in the territories of different States. In France and in England, the nationalistic conception meant some kind of territorial unity with a much broader political base than either language or race could provide. In Central Europe, however, it was linked more narrowly with language and with race. The Czechs and the Germans have lived together in Bohemia since the 12th century, and to the foreigner these two races seem very similar, for they have many characteristics in common. Nevertheless, only in rare historical circumstances have they regarded themselves as one Bohemian people in the same sense as the French, German and Italian inhabitants of Switzerland regard themselves as Swiss. In the Czech language, the word *Cech* means both Czech and Bohemian, and *Cechy* means Bohemia. Thus the Czech language reveals that the Czechs regard Bohemia as the land of the Czechs and the German minority as colonists.

The Czechs and the Germans have been highly conscious of their linguistic and racial differences, because these differences have coincided with a cultural and social division. For some centuries the Germans belonged to the privileged social groups, whereas the Czechs formed the lower classes of society. Among the Germans and also among the Hungarians, historical circumstances fostered the notion that some races are born to rule; whereas the subjection to which some Slav nations—the Czechs and Slovaks and others—have often been condemned, nurtured among them egalitarian principles.



The cultural development of the Czechs is distinguished by a peculiar combination of religious, national and social struggles. At the beginning of the 15th century the Hussites started one of the first Reformation movements on the European Continent. This strengthened the Czech culture, because divine service was conducted in that language and the Holy Scriptures were translated into Czech. It was a popular movement that embraced all classes of society, and nine-tenths of the population became its adherents. The moral fervour of this uprising of thought was directed against the corruption of the Catholic clergy, who were predominantly German.

When later in the 17th century the Catholic Counter-Reformation practically exterminated the Czech nobility, Czech became a language spoken only by peasants and workmen. After the country had been re-catholicized by force, the Reformation remained in the memories of the people as an ideal, at once national and religious, moral and democratic.

This development differed profoundly from that of Prussia and German Austria. The latter hardly experienced the Reformation and in Prussia Protestantism was adopted by the State, and the German nobility and clergy mainly ruled the inhabitants of their own race.

Traces of the Hussite Revolution can be found in most of the outstanding Czech figures for some centuries. Comenius, the great educationalist of the 17th century, was the last Bishop of the Czech Brethren, a form of Protestant Czech Church. Palacky, the leading Czech historian of the 19th century, and the Slovak humanist Kollar, were Protestants conscious of their connection with the Czech Reformation. Thomas Masaryk, too, stressed this religious tradition and favoured the separation of the State from the Roman Catholic Church, and was himself a convert from this Church to Protestantism. Thus the outstanding Czech national leaders until the 20th century stressed their connection with the Hussite movement.

Hus, therefore, demands a note of comment, for, patriot as he was, he had a wider outlook far in advance of his time. He was a Roman Catholic priest and Professor of Theology at

Prague University, and was strongly influenced by the teachings of John Wyclif: and when the English reformer's eighteen books were banned by the Pope, John Hus insisted that Wyclif's ideas should be allowed free circulation. This man, ardently fighting for freedom of conscience, composed a Czech grammar and preached in Czech, yet at the same time he taught his countrymen that he preferred an honest German to a dishonest Czech. This combination of toleration and allegiance to the laws of morality, remained a distinguishing feature of the best Czech national leaders.

Such principles and the small number of the Czechoslovak people—about ten million Czechs and Slovaks in 1930—have influenced their relationship towards neighbouring cultures and nations. Since the beginning of the Czech national revival at the end of the 18th century, their sympathy with other Slav nations has been very pronounced. The demand for increasing cultural contacts with them was voiced by linguists and historians throughout the 19th century, and occasionally closer collaboration was achieved with those Slavs who lived inside the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. With Russia, the biggest Slav State, sympathies were strong, but real contacts rare. The Russian ruling circles treated the Czechs with reserve, often with antipathy. Nevertheless, the fact that there was in the East a great and strong State, and a Slav one at that, which might oppose the German enemy in the west, fostered a popular Russophilism among the Czechs.

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, rumours were spread among the Czechs that the Russians would soon come to Prague to liberate them. Similarly in the autumn of 1939 reports were circulated in Czechoslovakia that the Soviet Army was approaching the Czech and Slovak frontiers.

However, against this uncritical pan-Slavism or pan-Russianism, outstanding Czech leaders warned the nation. The Czech liberal writer of the 19th century, Havlicek, made a clear distinction between Tsarism and the Russian people, and Thomas Masaryk, who had published an elaborate study of Russia, critically examined in the Press both the Russian poli-

tical situation and the Russian willingness to help the Czechs. And it is significant that in 1914 his editorial colleagues uttered the jest that the first man to be hanged when the Russians came to Prague would be Masaryk.

Though inclined to be Russophil, Masaryk also tried to gain the assistance of the Western Powers in the Czech struggle for liberation. He did so because he considered some basic moral and cultural principles to be common to the English, the French, the Americans, and the Czechoslovaks. These principles of Masaryk, which were politically so effective, form a part of the cultural inheritance of the Czechoslovak people. The President Liberator was concerned, then, not only with parliamentary politics, but also with politics in a broader sense, with cultural politics, or as he liked to call it, with "unpolitical politics". His influence upon the cultural life of the country was manifold and far-reaching. His ideas, therefore, deserve fuller discussion. These will be considered under three headings. First, his views on the general historical trend of our times; secondly, his opinion of the Germans; and thirdly, his attitude towards the Czech problem.

According to Masaryk, the theocracy of the Middle Ages, which had been centralized in the spiritual leadership of the Pope, was in later centuries succeeded by a greater independence of the nations and states. The Reformation, classical humanism, the sciences and philosophy, offered new spiritual and moral ideas and fundamentals for the organization of society, and prepared for the revolutions in England, France and America. One great result of this revolution was that Church and State became independent of one another. Religion, said Masaryk (who was a deeply religious man), did not lose by this separation, but gained by it, and so did the State. All other institutions were subsequently freed from the Roman Catholic Church—the sciences and philosophy, the schools and education, ethics and religion.

"The idea of the French Revolution was humanitarian, that is to say, it means ethical sympathy, men's respect for their fellow men, a recognition of the worth of human person-

ality. Politically and socially, these principles imply equality between all citizens of a State, and the bringing together of nations and States in a closer community of interests on the basis of common humanity."\*

Masaryk summarized his opinion in the following words: "During the Middle Ages, mankind—mankind being then the Europe of the Holy Roman Empire—was extensively organized by the Roman Catholic Theocracy. Democracy arose through the Reformation and the French Revolution, Democracy being an attempt to organize mankind intensively. Democracy is the antagonist of Theocracy. We are now in a period of transition from Theocracy to Democracy on a humanitarian basis."†

These ideas form the basis of Masaryk's criticism of Germany. "In the Middle Ages", he says, "German thought and culture formed a part of those of Europe; but in more modern times they were increasingly differentiated and isolated. The Prussian State, which the Reformation strengthened, was aggressive from the outset and dominated Germany. The idea of the State, the so-called 'Statism', prevailed also in Western Europe, though there the State was subordinated to Parliament and to public opinion. In Germany, on the contrary, the monarchical State was literally deified, and its absolute power generally recognized . . . The Prussian officer, the soldier, became the German criterion for the organization of society and indeed of the world. . . . In the course of time pan-German Imperialism took the place of Lessing's, Herder's, Goethe's, Kant's and Schiller's humanitarian ideals, which had been derived from secular and Western evolution. . . . Bismarck and Bismarckianism swallowed up Goethe."‡ Nevertheless in Germany there is still an antithesis between Goethe and Bismarck, Kant and Krupp, or in its clearest form between Beethoven and Bismarck. In Beethoven, Masaryk saw "a

\* Thomas Masaryk. *The Making of a State*, p. 304. George Allen & Unwin, 1927.

† Idem., p. 305.

‡ Idem., pp. 305-308.

German genius unspoiled by Prussia." And Masaryk further thought that the war of 1914-18 had answered the question "Goethe or Bismarck" in favour of Goethe. Unfortunately, another war had to pose the question once again.

While repudiating the one-sidedness of German thought, Masaryk nevertheless finds it deep and interesting. "It is", he says, "a scholasticism like that of the Middle Ages, conditioned and limited by a ready-made creed laid down in advance. Just as the Prussian State and Prussianism are absolute, so German philosophy and German idealism are absolute, violent and untrue. They mistake the hugeness of a colossal Tower of Babel for the Grandeur of a humanity united in Freedom."\*

These excerpts from Masaryk's ideas demonstrate that he recognized and accepted certain trends of German culture and repudiated others. In fact, he considered the mutual influence of cultures of different nations—not excluding those of the Germans and Czechs—to be fruitful.

In the same way as Masaryk regarded the problem of Germany as it affected the general development of humanity, so he dealt with the Czech question. He wanted to lift his nation to the highest level of world culture. He praised that part of Czech history that was progressive morally and culturally. He stressed these facts: that the Hussite Revolution had preceded the German Reformation by a hundred years. That at a time when in other countries moral and religious reforms were demanded only by isolated individuals or groups, in Bohemia the Reform movement took possession of the whole Czech people. That in pre-1914 Austria, there was less illiteracy among the Czechs than among the Germans. That relatively there were more German schools provided for the Germans in Czechoslovakia than in Germany.

He compared the cultural and spiritual achievements of his nation with those of other nations, but never claimed supremacy for the Czechs or Slavs or any other social or racial group. His fight against national chauvinism, even of his fellow-countrymen, is the more remarkable in that it was carried on

\* *Idem.*, p. 311.

in Central Europe where the waves of national chauvinism were rapidly rising. He criticized, for instance, the shallow view that the Czechs should be merely a dam against the Germans. The Czech position was for him essentially one of religion and humanity.

Similarly, though he would foster cultural collaboration with the other Slav nations, he fought Slav Messianism, pan-Slavism, as strongly as he fought German Messianism, pan-Germanism. The realization of his human ideal he sought in national, religious and racial tolerance, in democracy, in the love of mankind and in a world policy.

"We", he said, "do not conceive internationalism as anti-national or supernational, and we do not pour out our souls in bootless love for some distant people in Asia. Mankind is for us a concrete, practical idea, an organization of nations, for there can be no internationalism without nationality. The more national we are, the more human we shall be, the more human, the more national. Humanity requires a positive love of one's people and Fatherland and repudiates hatred of other people."

"Humanism is not identical with pacifism or peace at any price. Defensive war is ethically permissible and necessary. Humanism opposes violence and bars aggression. It is active, not passive; it implies efficacious energy; it must not be a mere word upon paper, but a deed and a constant doing."\*

These are Masaryk's thoughts of Germans and Czechs. What the Germans thought of themselves is well known and need not be repeated. But what did they think of the Czechs?

Goethe had expressed his sympathies with them, but Mommsen advocated smashing the hard Czech skulls. According to another German writer, the Sudeten Germans regard the Czech as a half-educated creature who, though to some extent improved by German influence, is politically intolerable and unreliable, socially never satisfied, and always pushing for his nation. The Germans who thought in this way, in the

\* Thomas Masaryk. *The Making of a State*, p. 409.

terms of pan-Germanism, could, of course, not collaborate with the Czechs. Hitler's idea of *Gleichschaltung* only followed the 1914 pan-Germanism. It is significant that the man generally considered to be the greatest German novelist of our time, Thomas Mann, though he complied with the Nazi racial standards, voluntarily left Hitler's Germany and acquired Czechoslovak citizenship.

The dilemma of Bismarck-Goethe, Hitler-Beethoven, can be further illustrated from the Czechoslovak German literature. There is no distinguished poet to be found among the German chauvinists in Czechoslovakia. Among the non-chauvinists, there are several outstanding names, such as Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Werfel. In Rilke, who is often called the greatest German poet that ever lived in the territory of the former Austrian monarchy, the cultural atmosphere of Prague is reflected. The fruitful influence of the Slav environment is apparent, too, in Werfel's work, and in some of his books Czech characters play an important role. The clash of German and Czech culture in Prague gives a special attraction to the work of some of the Prague German poets and writers. Many of them are of Jewish origin and this adds a further interest to their work. If proof were necessary, there is evidence in these works that not *Gleichschaltung*—racial and national isolation and mechanical unification—but the clash or intermingling of different cultures, of different races and environments, produces the most interesting and valuable works of art.

In the First Czechoslovak Republic of 1918-38, literature and art developed with great intensity and reached a very high level. The Czech literature of translations is probably the greatest in the world. This fervour for translation is significant of the endeavour of the Czech people to reach the highest standards of world culture. Situated in the heart of Europe, they had an excellent opportunity of observing developments in the west and in the east, of being a bridge between west and east.

In philosophy and politics, the Czechs tended to repudiate

pre-conceived absolute ideas that seemed so congenial to Germans and Russians, and they responded much more freely to Anglo-Saxon pragmatism. Masaryk translated Hume's "Ethics" into German, and advised the Czech people to learn English.

The Slovaks, the Eastern cousins of the Czechs, had been politically divided from the latter from about 900 until 1918. They were predominantly peasants, working for the Hungarian nobility; and as they did not take part in the Czech spiritual revolution of the 15th century, as well as encountering other obstacles, they were unable to attain the level of culture and education that was accessible to the Czechs in Austria. After the Liberation of 1918, a great cultural regeneration of the Slovaks set in, but a fair number of their intelligentsia remained under the influence of the Slovak Roman Catholic Party, which in contradistinction to the democratic party of the Czech Roman Catholics, always had Fascist leanings and finally submitted to Hitler.

Masaryk, who was of Slovak origin, favoured the development of Slovak education and culture, but for many historical reasons he gained more adherents among the Western Czechoslovaks. The Czech teachers, the representatives of Czech cultural institutions, the urban and also the country intelligentsia in Bohemia and Moravia, were predominantly followers of his cultural programme.

That his humanism was so successful among the Czech nation is, apart from other causes, certainly due to the fact that for a small nation, belief in international moral values was politically useful. For some of his adherents, humanism was perhaps only a useful catchword, behind which they tried to disguise egotistic, individual, group or racial interests. But for Masaryk and for the other great Czech professors and statesmen, the profession of humanism was sincere. They loved their own nation, but they wanted to be just to other nations. For instance, take Masaryk's attitude to the Germans. He did not wholly repudiate them. As an educator, he tried to discern in their culture what was good and what was evil.



He professed that it was Goethe who had given him a standard by which to measure all literature—including the Czech. At the same time, he relentlessly fought pan-Germanism, first with his pen and later by organizing a revolutionary army in the World War of 1914-18. This behaviour was consistent with love of his nation and of mankind.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GERMAN MINORITY

AFTER 1918, when Czechs and Slovaks became independent rulers of their own State, their relationship to the approximately three-and-a-half million strong German minority\* became one of the chief problems of State policy. Although several hundreds of years of German domination had accumulated hatred and contempt for the Germans, and gave rise to expressions of revenge, Thomas Masaryk was able to curb and prevent great outbursts of Czech national chauvinism. He succeeded in safeguarding complete equality for Germans and Czechs alike. Not only did the Germans retain their State-sponsored Universities and theatres, but more schools in proportion to the number of inhabitants were provided for the Germans in Czechoslovakia than for the Germans in Germany itself. The Czechoslovak State supported two Technical Universities for three million Germans, whereas for ten million Czechs and Slovaks only two similar institutions were provided. While Czech and Slovak became the official State languages, in all districts where at least one-fifth of the inhabitants were German or Hungarian, their languages could be used in the Courts of Justice and in all dealings with the authorities. In 1926 two German political parties entered the Government, so that henceforth the Germans also had a share in political power.

The world economic crisis of 1930-32, which brought to a standstill a large part of the Czechoslovak export industry and caused great unemployment among the German workers, and Hitler's advent to power favoured the rise of the Henlein Party, a camouflaged Nazi movement in Czechoslovakia. In the General Elections of 1935, Henlein obtained 62 per cent of all

\* In 1930 the population of Czechoslovakia numbered 14,470,000; 22.3 per cent of the inhabitants, that is, 3,230,000 were Germans.

the votes cast by the German electorate. Although the national and racial demands of this Party were extravagant, officially the Party accepted the fundamentals of the Czechoslovak Republic. As late as September 1938 Ernst Kundt and other members of its Executive Committee were inclined to accept a proposal made by Dr. Benes for a Czech-German agreement. Hitler, however, ordered the Henlein Party to rise against the Czechoslovak State. Finally, the Munich Agreement, concluded by Germany, Italy, Britain and France in September 1938, and imposed upon the Czechs without even consulting them, ceded to Germany the Czechoslovak borderlands inhabited not only by Germans but also by more than 700,000 Czechs.

After the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the Nazis introduced two types of citizenship in the so-called Protectorate—one for the Czechs and another for the Germans. This differentiation became marked in many aspects of life. For instance, Germans were exempted from trial before a Czechoslovak court of law. The Czech Universities were closed. Germanization of the country set in. Needless to say, Czechs were deprived of real self-government. The Gestapo killed the majority of the Jewish citizens, shot the whole population of the village of Lidice, and many other individual Czech citizens. Those democratic politicians, writers and journalists, who did not escape abroad, were put into concentration camps. Only a small number of the Czechs were prepared to collaborate with the Germans. Even among the members of the Protectorate Government and its civil servants, the Gestapo again and again discovered some who were secretly keeping in touch with Dr. Benes's London Government.

When the German terror regime was overthrown in 1945, the Czechoslovak Government set out to expel the German citizens from the country and to confiscate their property. This complete reversal of Czech policy towards the German minority was explained by the Czech Government in the following manner.

German citizens had supported, and often derived direct benefit from, the Nazi exploitation of the Czechs. Moreover,

in spite of the complete freedom and equality that they had enjoyed in the First Czechoslovak Republic, the majority of them had in the elections of 1935 voted for the camouflaged Nazi Party, the Henlein Party. They were, therefore, directly responsible for National Socialism in Czechoslovakia just as were the Germans in the Reich.

Against such reasoning the objection may well be raised that it is impossible to ascertain how many of the Germans, who had voted for the Henlein Party, really desired separation from Czechoslovakia, because this had not been expressly demanded by the Party in its election propaganda. Since, however, the four contracting Powers of the Munich Agreement of 1938—England, France, Germany and Italy—had assumed that all the Germans wanted this separation from Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Government seemed legally on safe ground when it shared this assumption. On the other hand, since the Munich *Diktat* had been repudiated by the Allies of the Second World War, the validity of one of the 1938 Munich assumptions may rightly have been doubted. Whatever the legal aspects of the matter, the fact remains that the expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia was sanctioned by the United States, Russia, Britain and France.

From the developments that took place from October 1938 to March 1939 it had become clear that the splitting up of the country into a German and a Czech region left the Czechs completely at the mercy of Germany. For strategic and economic reasons, the so-called Sudeten-German territories had to remain within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia—territories which the Czechs had always claimed to have the historic right to govern themselves.

The Czechs were determined to clear their country of the German "Fifth Column", even if their national economy should temporarily suffer, as indeed it did, when highly qualified German engineers and workers, who had formed the backbone of some of the old Czechoslovak export industries, were expelled. These men could not easily be replaced, but national security as conceived by Dr. Benes and most other leading

Czech politicians during the Second World War required this economic sacrifice.

In theory, only those Germans who could offer convincing proof of having fought against the Nazis, abroad or at home, were permitted to stay, and in practice this meant that the overwhelming majority of the democratic—non-Nazi and anti-Nazi—Germans were expelled.\*

Many of those Germans who were permitted to stay chose to emigrate voluntarily because no German schools were provided after 1945 and no cultural minority rights were recognized. It is significant that some of the Nazi specialists and irreplaceable workers, who were allowed to keep their posts, gladly sent their children to the Czech schools, whereas the decent German democrats refused to give up their national character. Thus the Republic lost most of its best German citizens and retained some of the worst opportunists, collaborators and even Nazis, insofar as they seemed economically indispensable and managed to secure a testimonial of reliability from the corrupt authorities. After 1946, only about 200,000 Germans remained in the country legally and some 200,000 illegally, by pretending, for instance, to be Czechs. Henceforth, over two million and a half Germans† who had been removed from Czechoslovakia to Germany would form a formidable group of dispossessed people ready to fight Czechoslovakia whenever the opportunity arose. But such a danger counted little with Dr. Benes then, for he believed with President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill that Germany would be kept

\* As late as 8 October 1944 Minister Ripka had declared in London: "The Germans who have proved their fidelity by fighting for the liberation of the Republic, will also certainly play their politically constructive part during the period of reconstruction on a completely different basis. We regard the democratic Czechoslovak Germans as loyal collaborators and we shall continue to co-operate with them in the proven spirit of mutual confidence and mutual understanding." (Quoted by Bohemicus—Dr. J. W. Bruegel—in *Rote Revue*, Zurich, January 1948, p. 19.)

† Several hundred thousand Sudeten Germans cannot be accounted for, because they never returned from the battlefields or from the various parts of Hitler's Reich to which they had been directed during the war.

down by the combined strength of the Big Four for one or even two generations to come.

This attitude signified a complete reversal of Masaryk's policy of justice towards the German minority,\* and one that profoundly demoralized the country. Many Czech "gold-diggers", as they were called, moved to the border regions to take away from the Germans houses, fields, furniture, and other personal belongings. Although later on the authorities managed to bring some order into the transfer of the Germans from Czechoslovakia to Germany, during the first few months of liberation, at least, greed and arbitrariness prevailed. This came as a great shock to those democratic Germans who had remained loyal to the Czechoslovak Republic and had abhorred National Socialism just as much as had the Czechs.

While during and after the First World War, Masaryk and Benes had hoped that Germany might become a friendly and democratic neighbour of Czechoslovakia, during and after the Second World War this hope was entirely abandoned. Facing the prospect of a permanently inimical and impoverished Germany on her north-western, western, and south-western frontiers, Czechoslovakia had to turn to the only Power that was prepared and strong enough to guarantee her frontiers against a future assault from Germany. This Power was Soviet Russia. Thus, not only the outcome of the Second World War on the international scene, but also Czechoslovak home policy, forced the Czechs to make the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty the basis of their foreign policy.

\* This policy of justice to the German minority had been advocated by Dr. Benes himself right up to the first two years of the Second World War. When addressing the Czechoslovak State Council in London on 11 December 1940 he said: "*I proclaim solemnly and most emphatically that we shall give up none of our citizens, whatever their nationality and party, in the Czech lands, in Slovakia and Ruthenia.*" (Dr. Benes's italics in his *Six years of Exile and of the Second World War*, page 182, published by Czechoslovak, London, 1945.)

## CHAPTER IV

### MASARYK'S DEMOCRACY

THE NEW REPUBLIC which emerged from the First World War was mainly the work of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. Holding the view that "States are preserved by those ideals to which they owe their origin", Masaryk succeeded in having his ideals incorporated in the Constitution of the Republic. Its preamble declared: "We, the Czechoslovak people, inspired by the desire to confirm complete unity of the nation, to introduce just norms, to ensure the peaceful development of the homeland, to promote the general welfare of all citizens of this State and safeguard the blessings of liberty for future generations, have in our National Assembly on 29 February 1920, adopted the constitution for the Czechoslovak Republic, in the following wording: 'And we, the Czechoslovak people, do hereby declare that we shall endeavour to carry out this constitution and all the laws of our country in the spirit alike of our history and of those modern principles embodied in the watchword of self-determination; for we wish to incorporate ourselves in the League of Nations as an educated, peace-loving, democratic and progressive member'."\*

Political power was vested in the President and in a Parliament of two Chambers elected by secret ballot on the basis of universal and equal suffrage. In order to ensure strict application of the principle of proportional representation, large constituencies were formed, each electing several Members of Parliament. The surplus votes of each party for all constituencies were added together and then additional seats were apportioned to the parties after a second and third scrutiny. Yet, although this electoral system ensures a more proportionate representation than, for example, the British one, it has several drawbacks. In the first place, it operates against any close contact being made between the elector and the

\* R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of Czechs and Slovaks*, Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., London, p. 316.

candidates to be elected, the very factor that in Anglo-Saxon countries lessens the dependence of the prospective Member of Parliament on his party: even if he does disagree with his party, he stands a good chance of being re-elected on his own merits, provided he has maintained the confidence of his electorate. In Czechoslovakia, however, the people voted for a long party list, and the Executive Committee of each political party had the last word in deciding what names and in which order they should be put on the party list. The party caucus, consequently, became much more powerful than it is in countries where a party candidate or an independent candidate is elected on the basis of the majority of votes in his constituency. In the second place, the British electoral system tends to ruin small parties, and by exaggerating the gains of the winning party, provides a firm basis for a one-party Government. The Czechoslovak system offered opportunities to small parties of obtaining parliamentary representation, with the calamitous result that in the period of 1918-38 as many as twenty-two political parties were represented.\* This made Coalition Governments inevitable and also frequent changes of Government possible, at least, in theory. To avoid such instability, the practical spirit of the Czechs devised an unconstitutional organ called the *Petka*, a Committee of Five, a Council of the leaders of the five Czech parties—namely, the National Democrats, the Agrarians, the Catholics, the National Socialists, and the Social Democrats. It was the task of this Council to overcome the disagreements that existed between the parties and to draw up a working programme, the details of which were elaborated by the Government. While the *Petka* was successful in securing relative stability of government, it at the same time unduly strengthened the power of a few party leaders at the expense of Members of Parliament and even of some Ministers. For this reason and owing to the effects of proportional representation, the inner life of the political

\* One reason for the adoption of this system of proportional representation was the intention to give a scrupulously fair representation to the national minorities.



parties in Czechoslovakia tended to become more authoritarian and even less influenced by the rank and file than it is in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Nevertheless, the basic tenets of democracy were held in high regard. Compared with the many restrictions upon the liberty of the individual and upon the nation that had been imposed by the constitutional monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia had made great advances towards democracy.

Although the censor could delete from newspapers and books passages which he considered likely to endanger peace and order in the Republic, the freedom to express different political and religious opinions was on the whole upheld, not only for the Czechs and Slovaks, but also for the Germans, Magyars and Ruthenians. Gradually, several German and Slovak parties joined the Government, thereby proving that at least a portion of the national minorities agreed with the general trend of Czech policy to the extent of being prepared to share the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the State.

The Republic inherited from the Austrian monarchy a nucleus of civil servants to which new recruits could easily be added just as soon as a sufficient number of educated people were available. This bureaucracy carried on in the Austrian tradition of red tape and an atmosphere of snobbish superiority of civil servants over ordinary human beings. It moved slowly but not inefficiently, and was less corrupt than is customary in Eastern Europe. President Masaryk attempted by re-education to counter the negative features of Austrian tradition, for these acted as brakes upon democratic life. His attempts and later those of President Benes met with a certain measure of success, but twenty years were too short a span of time for the development of a truly democratic Civil Service.

Socially, the Czech nation was characterized by a diligent and thrifty middle class, by small traders, artisans, workers, peasants, and by the intelligentsia recruited from these groups. The "middle way" features of the country were further emphasized by the fact that the population was almost equally distributed between town and country. The

Czech nobility had been exterminated in the 17th century, and the German nobles after the Revolution of 1918 were forbidden to use their inherited titles. The small and well-to-do (but by Western standards not very wealthy), bourgeoisie was never strong enough alone to determine Government policy. By the Land Reform of 1919, all estates in excess of one hundred and fifty hectares were expropriated and distributed among the poor or landless peasantry, so that more than half a million new small holdings were created. In the first years of the Republic the eight-hour day was established, and unemployment, health and old-age insurance introduced. A new Czech and the first Slovak University were founded, and the State offered a large number of scholarships for students without financial means. Theatres, philharmonic orchestras and many other cultural institutions were encouraged and supported by the State. Though inequalities of income persisted and industry remained in private hands, the principle of equal opportunity was generally recognized in theory and steadily, although slowly, put into practice.

While democracy was firmly established in a legal sense and great social reforms were speedily introduced, no pattern of social and moral behaviour that could be likened, for instance, to the ideal of the English gentleman had taken root. Here Masaryk's ideals of humanity, tolerance and mutual understanding were about to fill the gap, but twenty years were too short a time in which to educate a political and moral *élite*, strong and large enough to overcome the disasters which the unfortunate Czechs had to face. Masaryk's disciples proved their worth under his leadership, but to a much lesser degree under Benes. But when the ranks of Czech journalists and politicians had been decimated by the Gestapo, and, because of Benes's unquestioned authority, his fellow-émigrés had lost the habit of exercising independent political thought, the lack of an experienced political *élite* became disastrously apparent when Czechoslovakia was freed in 1945.

## CHAPTER V

### DEMOCRACY WITHOUT OPPOSITION

IN THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1935, the Communist Party obtained about 10 per cent of the total votes cast: in the election of May 1946 it secured 38 per cent. This quadrupling of the Communist influence was due to various causes which deserve closer examination. Between these two dates lies the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938, the rape of its remainder by the Nazis in 1939, and their regime of terror during the Second World War.

The prestige of the West had naturally sunk very low during the Munich days. Czechoslovak citizens felt that they had been let down by their Western allies, whereas Russia was excused on the grounds that she had not been given a chance to help the Czechs since her treaty obligations were dependent on France's action and this situation never arose. Moreover, the Communists initiated a whispering campaign alleging that Soviet Russia had offered armed resistance, despite France's inactivity, but that the "reactionaries" in the Czechoslovak Government had refused her offer. Privately, Dr. Benes's entourage maintained that Dr. Benes had taken the initiative to inquire whether Russia was prepared to assist Czechoslovakia, even if France backed out, but was told that she would fulfil her treaty obligations and no more. This account seems the more probable, because it was unlikely that Russia would have contemplated fighting the Nazis single-handed, whilst the West remained neutral or gave moral assistance to the Nazis. Whatever the truth, the Communists undoubtedly gained by the fact that Russia could not be blamed for Munich, whereas they could revile the Western democracies for having acquiesced in the Nazi exploitation of Czechoslovakia from September 1938 until September 1939.

The outbreak of the Second World War, however, turned the scales: Soviet Russia had signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany, and the Western Allies were fighting after

all. Many Czechs, some Slovaks and some German citizens from Czechoslovakia had escaped abroad and were now fighting with the French Army and the British Army and Air Force. Britain's heroic resistance to Hitler's Blitzkrieg endeared her once again to the Czechs, the more so as the official repudiation of Munich by the British Government convinced them that lessons had been learned from past mistakes. The authority of the B.B.C. rose steadily, for people found out by experience that its news service was reliable. Yet Russia's psychological warfare, after Hitler's attack upon her in June 1941, proved to be superior to that of the West.

While the West and the East referred to each other politely as "great democracies", the Russians in their broadcasts, never ceased to glorify their own "democracy". The European service of the B.B.C. in general, and its Czech and Slovak services in particular, were rather reluctant to educate their listeners in those essentials of democracy in which the Western regimes differ from Soviet "democracy". It would have been easy to explain to European listeners, living under the Nazi terror, how the regime of one party, not only of the Nazis but of any one party, must lead to a dictatorship.\* But in order not to offend the Russians, or simply because they misunderstood the mentality of their listeners, the Allied broadcasters during the war never attempted to educate democratic cadres which after the liberation might have turned the scales in favour of democracy. The equation between Western and Eastern democracy that was so popular during the war was of tremendous assistance to the Czech—and other—Communists. They had every reason to hide their totalitarian aspirations,

\* During the Second World War I suggested among the guiding ideas of Allied propaganda to Germany the following: "If you have one political party only, it will tend to amalgamate itself with the state bureaucracy, and ordinary citizens will have no power to control affairs and remove those who are corrupt or abuse their position. At least one opposition party with free elections and a free Press and uncensored facilities for broadcasting are necessary to check such tendencies as may foster the development of oligarchical government leading to dictatorship." (*Broadcasting for Democracy*, page 54. George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1942.)

and insofar as they succeeded in doing so, they appeared to the masses as a sincerely democratic party whose socialist demands were more radical than those of the other democratic parties. Hence the success of the Communists was partly due to the misguided political warfare of the West. But they did not confine themselves to broadcast propaganda. From 1943 the Russians dropped parachutists into Czechoslovakia whose essential task was to organize the Czechoslovak Communists and to instruct them how to take over power during the expected downfall of the Nazi regime, how to organize and to keep under their control the local liberation committees. From the West no similar action was taken.

Another factor assisting the Communists was Nazi propaganda which strongly overplayed its attacks against the Bolshevik devils and its glorification of the Nazi angels. The oppressed peoples learnt from experience that the Nazis were not angels, but devils, and from this they deduced that the Bolsheviks must be the angels. And the angels came to deliver them from the Nazis. The Red Army, sweeping over Eastern Europe, liberated Czechoslovakia. Not even the bad behaviour of the Russian troops, the rape of women and the stealing of watches, carpets, cows and horses from private citizens, not even the comparison of the dirty and primitive Soviet soldiers with the popular well-dressed and clean American soldiers, who good-heartedly distributed chocolates to children and cigarettes to adults, made people forget the gratitude which they owed to the Russians for liberating them from the Nazi hell. The prestige of Soviet Russia could not but enhance the popularity of the Czech and Slovak Communists who for so long had emulated the Russians.

Meanwhile the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile, which resided in London during the war, gave considerable encouragement and assistance to the Czechoslovak Communists after Russia's entry into the war. It was soon forgotten that

prior to this event, the Czech Communists—just as the Communists of other countries—had sabotaged the war effort. Although the Communists refused to join Dr. Benes's Government, innumerable favours were granted, many posts were given them in the Government offices. While the official Government paper in London never opened its pages to a political discussion and most emphatically discouraged it—as if the President, Dr. Benes, and his Government could never be wrong—the Communists published their weekly in which they did not hesitate to attack Government Ministers. The Government even assisted them in obtaining a paper allocation from the British authorities, and non-Communist politicians contributed to their Press funds. The Communists thus educated their cadres by public discussion, while none of the democratic parties attempted to do so. It was an odd situation. On the one hand, the Czechoslovak democrats held that Stalin could be relied upon not to interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia—in which case he should, of course, be expected to put up with non-preferential treatment of the Communists. On the other hand, they voluntarily facilitated the Communists' propaganda abroad and their penetration into the State bureaucracy. The Communists, consequently, had the double advantage of not being burdened with Government responsibility and of exerting a steadily growing influence upon Government machinery. After the liberation of France and before the Czechoslovak Government returned to Prague, the post of Press Attaché in Paris, for instance, was entrusted to a young and enthusiastic Communist. Many bureaucrats, seeing which way the wind was blowing, tried to make a deal with the Communists, presuming that if Czechoslovakia remained democratic their support of the Communists would not be held against them, but if she turned Communist then they would be rewarded, as indeed they were afterwards. Yet they did not have to wait for their reward until a purely Communist Government was installed by a putsch, for Dr. Benes gave the ministerial key posts to the Communists even before he set foot on the territory of liberated Czechoslovakia.

Now the most tragic chapter of this narrative begins. In the spring of 1945, Dr. Benes and his London Government went to Moscow to reach an agreement with the Czechoslovak Communist leaders who had taken refuge in Russia during the war. As a result of these conversations, President Benes nominated a Provisional Government in which the Communists obtained all the key positions, such as the Ministry of the Interior—which commands the Security Police—the Ministry of Information—which controls broadcasting, the production and presentation of films, and exerts a great influence upon the Press—the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture. General Svoboda, who had commanded the Czechoslovak Brigade in Russia and was officially a non-party man but for all practical purposes a Communist fellow-traveller, became Minister of National Defence. Mr. Masaryk's (the Foreign Minister) deputy, who was practically responsible for the whole administration of the Foreign Service, also became a Communist. The less important offices were distributed among members of the Czech Catholics (People's Party), National Socialists and Social Democrats, and the Slovak Democrats. The Provisional Government was headed by Mr. Fierlinger, a crypto-Communist member of the Social Democratic Party. His nomination was demanded by the Communists who knew that he would serve their aims better than could an openly declared Communist. Thus, Dr. Benes made the Communists masters of Czechoslovakia even before the will of the Czechoslovak people could be ascertained in the elections.

None of the new Communist Ministers, with the possible exception of Gottwald, was very prominent either in Czechoslovakia or abroad. Yet the two sincere champions of political democracy, Benes and Jan Masaryk, who enjoyed a world reputation and were at the zenith of their influence both at home and abroad, voluntarily handed over power to the Communists, the enemies of democracy. Why?

At that time the Red Army had already entered Czechoslovak territory and was likely to liberate the whole country. If he did not reach a compromise with the Communists, Benes

feared, that the Communists, supported by the Red Army, might establish their own Government, and then he and his supporters might find themselves in a position similar to that of the London Polish Government, which had been abandoned by the Big Four in favour of the Communist-controlled Lublin Government. Even if no compromise had been reached with the Communists, I do not believe that Dr. Benes and Jan Masaryk, who were undoubtedly the most popular men in Czechoslovakia, could have been abandoned by the Western democracies, if such an intention, which I doubt, ever existed.

A compromise with the Communists was worth while only if it were a real compromise and not a complete surrender. On the basis of their pre-war influence, the Communists were entitled to one-tenth of the Government posts, and even if their influence tripled or quadrupled, there was no reason why the strongholds of power should not have been at least equally divided between the Communists and the democrats.\* But during the conversations such a compromise was not even attempted. In the discussions between the parties, the Communists simply stated that they were the strongest party, and the leaders of none of the democratic parties questioned their assertion. Moreover, they were the only party that entered the discussions with an elaborate social programme. The leaders of the other parties had spent several years in exile without preparing or agreeing on a post-war programme. Hence the Communists had an initial advantage in the conversations. The other parties accepted the great bulk of the Communist proposals, making only slight amendments. Thus the Communists quite naturally became the leaders of the coalition from the very start.

President Benes, while leaving the distribution of offices to the party leaders, apparently believed that the Communists would remain grateful to him for allowing them to share so much of his power—and at that moment the whole power of

\* Here and elsewhere, the term "democrats" is used to denote all those who believe in parliamentary democracy. It implies the leaders or members of all democratic parties of the Right, Centre or Left.



the Czechoslovak Government was concentrated in his hands—and that they would never misuse it. In London, it did not seem to matter very much who was in the Government, because Dr. Benes's voice had been decisive in all essential problems. Furthermore, since for the post-war period Dr. Benes envisaged a peculiar kind of democracy without opposition, he probably trusted himself to be able to check any Communist extravagances. He believed then, and certainly until the middle of 1947, that Gottwald would scrupulously play the democratic game. This illusion was only a distorted expression of the fact that Dr. Benes and his followers had already accepted one important tenet of the Communist doctrine: a regime without opposition.

Henceforth, no opposition party or individual was permitted to be present in the Czechoslovak Parliament. The five parties—the Communists, the Slovak Democrats, the Czech Catholics, National Socialists and Social Democrats—were to form a Government of the National Front, and only with the Government's permission could a new party take part in the election fight. In this way there were excluded from the political arena not only the Slovak Catholics who had in their overwhelming majority collaborated with the Nazis, but also the Czech and Slovak Agrarians, the strongest single party of pre-war Czechoslovakia, whose one wing had collaborated with the Nazis but whose two leaders had been Ministers in Dr. Benes's London Government. Dr. Benes himself favoured the revival of the Agrarian Party, but the Communists, supported by all other party leaders—with the single exception of Minister Stransky—outlawed it.

While the Agrarians were undoubtedly much more burdened with subservience to Hitler than any other Czech party, no party was entirely free from traitors and collaborators.\* Since after liberation many of them were imprisoned and deprived of their political rights, they constituted no public danger. The principle that any group of citizens has the

\* A number of Nazi collaborators were welcomed into the ranks of the Communist party and entrusted with important posts.

right to elect representatives is an essential tenet of democracy. Here it was abolished by a few leaders of the National Front who, without consulting the electorate, thereby disregarded one basic law of the Czechoslovak Constitution.

It is worth noting that the Communists needed to exert no pressure upon the other parties to obtain this abolition of a basic law of democracy. The latter simply hoped to catch more votes if the Agrarians or additional parties were excluded from election fights. How mistaken they were will be seen later.

Pre-war Czechoslovakia had certainly been blessed with far too many parties, and if their number was to be restricted it could have been done by a change of the electoral law in a way that might hamper the representation of the small parties. The absence of opposition, however, was bound to have serious effects upon the life of the recognized political parties themselves. A Member of Parliament who might disagree with Government policy had either to acquiesce or else retire from Parliament. He could not remain in the House as an independent Member or as a Member for a new party. The Members of Parliament, therefore, became mere voting figures who were called upon to carry out the orders of the General Secretaries of their respective parties. These secretaries themselves and some leading party bosses sat on the small Committee of the National Front, an unconstitutional organ in which the non-Communist parties had the formal majority, which they also had in the Government. But the Communists worried very little about this formal majority. They concentrated on strengthening their political influence by skilfully using the important Government offices which had been entrusted to them.

In so far as more vigorous men with independent minds were still to be found in the depleted cadres of the democratic parties, the Communists very often protested against their being given responsible positions, and in many instances the leaders of the democratic parties yielded to this pressure. In other words, the Communists indirectly hampered the free development of the political life of other parties. In addition,

they had secret contacts with crypto-Communists, who in all the other parties acted according to their orders.

Their indirect influence upon members of the democratic parties was greatly enhanced by the fact that they controlled all the Intelligence Services of the Government. Not only were the Intelligence Services of the Ministries of the Interior and National Defence in the hands of the Communists, but even the Ministry of Information had its special Intelligence Department. Needless to say, the Communists exploited these departments for their own party purposes. They used their secret information about individual members of the democratic parties to exert pressure upon the weaklings, to thwart the activities of the stronger men and to prepare lists of those who might be willing to work for the Communists, and eventually, in February 1948, to join the Action Committees. The democratic leaders, on the other hand, had no similar means of knowing, nor did they attempt to find out, how devoted the members of their parties were to the democratic cause.

In addition to the police and *gendarmérie* a special corps of National Security was formed to combat the Nazis in the German borderlands and elsewhere. This corps was from the outset almost entirely Communist. Already in February 1946 Mr. Krajina, the General Secretary of the National Socialist Party, revealed in a speech to the National Assembly that the Communists were collecting incriminating material against leading members of the democratic parties by forcing prisoners, including Nazis, to make false statements about them. Although the Communists made tactical retreats whenever their intrigues were publicly exposed, they never discontinued these illegal activities. By controlling the various investigation departments they could sabotage the judiciary, so that guilty persons, particularly Communist criminals, could often escape the punishment they deserved according to Czechoslovak law.

The Communist Minister of Agriculture set out to carry through the New Land Reform which had been agreed upon by all parties. Land owned by Germans and Hungarians and also by Czech and Slovak traitors was confiscated by the State

and allocated to labourers and smallholders who, of course, showed their gratitude to their benefactors by voting for the Communists in the General Election of 1946. The Minister also granted financial support to individual peasants, and just before the election freely distributed thousands of tickets entitling the holders to acquire a tractor or another agricultural machine without payment.

The democratic parties, notably the National Socialists and Czech Catholics, facilitated this Communist conquest of the village by showing, even in their election propaganda, no understanding of the economic needs and radical demands of the poorer farmers and smallholders. The most stupendous gains of the Communists, consequently, occurred in the agricultural districts.

Equally great was their success in the previously German borderlands. The property of about two and a half million Germans, who were expelled from the country, was distributed among Czechs and Slovaks who settled down in these previously German districts. The Communists were in charge of this resettlement and earned the gratitude of all those who gained by this redistribution of movable and immovable property, estimated at £1,000 million. The Communists completely disregarded the international tenets of their doctrine and indulged in a rabid national chauvinism which permitted them to treat the Germans with the same cruelty and contempt for human dignity with which the Nazis had treated the Czechs. Their purpose was clear. The deeper the enmity between the Czechs and the Germans, the greater would be Czechoslovakia's dependence on Russia.

While employing Nazi methods against the now helpless German men and women, the Communists did not disregard the other legacy of Nazism—Jew baiting, wherever it promised to pay political dividends. The Communist Minister of Information himself, for instance, employed anti-Semitic slogans in a speech at Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) at a meeting which he failed to rouse to enthusiasm with his usual battery of words. And this battery contained more than one explosive. From the

very first day of liberation, he and the Minister of Education indulged in vituperation of the West for having let down Czechoslovakia in 1938 and again in 1945! for having unnecessarily prolonged the war and for supporting German Nazis. At the same time, they glorified Soviet Russia and the Red Army, which was said to have liberated Europe single-handed. The dissemination of facts, which were contrary to his fantastic allegations, the Minister restricted by rigorously applying his power of censorship. For instance, he cut twenty-five minutes of a film, made by a Communist director, describing the activities of the Czechoslovak Brigade of the British Army. The suppressed part showed the mighty achievement of the Allied invasion of France, which has never been acknowledged by the Soviet radio and Press.

Such were the advantages which the Moscow agreement had given to the Communists. However, these advantages alone would not have turned the scale in their favour had there been a basic ideological difference between them and the democratic parties. But both Communists and non-Communists advocated the same policy: democracy without opposition, nationalization of industry, and the expulsion of the Germans. And each party contended that it was more devoted to this task and better equipped for carrying it through than its competitors. Propagandistically, Communists and National Socialists, for instance, competed in demagogic phrases of rabid nationalism, in accusing one another of mismanagement, corruption, patronage. In this quarrel all the trump cards were in Communist hands. They had a network of local organizations at a time when the others had evolved little more than central and district committees of their parties. And if there was no basic difference between the parties, why should the citizens not support the best organized, most powerful party, which, moreover, could rightly claim that, having never joined the Government before the war, it was responsible neither for pre-war capitalist exploitation, now condemned by all parties, nor for the Czechoslovak surrender to the Munich *Diktat*.

The other parties, although their Press was free, failed to make complete use of it. The emulation of Russia, the ideal country in every respect, was, of course, one of the main Communist arguments. The democratic parties, while attacking some, by no means all, Communist methods at home, only rarely resorted to poignant descriptions of the real conditions inside Soviet Russia, and thus the Communists in this sphere were leading almost unopposed. Although several courageous journalists occasionally referred to the "streamlining" of Soviet literature and a few anti-Soviet books particularly in the English and French language were available in the bookshops, no leading politician and certainly no Minister would refer critically to any aspect of Soviet life. On the contrary, they often expressed their admiration for the Soviet regime in an uncritical and exaggerated manner which could not but assist the Communists.\* Therefore, the Communist election propaganda in this field remained, to say the least, unopposed. The more so as President Benes especially advised the parties not to discuss foreign policy in the election campaign of 1946.

While the broad outline of foreign policy was unanimously accepted by all parties, there were foreign events which might have served as a warning to the Czechoslovak democrats. If the details of the Communist treatment of Mr. Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party in Poland and of the democrats in Rumania and Bulgaria had become known in Czechoslovakia, her citizens might have become earlier and better aware of the true nature of post-war Communism. But even the democratic Press preferred to keep their readers in darkness on such important issues.

Similarly, although the common people could not fail to note that some Unrra food supplies were of Western origin, a Socialist Minister publicly expressed deep gratitude to the Soviet Union for delivering them, while he hardly recognized the merit and sacrifice of those who actually paid for them.

Propagandist advantages were not the only ones with which

\* Quotations from the Czechoslovak Press will be found in Chapter VII, "No Resistance".

the Communists faced the 1946 election. They were by far the wealthiest of all the political parties, and the number of their party employees was greater than that of all the other parties added together. In January 1947, the Communists employed 2,400 Secretaries, the National Socialists 723, the Social Democrats 513, and the Catholics 512. The voting age was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen years, which was advantageous to the Communists who, with their superior means of propaganda, could arouse the enthusiasm of politically inexperienced youth.

No wonder the Communists, with so many favourable circumstances on their side, obtained 38 per cent of the total votes cast in the general election of May 1946. But even so, it should be remembered that the majority of the people voted for the democratic parties and that this was at the very zenith of Communist influence. Moreover, with no opposition party allowed to compete in the election, it must be assumed that all parties of the National Front and also the Communists, obtained a higher percentage of the votes than they would have if the electorate had been permitted to cast a vote for a party which had not been responsible for the post-war Provisional Government. Any speculation regarding the number of people who might have opposed the Government must necessarily be mere conjecture. But 20 per cent of the electorate is probably a conservative estimate. In that case, the Communists' 38 per cent would hardly reach 35 per cent. This speculation is, incidentally, not so futile as it may appear at first sight. It brings into relief the extent to which the stultification of democracy, although intended to support the selfish interests of all parties of the National Front, assisted the enemies of democracy—the Communists—more than any other party.

The selection of Mr. Fierlinger as Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, nominated in Moscow, was another gratuitous gift to the Communists. As the Communists held

all the decisive seats of power, it would have been only fair to make their overwhelming preponderance apparent by taking the Prime Minister from their ranks. Yet the Communists were shrewd enough to prefer Mr. Fierlinger, who was nominally a member of the Socialist Party.

Before the war, Mr. Fierlinger had been a professional diplomat and served as Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. In accordance with the Soviet policy of 1939, Mr. Fierlinger closed the Czechoslovak Embassy in Moscow and came to London to write a book on Soviet Russia, which proved unmistakably that he had become an uncritical admirer of the Soviet regime. When in 1941 Russia, invaded by the German Army, recognized the London Government of Czechoslovakia, Mr. Fierlinger returned to Moscow as Ambassador mainly because he was welcome to the Kremlin. Nevertheless he did not enjoy the confidence of the London Government, who in 1943 decided to recall him. But the President, Dr. Benes, did not carry out this decision.\* By 1945 even President Benes did not like his candidature for the post of Prime Minister and would have preferred Gottwald, the leader of the Communist Party. But Gottwald refused and Fierlinger's candidature was supported by the Czech Catholics and Slovak Democrats, for the latter were indebted to him for promising to open no Social Democratic offices in Slovakia so that they could hope to gain the votes that might otherwise have been cast for this party.

Dr. Fierlinger had hardly any followers in his own party, the Social Democrats. But returning to Prague with the prestige of Prime Minister, he was elected party chairman. He favoured complete subservience of his party to the Communists, and was instrumental in putting Communist fellow-travellers into responsible positions. As the Communists set out to conquer the Trade Unions, and the democratic parties with the sole exception of the Social Democrats underestimated

\* President Benes certainly neither liked nor trusted Mr. Fierlinger, but as he knew how welcome he was at the Kremlin, he probably did not wish to arouse Soviet suspicions by recalling him.



their importance, the weakening of the latter by traitors from within considerably assisted the Communists.

Under Fierlinger's leadership, his party suffered a crushing defeat in the 1946 election, and Gottwald now openly succeeded Fierlinger in the Premiership. The defeat of the Social Democrats was a clear indication that the Socialist workers did not appreciate a policy which was hardly distinguishable from that of the Communists, and the rank and file began to demand a more independent line of democratic Socialism. At the party congress of November 1947 Fierlinger was not re-elected. The new Executive Committee decided to free itself from Communist penetration, and was about to expel some crypto-Communists from its ranks when the Communist putsch of 1948 abruptly ended this process of regeneration.

The change of leadership in the Social Democratic Party was only a symptom of the general decline in Communist influence. Too many people had witnessed the conspicuous enrichment of the Communist bosses. They were seen in beautiful motor-cars, lived in large flats and houses "requisitioned" from their rightful owners, and displayed all the characteristics of the *nouveau riche*. All parties essayed to put their members into responsible positions in industry and the civil service. But whereas the democrats, by and large, favoured their protégés only if they had the required qualifications for the job, the Communists systematically filled all such positions with their own members even if they were lacking the most elementary qualifications. No party was free from corruption, but Communist corruption flourished excessively, particularly on the lower and medium levels of public and industrial administration where it aroused the anger of many people.\* Local Government and factory representatives slowly learnt that the Communists always found a way of disregarding majority decisions if they did not agree with them. The Ministers of the Interior and Agriculture often misused their

\* Before the war, Rumania had enjoyed among the Czechs the reputation of being the most corrupt country of the world. In 1947, the following story became very popular in Prague: "A Rumanian Government delegation has just arrived in Prague. Why? To study corruption."

powers in order that Communist minority suggestions should be carried out, although they referred to matters in which the decision of the local or factory council should have been final.

After two and a half years of experience with these Communist methods, the people began to draw their own conclusions. A Gallup Poll carried out at the order of the Communist Party in January 1948, indicated that their influence had declined from 38 per cent to 29 per cent. In all elections held in 1947 among University students, the "Marxist bloc" never obtained more than 25 per cent of all votes cast, and the Communist support averaged 12 per cent. As the fear of Communism lessened, the other parties showed greater initiative and independence in local affairs. Public and factory meetings made the National Socialists and Social Democrats confident that in the general election, which was to be held in May 1948, their support would increase at the expense of the Communists. Even so, the Communists were likely to continue the strongest single party, and, though losing some of their influence among the industrial workers, still to remain a formidable force in the factories and in the previously German and some agricultural areas. But they had no chance of achieving their totalitarian aims by democratic means, and were consequently determined to give up playing the parliamentary game. Before we examine the Communists' use of violence as a political weapon, we must briefly survey the economic and social changes that occurred in Czechoslovakia from 1945 to 1947.

In the course of the years 1945 and 1946 all banks, all joint stock companies engaged in finance, all insurance companies, all mines and power plants and about 65 per cent of all non-agricultural industry, were nationalized. This programme of nationalization had been agreed upon by all political parties, and all of them demanded to be represented by their members on all levels of the new industrial bureaucracy. This led to an

undue increase of the clerical personnel even beyond what is customary in State-owned enterprises. Moreover, if disagreement arose between the managers and workers of one factory, on the one hand, and the central planning department of the responsible Ministry on the other, a delegation of twenty to thirty men, comprising half a dozen representatives of each political party, would be sent to Prague to protest and to exert pressure. This peculiar interpretation of industrial democracy led to the loss of millions of working hours and made the position of the chief planners very difficult.

While industrial recovery proceeded in Czechoslovakia more rapidly than in the neighbouring countries, industrial administration was less than adequate, because a great number of the new administrators lacked the training and experience required for the proper fulfilment of their tasks. The recruitment of the new civil servants from the ranks of the manual workers created an acute shortage of skilled labour, which greatly surpassed what might have been expected even after the expulsion of the skilled German workers. In addition, as it had been patriotic to sabotage and work slowly under the Nazi regime, it was not easy to eradicate this habit after liberation. Productivity was consequently low.

Nevertheless, in 1946 when the crop was good, and in 1947 when it was bad, the distribution of food and clothing seemed fair and the general economic situation not unsatisfactory, although it was impossible to estimate how far this was due to the post-war efforts of the Czechoslovaks themselves, and to what degree to Unrra help and to the considerable supplies left in the country by the Germans.

Great efforts were made to stimulate productivity by various incentives. Real wages were increased beyond the level of 1938-39. Workers' Councils were empowered to participate in factory management in an advisory capacity and to establish welfare institutions. The Trade Unions exhorted the workers to work harder.

The unification of the Trade Union movement had been greatly assisted by the policy of the Nazi authorities, who dis-

solved the Central Councils of the various Trade Unions which, in pre-war Czechoslovakia, had been allied to several political parties. After liberation, a United Trade Union Movement was established. Being organized on an industrial basis and comprising the members of all political parties, it became extremely powerful. Theoretically, all parties were represented on its Central Council. While its President was a Communist, Mr. Zapotocky, the editor of its newspaper, was a National Socialist, and its General Secretary, Mr. Erban, a Social Democrat. But the latter was actually a crypto-Communist and the Council was dominated by the Communist Party. In 1945 a great number of the manual workers sympathized with the Communists, but in 1947 factory elections showed a strong tendency for the workers to turn away from the Communists to the Social Democrats and National Socialists. Nevertheless, the Central Council remained unchanged.

In Slovakia, which Hitler had turned into an independent State in 1939, the Communists at first—from 1945 to 1946—fostered separatist tendencies. They even played with the idea that if their demands for a high measure of independent Slovak administration were not accepted by Prague, the Slovaks might apply for admission into the Soviet Union. After liberation, a special Slovak Parliament called the Slovak National Council and a Government called the Board of Trustees were formed. The Board of Trustees, whose members were to be selected according to the results of parliamentary elections, could take decisions upon all matters except foreign policy and national defence. The Communists pledged their support to a completely independent Slovak administration, because they thought it would be very popular with the Slovak people and help them to win the majority in the elections of 1946. They failed. These elections gave a clear majority of 62 per cent of the votes to the Slovak Democratic Party, whereas

the Communists obtained only 30 per cent. The Social Democrats, who belatedly entered the political struggle in Slovakia, obtained less than 4 per cent and only two Deputies, the small Freedom Party also having two representatives. The Board of Trustees, consequently, was governed by a majority of the Democratic Party (nine out of fifteen members), while the Communists had to content themselves with six members, although these held such important posts as the Presidency of the Board, the Trusteeships of Education and of the Interior.

No sooner was the defeat of the Communists in the 1946 election announced, than they completely changed their Slovak policy. Seeing that they had greater influence in the Czech Provinces and in the Prague Government than in Slovakia, they set out to limit Slovak autonomy and reviled the Slovak Democratic Party as "Fascist". In the autumn of 1947 the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior, by using *agents provocateurs*, was able to prove that some members of the Democratic Party had been conspiring against the Republic and had maintained contacts with some Slovak émigrés, who had collaborated with the Nazis during the war. In addition, they charged the Democratic members of the Slovak Board of Trustees with maladministration and demanded their replacement by Communists.

Even if one or two M.P.s and the secretary of a leading member of the Slovak Democratic Party had been convicted of treason—actually they were not—it would still be an extraordinary procedure to conclude from this that the representation of this party on the Board of Trustees should be curtailed.

The Communist President of this Board resigned in November 1947 and thereby precipitated a Government crisis in Slovakia. As the discussions between the Slovak Communists and Slovak Democrats were unsuccessful, the Prague Government had to consider the matter. It decided to dispatch Mr. Gottwald, the Communist Premier, to Bratislava and gave him full powers to deal with the crisis. This decision once again showed the shortsightedness of the Prague democratic leaders who had a majority in the Government, but in such a vital

problem did not even wish to be represented by one or two of their own Ministers and left the matter entirely in the hands of the Communists.

Mr. Gottwald attempted to bully the Slovak Democrats into acceptance of the Communist demands by introducing into the Bratislava discussions "non-political" representatives of the people's organizations such as trade unions, partisans and women. (The women's organization is a particularly ingenious Communist device. The majority of the Slovak women had voted against the Communists: the Communist women's organization, therefore, pretended to represent all women in Slovakia.) But the Slovak democrats successfully resisted Mr. Gottwald's threats and calumnies. He returned to Prague and suggested that the Slovak crisis be solved by a decision of the Czechoslovak National Front (the representative organ of all political parties). He cleverly added that this National Front should be extended so as to comprise representatives of the people's organizations, that is to say, additional Communist representatives. This re-organization of the Prague National Front the Czech democratic leaders successfully resisted, but because they did not dare to defend the "Fascist" members of the Slovak Democratic Party and hoped at the same time to strengthen Prague centralism with regard to Slovakia, they accepted a "compromise" solution of the Slovak crisis. The number of the Slovak Democrats on the Slovak Board of Trustees was brought down from nine to six, and the three vacant posts were filled by one "expert" and by members of the small parties, the Slovak Freedom Party and the Social Democrats. Thus, the principle that Government representation should be in accordance with parliamentary election results was abandoned in Slovakia. And this little Communist *coup d'état* in Slovakia received the sanction of the Czech non-Communist parties.\*

\* In his *Czechoslovakia Enslaved* (Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1950, p. 119) Dr. Ripka, one of the pre-February National Socialist Ministers, contends that the outcome of the Slovak crisis was a "victory" for the democrats. It was not a complete defeat for the democrats only insofar as the Communist demand for the re-organization of the Prague National

At the same time, the rights of the Slovak Board of Trustees were still more curtailed so that it became an executive organ of the Prague Government rather than an autonomous body. But for the Communists this was not the end. They wanted to destroy the Slovak Democratic Party. In meetings of the Slovak Board and in their Press, they started to demand the resignation of many of the Slovak Government officials on the grounds that they were "Fascists, collaborators" and what not. Such accusations were directed against men and women whose reliability had been investigated after liberation and confirmed by committees on which the Communist Party had been more than fully represented.

The "reorganization" of the Slovak Board of Trustees was a great success for the Communists and an important precedent. As they had met no resistance in the Czech democratic parties, they could not but feel encouraged in their ambitious aims regarding the Prague Government itself.

At about the same time, the Communists attempted to kill or at least to intimidate three leading Czech politicians, Mr. Masaryk, Mr. Zenkl and Dr. Drtina, by bombs sent through the post. The bombs had been put into perfume boxes and

Front was resisted, but the change in the Slovak Board of Trustees was a clear victory for the Communists. Two small parties gained one seat each at the expense of the Slovak Democrats. Had the Communists surrendered one seat and the Slovak Democrats also one, it might be possible to speak of an extension of party representation. But as the Slovak Democrats lost three seats and the Communists none, the party which commanded 62 per cent of the parliamentary votes was reduced to the same representation on the Board as the one which represented less than a third of the population. This surrender of democratic principles and the abandonment of their natural Slovak allies against the Communists was a defeat of all democrats and a great success for the Communists. In the dynamics of the struggle this fact was infinitely more important than the incidental gain of the two small parties. It can be described as a democratic victory only by a writer who does not consider the Slovak Democrats to be a part of the democratic front. But the same Dr. Ripka claims on pages 109-111 of his book that since the autumn of 1947 he had been advocating a close co-operation with the Slovak Democrats against the Communists. His two statements taken together betoken a mental confusion that would suffice to explain why his tactics against Communism could not but fail.

were to explode as soon as the boxes were opened. Fortunately, one of the boxes was opened in the office of a Ministry and a warning was immediately given to all other Ministers, so that no damage was caused. An inquiry instigated by the Ministry of Justice led to the arrest of a cabinet-maker, a member of the Communist Party, who confessed that the Party Secretary of his district and the local Communist Member of Parliament had ordered these boxes from him. The inquiry was sabotaged by the Communist Minister of the Interior, who ordered some of the arrested men to be released, but the co-operation of the Communist M.P. in this plot was sufficiently proved to induce him to resign his seat in the House. Although Dr. Drtina, the Minister of Justice, pursued the matter vigorously, he could not assemble all the evidence until January 1948, so that this court case had not yet opened when the Communists carried out their putsch in February 1948.

The selection of the three political leaders, who were to be killed by the perfume-bombs, revealed quite clearly the Communist design. Jan Masaryk was, apart from the ageing President Benes, the most popular man in Czechoslovakia, and both by his name and his actions represented the democratic tradition of the Republic. Dr. Zenkl, one of the Vice-Premiers in the Czechoslovak Government, and Dr. Drtina, were leading personalities of the National Socialist Party, the strongest non-Communist party of Czechoslovakia. The path towards Communist domination would be greatly cleared if these men were removed. Considering the high degree of centralization upon which the Communist Party prides itself, it is unthinkable that a District Secretary or a Member of Parliament should have acted in this matter without the orders of the Politburo and the General Secretary of their Party. Henceforth, Mr. Masaryk, Dr. Drtina and Dr. Zenkl, should have been aware of the fact that they were sharing seats in the Cabinet with men who had ordered their murder. After this experience, it is difficult to believe that the Czech democrats could have been surprised by the Communist putsch. Nevertheless they were.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE COUP D'ETAT

**DURING 1947** THE COMMUNIST influence upon the masses was steadily declining. In the democratic parties the anti-Communist wings were growing, and the democrats were looking forward with great confidence to the parliamentary election fixed for May 1948. They did not intend to govern without the Communists, even if the Communist parliamentary representation were to shrink, but they hoped they would perhaps be able to drive them out from one Ministry or another and force them to abide by Government decisions more scrupulously than they had done in the past. The Communists, on the other hand, quite logically concluded from the decline of their popular influence that they had to use non-parliamentary weapons in order to achieve their aims. Some of these weapons had been successfully tried out in 1947. Soviet diplomatic pressure had brought about a reversal of the Czechoslovak Government's decision on Marshall Aid, and was sufficient to induce the Czech democrats to abandon the economic interests of their country. In the Moscow talk of 1947, Stalin had sized up the Czech democratic leaders, his allies and his prospective enemies, and found them weak and very amenable to Soviet pressure. Therefore, he probably concluded that further pressure might yield even greater fruits, and in February 1948 he dispatched Mr. Zorin, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, to Prague in order to apply this pressure. The Communist bomb plot had unmistakably shown that the democrats were not able to retaliate speedily and in full force. Hence, the risks involved in using the violent methods of civil war were not likely to be great. The threat of introducing representatives of the people's organizations into the discussions between the political parties during the Slovak crisis of 1947 seemed to have impressed the Czech democrats to such an extent that they had hastily retreated and granted greater powers to the Slovak Communists. Hence, the

mobilization of the people's organizations could be expected similarly to strengthen Communist power in the Czech provinces. These three methods, Soviet diplomatic pressure, the use of violence and the mobilization of the people's organizations, combined with the ingenious device of "action committees" became the chief weapons of the *coup d'état*.

For Sunday, 22 February 1948, the Communists called a Congress of Workers Representatives in Prague "to save the Republic from economic collapse". The Communist Press campaign for measures of further nationalization and a system of social insurance seemed to indicate that the main purpose of the Congress was to make the Communists more popular in the eyes of the working class. Similarly, a Peasant Congress convoked for the following Sunday was to assure the peasants that the Communists would always respect the private property of the small-holder and small artisan.

The democratic parties assumed that these congresses were designed as demagogic pre-election manoeuvres. If the Communists really wanted to improve the social insurance scheme they had had ample opportunities of doing so in co-operation with other parties. As for further measures of nationalization, there were no economic reasons to justify them. The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement had stated in May 1946 that the processes of nationalization had been completed, and the two years that had since elapsed had been too short a time in which to enable the State to run its industry with real efficiency. Greater and more durable efforts were required to consolidate the administration of the nationalized industries. Economically, little could be gained from the ruin of small entrepreneurs: politically, however, further proletarianization of some groups of the middle classes might make the Communists more popular with the workers, and ruin those very people who formed the backbone of some of the democratic parties. These parties, therefore, were intent on showing to the electors that their disagreement with the Communists was not about essential economic issues, but about political problems. The activities of the Communist Minister of the Interior

provided the democrats with excellent arguments for this political demonstration, and they decided to make use of them as a pre-election counter-stroke to the Communist manoeuvres.

Mr. Nosek, the Communist Minister of the Interior, had been systematically attempting to convert the Czechoslovak police corps into a private Communist army. Non-Communists were either persuaded to join the Communist Party or transferred to unimportant posts or simply dismissed. This process was nearly completed by February 1948, but while, until then, the non-Communist members of the Government had been watching this development with fear and protests, but without taking action, at this juncture they took exception to Mr. Nosek's latest measures. The remaining non-Communist regional commanders in the Prague district—altogether eight—had just been partly made to retire and partly transferred to unimportant posts. The Government censured this procedure and ordered the Minister of the Interior to reinstate these police officers in their Prague positions. A special commission was formed to investigate the matter and also the "reorganization" of the police force. All decisions were taken by a unanimous vote of all the non-Communist Ministers—including the Social Democrats—which thus overruled the Communist minority.

When at the next Cabinet meeting it became known that these decisions had not been carried out, twelve Ministers, members of the National Socialist Party, the Catholic People's Party and the Slovak Democratic Party, informed the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, that they would attend further meetings of the Cabinet only if the eight police officers were reinstated in their positions. Mr. Gottwald's written answer showed that he did not contemplate fulfilling this condition. Thereupon, the Ministers handed in their resignation. The Ministers of the Social Democratic Party did not resign, but one of them, Mr. Majer, informed the President that he was ready to resign if the President wished and suggested that the resignation of the whole Government could be forced if Masaryk too, relinquished his office, and thereby brought the

number of resignations to fourteen, a majority among the twenty-six members of the Government.

The resigning Ministers apparently expected that if the President, as they hoped, did not accept their resignation, then the Communists might be forced to retreat and to carry out the Government decision. None of them thought that this resignation would be the starting-point of a civil war. They thought in purely parliamentary terms. But the Communists surprised them completely by a concerted extra-parliamentary action in which all the ingenious totalitarian weapons were applied in an efficient and well-planned manner.

A day before the resignation of the twelve Ministers, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Zorin, who had previously been Soviet Ambassador in Prague and was the Soviet expert on Czechoslovakia, paid an unexpected visit to Prague. He called on the Ministers of Foreign Affairs,\* Food and Transport, and pretended that he had come to "supervise the deliveries of grain". As this assignment could not be taken seriously, he left everybody guessing what the real purpose of his visit was. Apparently, his very presence was to demonstrate publicly that the Soviet leaders saw eye to eye with the Czech Communists, and thereby to intimidate their opponents. He seems to have been instrumental in persuading Mr. Lausman, the chairman of the Social Democratic Party, to make a deal with the Communists. At the same time, he showed marked discourtesy to President Benes whom he completely ignored. What secret conversations he had with his Czechoslovak comrades is not known.

Equally surprising as Zorin's visit was the sudden arrival of three Polish Social Democrats. On Sunday, 22 February 1948, they called on leading members of the Czech Social Democratic Party and advised them to side with the Communists against the right-wing parties.

\*According to *Bohemicus* (*Le Figaro*, 25th April 1948), Zorin told Masaryk on 19 February 1948, that the Czechoslovak Government must be purged of certain Ministers whom the Soviets did not trust, but Masaryk himself should remain at his post. This account could not be verified from other sources.

Only a few hours after Mr. Gottwald had received the letters of resignation from the twelve Ministers, the Executive Committee of the Communist Party issued a proclamation in which it appealed to the people to establish "Action Committees", composed of "reliable elements" in every locality, factory, office, club or society. This proclamation was issued on Friday night, 20 February, and by the following Monday these Action Committees were already working at full speed in most political, cultural and economic organizations of the country. They were expelling from the ranks of these organizations duly elected members of executive committees, including chairmen and secretaries, until all organizations were brought in line with the Communist policy.

In the Syndicate of Czechoslovak Writers, for instance, an Action Committee, consisting of much lesser figures than the duly elected Executive Committee, took over all business. This Action Committee proclaimed that the writers supported Mr. Gottwald and announced the names of well-known writers who had either "resigned" or been expelled from the Executive Committee. At the same time it announced that a special committee had been appointed to purge the organization of "bad writers".

Similar Action Committees were established in all political parties with the single exception of the Communist Party. In the Social Democratic Party, Mr. Fierlinger, who had been convincingly defeated at the last Party Congress, now became chairman of the Action Committee. Whereas the Executive Committee of the Party had decided against participation in the new Communist Government, Mr. Fierlinger and the acting party chairman, Mr. Lausman, joined it. The Action Committee expelled from the ranks of the Party the duly elected General Secretary, Mr. Vilim, and the Minister of Food, Mr. Majer. In the other parties, the Action Committees were composed of only one or two members of the duly elected Executive Committees and of party members who were either less known or entirely unknown to the public.

The Action Committees were described by the Communists

as expressions of the will of the people. Since these committees sprang up overnight, however, it was of course technically impossible for the "people" to voice their will or to elect these committees. Indeed, these committees showed gross contempt for the clearly expressed will of the people by removing those very men and women who had been duly elected by the people. The Action Committees were in fact groups of Communists or crypto-Communists, who had infiltrated various organizations and whose names had been carefully prepared in advance by the General Secretary of the Communist Party, so that they could all start working at one stroke.

Within a few days, in fact by the following Wednesday, the whole Press was Communist controlled, and so no protests against the establishment of Action Committees could be publicly expressed. Moreover, non-compliance with the orders of the Action Committees made the recalcitrant liable to imprisonment, and Mr. Nosek's police force and the Workers' Militia assisted the Action Committees in every way. In certain cases, the armed forces carried out a raid upon the headquarters of an organization first, removed some of the duly elected representatives and intimidated others, and thus cleared the way for the Action Committees. In this manner, all social groups, including the working class, were deprived of every form of self-government and self-administration they had hitherto enjoyed.

While the protection of Action Committees appeared to be the chief function of the police force and of the armed Workers' Militia (that is, armed Communists), their secondary function was to intimidate the population as a whole. In the big towns, especially in Prague, these forces paraded the streets in armed formations and shouted out their loyalty to Mr. Gottwald. On Saturday, the police forces gave an oath of loyalty to Mr. Gottwald, in complete disregard of the constitutional oath given to the President and the laws of the Republic. Twice in one week, on Wednesday, 25 February, and on Saturday, 28 February, they assembled at the Old Town Square of Prague in order to receive the thanks of Mr.

Gottwald and other Communist leaders for the heroic part they had played in the "people's revolution".

While Action Committees and Communist armed forces seized power and liquidated all spheres of independent thought and all centres from which anti-Communist resistance could emerge, mass demonstrations were staged in Prague and other cities so as to create the impression that this police putsch was a national revolution. The Communists certainly commanded a sufficient number of supporters to fill a town square in most Czechoslovak cities, but who in his senses would deduce from a demonstration of fifty or a hundred thousand people in Hyde Park that they represented the unanimous will of all Londoners? Yet this is exactly what the Communists would like the world to believe. At the same time, counter-parades, like the one of several thousand students who wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to President Benes, were mercilessly dispersed by heavily armed police forces.

On Sunday, 22 February, the Factory Councils' Congress was convened in Prague. Although it was organized by the Central Council of Trade Unions, a statement published a few days before by the Social Democratic Party had made it clear that the delegates had not been properly elected and were not truly representative of the two million members of this organization. What this assembly of carefully selected Communists and fellow-travellers had lacking in true representation, it assumed by calling itself simply "the largest and strongest workers' parliament of the country". Needless to say, it accepted all the motions\* put to it by the Communists and enthusiastically listened to the speeches made by Mr. Gottwald and Mr. Zapotocky, the Communist Chairman of the Trade Unions' Council.

In his speech, Mr. Gottwald accused the Ministers, who had resigned, of being the spokesmen of the remaining capital-

\* Of the 8,000 delegates about 500 were Social Democrats and 500 National Socialists, but although they had been briefed by democratic speakers on the eve of the congress, only two dared to vote against the official motions.

ists and great landowners, of the black marketeers and Nazi collaborators who wished to return the nationalized factories to the capitalists, take the newly distributed land away from the small owners and instal a regime of hunger and unemployment. These reactionaries, he shouted, were prepared to abandon the agreements with the Soviet Union and the other Slav nations, endure German imperialism once again and suffer a new Munich in order to satisfy their own class interests and gain the assistance of foreign reactionaries. This amazing accusation was levelled against the very Ministers and parties who, in co-operation with the Communists, had carried out the nationalization of 70 per cent of all Czechoslovak industry! Mr. Gottwald then demanded that the President should accept the resignation of the twelve Ministers and that these deserters of the National Front should never again hold office. The President must nominate a new Government composed of Communists, representatives of "the people's organizations" and reliable elements of other parties. In order to make this essential demand appear more popular, Mr. Gottwald also put forward proposals for a new scheme of national insurance, a new land reform, tax reductions for farmers and small traders. Mr. Zapotocky then pleaded for the nationalization of all enterprises with more than fifty employees. The Congress accepted all these proposals and issued a proclamation to all members of the Trade Unions urging them to organize a one-hour token strike throughout the whole country on the following Tuesday, 24 February. It also confirmed the Communist instruction for the establishment of Action Committees, thereby giving them a "non-party" flavour.

Neither this Congress nor the many street parades were the centres of real power, they were used merely for propaganda purposes. From them the Communist leaders deduced their claim that they were representing the people and their demands. Power rested with the Communist police forces, which were protecting the rapidly growing number of Action Committees. On Monday, 23 February, the Central Action Committee was set up in order to "co-ordinate" the political



activities of all "progressive Czechs". Its chairman was the Communist leader, Mr. Zapotocky, but other parties were also "represented": the Social Democrats by Mr. Fierlinger, the People's Party by the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Petr, and Father Plojhar, the National Socialist Party by Mr. Najman, a member of its Executive Committee. It is significant that this meeting was also attended by the Minister of National Defence, General Svoboda, and his Chief-of-Staff, General Bocek. Both men were considered to be non-party men. This meeting showed unmistakably that the Communists had found valuable allies among the members of all political parties and had the support of leading generals. Thus the new structure of Action Committees was completed.

While the Action Committees were working and purging at top speed, the life of the non-Communist political parties was disrupted. The headquarters of these parties were raided by the police from Monday to Tuesday, their office premises were taken over by Action Committees, their administrative personnel was partly put under arrest. On Wednesday, the daily newspaper of the Czech Socialist Party could not appear, because the supplies of newsprint were not delivered. The dailies of other parties were published under a new crypto-Communist management.

Broadcasting had been under the control of the Minister of Information since 1945, but speakers from other parties were permitted to go on the air. After the resignation of the twelve Ministers, however, non-Communist speakers were completely ousted from broadcasting house. A speech by the Social Democratic Minister, Mr. Majer, scheduled for Monday night, was cancelled. Although an official communiqué from the President's Chancellery had announced on Monday, 23 February, that the President would explain his attitude to the people, his voice was heard no more on the Prague radio.

The twelve Ministers, though their resignation had not yet been accepted by the President, were prevented by Action Committees from entering their own offices. While many local functionaries of the democratic parties were arrested on Mon-

day and Tuesday, the resigning Ministers and the Deputies could at least move about freely, although many of them were under constant observation by secret police agents. This state of affairs was skilfully exploited by Mr. Gottwald for intimidating the Deputies of the democratic parties.

The violent campaign of the Communist Press, which from the second week of February onwards had demanded the liquidation of the reactionary leaders, including the Social Democratic Minister, Mr. Majer, and his followers, was intensified. Documents were said to have been found which proved the existence of a plot of Czech reactionaries acting in the service of foreign imperialism. On Monday, 23 February, —although in Czechoslovakia newspapers were not permitted to be published on Monday mornings—a special edition of the Communist daily newspaper quoted fully an *Izvestia* article, which assured the Czechoslovak Communists of Russian support. At the same time, the Communists deliberately spread rumours that the Soviet Army—whose units were actually concentrated on the borders of Czechoslovakia—was ready to march into the country and would not permit the Czechoslovak people to be defeated by a reactionary plot. Tass reports and broadcasts from Moscow ingeniously connected the American Ambassador's return to Prague from the United States with a "Western plot", which was alleged to have precipitated the Government crisis.

While the meeting of Parliament, which was to have been held on Tuesday, was cancelled by the Speaker at the request of the Communists, the Deputies were individually asked whether they would support a new Gottwald Government purged of reactionaries. On Wednesday, 25 February, Mr. Gottwald claimed that he had in his pocket the signatures of more than half of all Deputies, assuring him of their complete support. Armed with this formidable weapon, a parliamentary majority, in addition to the virtual control of all strongholds of power, Mr. Gottwald confronted Dr. Benes with an ultimatum.

Already on Saturday, one day after the resignation of the

twelve Ministers, Mr. Gottwald had discussed his demands with the President. That day the stand made by Dr. Benes was firm and unyielding. "There can be no Government without the Communists, nor without the other parties." He refused to yield to Mr. Gottwald's demand that the resignation of the twelve Ministers must be accepted and that they must be excluded from future Governments. "If I acted according to your demands", replied Dr. Benes, "I would be interfering with affairs which must be decided by the political parties and not by the President." After this audience, President Benes left for his country seat and did not return to Prague until Monday. This departure for the country was a clear indication that President Benes did not intend to stem the Communist tide by taking any emergency action. On his return to Prague on Monday, he assured the leader of the Catholic People's Party, Msgr. Sramek, a Vice-Premier, that he would nominate no Government that was not based on an agreement between the chairmen of all parties. When, in the evening of the same day, he received the representatives of the Social Democratic Party who came to assure him of their loyalty and to put the mandates of their Ministers at his disposal, he burst into tears.

On Tuesday, Dr. Benes apparently informed Mr. Gottwald that his claims would meet with resistance in Parliament, but Mr. Gottwald bluntly declared that Parliament would not assemble until the crisis was over. On Wednesday morning, the Communists submitted to Dr. Benes the names of the non-Communist Deputies who had undertaken to support Mr. Gottwald's new Government unconditionally. At that moment, the Communists knew that they would command a majority of thirty votes. In the afternoon, Dr. Benes accepted all the Communist demands.

At 2 p.m. a meeting of Communist workers was held in Wenceslaus Square, the largest square in the centre of Prague. They had assembled in order to demonstrate their power to the President and to Parliament. "To avoid bloodshed", President Benes accepted the resignation of the twelve Ministers

(members of the Czech Socialist, the People's and the Slovak Democratic Party) and also of two members of the Social Democratic Party, the Vice-Premier, Mr. Tymes, and the Minister of Food, Mr. Majer, and nominated the new Government proposed by the Communists.\* Mr. Gottwald rushed back to the meeting at Wenceslaus Square and announced that the President had submitted to the "will of the people".

The new Government comprised twelve Communists, four Social Democrats, two National Socialists, two Catholics, one Slovak Democrat, and one member of the Slovak Freedom Party. None of the non-Communist Ministers represented the will or the opinion of their respective parties, but their participation in the Government, nevertheless, indicated how deeply the Communists had infiltrated into other parties. Two non-party men from the previous Government remained in office, the Minister of National Defence, General Svoboda, and, surprisingly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jan Masaryk.

At three o'clock of the same day some ten thousand students assembled in front of the Prague Technical University and marched to the Castle to express their loyalty to the President. The procession was brutally attacked by the Communist police. Many students of both sexes were injured, one mortally. More than a hundred were arrested.

On Friday, the Government were received by the President who said that his decision had been very difficult for him to make. "Any other course would have deepened the crisis, divided the nation still more and ended in general chaos."

After this audience, President Benes left his Prague residence and made it unmistakably clear in the official announcement that he was leaving for ever. "The President of the Republic, Dr. Edvard Benes, and Mme. Hana Benesova, left Prague

\* Some Czechoslovak émigrés have asserted that on Wednesday, Mr. Gottwald showed the President a long list of names of public men who would be immediately arrested if the President refused to comply with his demands. I have been unable to secure evidence for this assertion and the President's Chancellor, Mr. Smutny, told me that he knew nothing about this list.

Castle on 27 February. At 15.23 they departed for their private home at Sezimo Usti." At his country home, the President's flag was not hoisted and Dr. Benes directed his Chancellor to prepare a statement of his abdication. But on Monday, he changed his mind and remained in office until June.

A week after his arrival, Mr. Zorin, having successfully supervised "the delivery of grain", left for Moscow.

## CHAPTER VII

### NO RESISTANCE

THE MOST PERPLEXING THING about the Communist putsch was the complete absence of democratic resistance. The Communists, by skilfully exploiting their command over the police forces and their control of broadcasting and by disrupting all democratic institutions and organizations from within, were so able to intimidate the President and a large majority of the Members of Parliament that they gave constitutional sanction to the Communist dictatorship. Two questions will be raised. Why did the democrats not resist the Communist coup? And why, once they were defeated, did some of them publicly sign their own political death warrant?

The democratic parties were in no way prepared for an open fight with the Communists. It is true that some of them had had uneasy forebodings and were aware that the Communists intended to cleanse the Government from "reactionaries". Though they feared that the Communist control of the police forces might be misused for falsifying election results, somehow or other they managed to discount from their calculations all realistic appreciation of the threatened *coup d'état*. They were completely taken by surprise by the series of revolutionary acts which the Communists suddenly perpetrated, and they pinned all their hopes upon the President. The twelve Ministers had resigned their posts yet hoped the President would not accept their resignation but would force the Communist Minister of the Interior to retreat. Thus they placed the whole, heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of the ageing and ill President.

Although it seemed that the democrats had taken the initiative by resigning their ministerial posts, the moment was actually chosen by the Communists. The best opportunity for a showdown with the Communists had occurred in July 1947,

when the Soviet Union demanded that the Czechoslovak Government should withdraw its unanimous decision to attend the Marshall Aid Conference. Had the democrats then insisted upon carrying out what the whole Government, including the Communists, had considered right in the economic interests of the country, they could have rallied behind them the whole country, embracing many workers who sympathized with the Communists but could easily understand that their vital economic interests were at stake. This occasion had been missed. In February, however, the democratic Ministers were deliberately provoked by the Communists, who probably reckoned that their provocation might force the President to nominate a Government of officials and experts who would not be representing the political parties.\* Three days before their resignation, Mr. Gottwald complained to the President that according to his information the democrats intended to oust the Communists from office and had already prepared a list of the officials who would form the new Cabinet. Although the President assured him that he had no knowledge of any such plan and would nominate no Government without the Communists, Mr. Gottwald incessantly dwelt on this point. Apparently, the Communists had in advance thought out the possible tactics of the democrats, and this with greater logic and precision than the democrats themselves. The issue was clear. If the democratic Ministers accepted responsibility for a Government whose decisions were ignored by the Communists, they would be pushed into an untenable position. If they resigned—and not only the twelve Ministers, but also Mr. Masaryk and Mr. Majer, in other words, a majority of the Government—Mr. Gottwald would have to hand in his resignation too, and what would the President do then? Nominate a Party Government without the Communists or a Government of officials? Mr. Gottwald in all probability wanted to find out the President's intentions. Whereas the Communists faced this possibility squarely, the democrats failed to do so.

\* The Czechoslovak Constitution allowed for the formation of such a Government provided it received a vote of confidence in Parliament.

Their tactics were purely in the nature of a demonstration. They did not even attempt to confront Mr. Gottwald with the resignation of a majority of Ministers. Before resigning they did not make sure that Mr. Masaryk and the Social Democrats, too, would relinquish their offices. According to the Czechoslovak Constitution, the resignation of a minority of Ministers does not force the Prime Minister to resign: on the contrary, it leaves him free to select new collaborators. Constitutionally, therefore, Mr. Gottwald was perfectly entitled to seek new men for the relinquished offices. But the democrats, of course, had handed in their resignation in the hope that it would not be accepted by the President.\* This was an inept gesture, and the Communists ably called the bluff by exploiting their constitutional advantage and by mobilizing their armed bands and their Action Committees.

Had the Ministers not resigned, the Communists would probably have attempted their *coup d'état* in any case, either then or a few weeks later. Yet constitutionally their manoeuvring would have been rendered more difficult. It would have fallen upon them either to disrupt the National Front and demand a reshuffle of the Government—a very unpopular act on the eve of the general election—or to commit blatantly unconstitutional acts which would have forced the President to defend the Constitution against them. The issue would have been much clearer in the eyes of the world, the initial advantages of the Communists smaller, but the main difficulty of the Czechoslovak democrats would have remained—namely, their inability to contemplate defence measures against a putsch supported by the State police.

The democratic parties who, of course, rely on the armed

\* The President told the Chairman and the General Secretary of the Social Democratic Party on Saturday, 21 February, that he had been surprised by the resignation of the twelve Ministers. The President's Chancellor, Mr. Smutny, equally testifies that the President was taken by surprise. On the other hand, Dr. Ripka and Dr. Zenkl, two Ministers of the National Socialist Party, who had seen the President a few days before their resignation, have asserted that they informed him of their intention to resign and he had indicated his approval.



forces of the State to keep law and order, were completely helpless in this situation. They had no armed formations of their own as the Communists had in their Workers' Militia. Everywhere it would have been difficult for the democrats to improvise armed resistance against a sudden onslaught of insurrectionists, trained in special Communist schools. It was particularly difficult for the Czech democrats, who had persisted in minimizing the difference between Western democracy and Soviet "democracy" and had thereby failed to prepare their followers for the danger of a Communist putsch. The Communist *coup d'état* in Hungary in 1947 might have taught them a valuable lesson, had they paid attention to it. But they did not. No wonder that at the hour of peril the democratic leaders did not know just how loyal their closest democratic collaborators were and whether they were prepared to risk their lives to defend one type of "democracy" against another. As subsequent events proved, quite a number of high political functionaries and officials voluntarily preferred a cosy job in a Communist "democracy" to the dreary fight for democracy in exile. Not all the members of the democratic parties, who were on the staffs of the Czechoslovak Embassies and Consulates abroad, and therefore could easily free themselves from Communist control, resigned their posts after February. For instance, the London Ambassador, a Social Democrat, and his Cultural Attaché, a Czech Catholic, stayed on. With such ideological confusion in the democratic camp, it would have been hard to organize armed resistance against the magnificently trained Communists.

As late as Monday night, the President promised to hold out and nominate no Government in which the democratic parties were not properly represented. But what could he do? The police forces were under Communist control. His two assets were his great popularity and the rank and file of the Army. The Minister of National Defence and his Chief of Staff attended the Monday meeting of the insurrectionists, the Central Action Committee. The President, as Supreme Commander of the Forces according to the Czechoslovak Consti-

tution, had the right and duty to summon the Army for the defence of the democratic constitution. If he had done so, these two generals might or might not have obeyed him: only experience could tell. All observers agree that the overwhelming majority of the officers and men would have followed the President. But how could his message reach them if the Minister of National Defence and his Chief of Staff should sabotage the orders of the Supreme Commander? Perhaps he could have got his message through by dispatching his faithful Ministers and M.P.s to the barracks, or by communicating directly with all the loyal commanding generals. But he no longer knew which of them was still loyal. The mobilization of the army was beset with difficulties, and action alone could tell whether it might have succeeded.

The time to take action was on Saturday and Sunday. Mr. Zorin had arrived on Thursday. The Communists had published their instructions for the formation of Action Committees on Friday, and on Saturday they made the police corps profess allegiance to Mr. Gottwald and to Mr. Nosek, thereby changing the constitutional oath to the President and the laws of the Republic. The police started to distribute arms to the Workers' Militia. These three unconstitutional acts required immediate counter-strokes. The President could have accepted Mr. Majer's and Mr. Masaryk's resignation, and thereby the resignation of the Government. He could have attempted to restore order by mobilizing the Army. If Mr. Kopecky, the Minister of Information, barred the President from coming to the microphone, the Army should have been used to safeguard the President's constitutional right to speak to his nation.

Instead of acting forcibly and rallying behind him all those who remained faithful to the democratic Constitution of the Republic, President Benes departed for his country seat and remained passive. On Friday afternoon, when he heard from Mr. Hala of the People's Party about the resignation of the twelve Ministers, he was optimistic. "This time", he said, "the Communists have miscalculated the situation. They will have

to give in.”\* But the Communists were already speedily mobilizing all their forces for an extra-parliamentary fight, while the democrats confined themselves to a demonstrative gesture. The situation was more difficult on Monday, and by Wednesday the Communists were in complete control and resistance was impossible. The only thing the President could do then was to refuse to nominate the new Government, or resign.

The argument that the President had to nominate the new Government, because Mr. Gottwald asserted that a majority of the Deputies would support it, was not a democratic one. To find out the opinion of Parliament, the Deputies must assemble in the House and be given the opportunity to express their views and to vote freely. The Communists, however, had just suggested the postponement of its meeting. The inner life of the parties had been forcibly disrupted by the Action Committees and the many arrests that had been made. Mr. Gottwald's "all-party" Government can be likened to an all-party Government in Great Britain, in which the Conservatives would be represented by Messrs. X and Y, but Mr. Churchill, Mr. Eden, Lord Woolton and other leading figures would be excluded. Similarly, the Labour Party would be represented by Mr. Z, but not by Messrs Attlee, Bevin and Morrison.

President Benes could harbour no illusions about the true nature of the new Government. As he himself put it during his conversation with Mr. Gottwald in May 1948, he yielded to "the street".† Perhaps he thought that as long as he remained President, the Communists would have to respect, as broadly speaking they did, the immunity of the democratic M.P.s who would thereby gain time in which to prepare for their escape abroad. It may be argued that even if he had abdicated at once, the Communists would not have dared to arrest the democratic M.P.s before a new Parliament was elected, and that in any case, he should not have given constitutional sanction to the Communist *coup d'état* by nominating a Govern-

\* Cf. President Benes's own account of his attitude to the resignation in Chapter IX.

† See Chapter IX.

ment which emerged from it. On the other hand, having witnessed how the resignation of the twelve Ministers had facilitated the Communists' ascent to power, he might have felt less inclined to relinquish the last position which the democrats were holding.

At the critical moment, not a single leader from any political party suggested active measures for handling the situation.\* No attempt, for instance, was made to mobilize the Sokols, the world famous organization of Czechoslovak gymnasts whose patriotism and devotion to the democratic ideals of President Masaryk and Benes had in the past rendered great service to the Czechoslovak cause. Not even the constitutional means, which could have served the democratic camp, were properly used. Parliament was to assemble on Tuesday, 24 February, but the Communist Deputy Speaker suggested to the Speaker of the House, Mr. David, a National Socialist, that this meeting should be cancelled. The majority of the Deputies, who formed the Presidency of Parliament, willingly accepted the Communist suggestion. The democratic party leaders had failed to instruct their representatives in this office to insist that this vital meeting of the House should be held.

The resigning Ministers simply believed that the threat of resignation alone and the President's unwillingness to accept it would halt the Communists' attempt at a putsch. Several of

\* In his *Czechoslovak Enslaved* Dr. Ripka conveys the impression that he and his colleagues were preparing for an open fight which did not occur merely because Dr. Benes yielded to the Communists. On Sunday, 22 February, he let the President know that he and his colleagues would "act according to a well-defined plan" (idem p. 246). They would wait until the token general strike was over, but then, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday his party, the National Socialists, and the Catholics would organize "large mass meetings" in Prague and in the country (idem p. 247). Dr. Ripka thereby unwittingly testifies that during the actual putsch, he and his colleagues remained passive. Moreover, he does not report that these meetings were neither held nor called. It might have been futile and impossible to hold meetings on Thursday, but if University students could take the initiative of organizing a procession to the Castle on Wednesday, Dr. Ripka and his colleagues could have held their "large mass meetings" on Tuesday and Wednesday had they chosen to do so.

them left Prague for the week-end and delivered speeches in remote parts of the country. Most of them were optimistic still on Monday, and expected that their purely passive resistance would hasten the early holding of a general election in which they hoped the Communists would be weakened. Passive tactics against aggressive insurrectionists, however, had succeeded nowhere in the past and they proved once again inappropriate and insufficient, this time in Czechoslovakia.

The Communists tried to intimidate the President and the public by spreading reports that the Red Army would assist them if anybody resisted the "people's revolution". Neither the President nor the other democratic leaders believed that the Soviet Union would dare to invade Czechoslovakia, but they failed to call the Communists' bluff. Thus, the Communists gained a victory without the direct intervention of the Red Army and could claim that the Czechoslovak people were on their side. The more so, as the President nominated the "people's government" and the overwhelming majority of the National Assembly gave its blessing. The 116 non-Communist Members of Parliament, who betrayed the confidence of their electors and the programme of their parties by voting unconditionally for the Communist Government on 11 March, showed unmistakably that their democratic convictions were not very deep. At first, there might have been some justification for their behaviour in President Benes's nomination of the Government and Mr. Jan Masaryk's participation in it. But when the latter's suicide was reported just the night before Parliament was due to assemble, the democrats could have had little doubt about his attitude. Fear of Communist persecution may explain the behaviour of some of them. But 116 out of a total of 185 democratic representatives is so large a number that their line of conduct cannot be explained by these extenuating considerations alone. It is a clear sign of the deep demoralization and confusion that existed inside the political cadres.

To see this demoralization in its proper proportions, it has to be recalled that about fifty Members of Parliament, includ-

ing Ministers, escaped abroad to continue their fight for Czechoslovak democracy, and there must have been others who likewise wanted to escape but were prevented from doing so by the Communists. These true democrats, among them the General Secretaries of the five democratic parties, were deserted by the very Members of Parliament whom they themselves had selected for their Parliamentary lists. After the war, the choice of Parliamentary candidates lay almost completely in the hands of the party caucus, particularly of the Secretary. If this betrayal had affected one party only, it might perhaps have been explained by the psychological ineptitude of the General Secretary. But as it occurred in all parties, it points to a deeper disease.

In a country where democracy is deeply ingrained by centuries of experience as in Britain, democratic activities become habitual, and new generations and new social groups who enter the political arena may acquire democratic habits by imitating the older generations and the more experienced social groups. In Czechoslovakia with her brief experience of self-government, abruptly ended by Nazi conquest, the roots of democracy were not so deep. A feeling, a preference for democracy was widespread among the Czechs and the Slovaks, but the knowledge of how to put it into practice was comparatively slight. Hence the training of cadres for a democratic way of life should have figured prominently in the priority programme of all the democratic parties. It did not. The leading figures were too preoccupied with daily problems to devote any attention to the education of political cadres. Moreover, some of them, of no great mental stature and therefore inclined to overestimate themselves, were more eager to have obedient yes-men in the House than men and women of ability, who possessed independent minds and would think about the essential problems of home and foreign policy for themselves. Such people occasionally cause difficulties and ask disagreeable questions, but once they have acquired a thorough theoretical and practical training may be relied upon to be staunch defenders of democracy.

The unsettled conditions of post-war Czechoslovakia, where democracy was described by its chief exponents as a kind of cross between Western and Soviet democracy, hardly provided a favourable environment for theoretical clarification of political thought. Still less encouraging was the everyday experience of Government action. How could gifted and independent minds develop and flourish in an atmosphere, where there existed the outlawing of political parties, a Government without opposition, the gross injustices perpetrated on the democratic anti-Nazi German citizens of the Republic without arousing protest, the subservience to Russia even when completely harmful to the economic interests of the homeland, the idealization of the Communist dictatorships in Soviet Russia and in Eastern Europe and silence on their greatest crimes?

This idealization of the Soviet regime continued even after Stalin's Marshall Aid ultimatum of July 1947, which Dr. Ripka calls "a flagrant violation" of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty and a "grave blow" to Czechoslovak sovereignty.\* Nevertheless, the same Dr. Ripka wrote in a leading article of *Svobodne Slovo*, the central organ of the National Socialist Party, on 7 November 1947: "Our attitude to Soviet Russia is *in complete agreement with Stalin's well-known doctrine* (Dr. Ripka's italics) regarding the new, contemporary(!) Slav policy which differs(!) from the past pan-Slavism that demanded a vassal subservience of the small Slav nations to the Russian empire, and is based on the mutual assistance and alliance of independent Slav nations administering their own affairs in their own way, according to their own law and their own national tradition! If we, Czechoslovaks, are equally convinced Russophiles as Sovietophiles(!), we express thereby our conviction that the Soviet revolution and the Soviet regime have immensely—culturally, technically, politically, socially and as citizens—lifted the Russian people and the other peoples of the Soviet Union." [From the same issue of *Svobodne Slovo* the reader can learn that the Soviet Union "honours her deceased artists with exemplary and beautiful

\* *Czechoslovakia Enslaved*, p. 304.

piety", and that by their October revolution "*the Russian people have chosen a regime of justice*" (italics of *Svobodne Slovo*.)]

The above eulogy of Soviet Russia was written by a democratic Minister who asserts that since the autumn of 1947 he had been preparing for a fight against the Communists and that in July 1947 he realized that the Czechoslovaks had "ceased to be allies to become vassals" of the Soviet Union.\* Thus he and some of his colleagues presented to their adherents as "national independence" what they knew to be vassalage, and "inspired" them for a fight against Communism by declaring themselves not merely Russophiles but also "Sovietsophiles" which means lovers of the Soviet regime. Instead of stigmatizing the Czech Communists' subservience to Stalin and their deceptive idealization of the Soviet dictatorship, some democratic leaders lent support to Communist propaganda by their own publicity. In this manner they demoralized† their own adherents, could educate no democratic cadres and therefore had to rely on mere yes-men. Had there been fewer yes-men in Parliament before the February putsch, the democratic leaders might have had to face some friendly constructive opposition, but there certainly would have been fewer yes-men after the putsch. The yes-men, conditioned to saying "Yes" to those in power, only carried on their function when power shifted from one "National Front" to another.

Just as these yes-men in Parliament had been welcome to the leaders of the political parties, so did President Benes always prefer the weaker to the stronger personalities when selecting Ministers or making appointments. From 1940 to 1945 in all essential problems of home and foreign policy, he

\* *Czechoslovakia Enslaved*, p. 71.

† Mr. Tigris, one of the few courageous journalists of post-war Czechoslovakia, has put it thus: "Our, the democrats', fault was not so much political as rather moral. Together with the Communists, we deceived our own nation, here consciously, there unconsciously, and sometimes because we did not dare to speak the truth." (*Svobodny Zitek*, Paris, Christmas, 1948).



made the decisions and the democratic Ministers carried them out. It was, therefore, only natural that during the February crisis they laid the whole burden of responsibility upon him. Had he selected stronger men and encouraged them to go their own way, they might have displayed greater initiative during the crisis.

Overconfidence in himself was Dr. Benes's main weakness. He probably thought that the Communist intrigues and the shortcomings of the democratic Ministers mattered little so long as he was President, for did not the whole nation adore him? Who could hope to disrupt Czechoslovak democracy as long as Dr. Benes guided its destiny? Moreover, Stalin himself had told him in 1945 that he should ask for his assistance if ever he had any trouble with the Czech Communists. Benes knew that Czechoslovak democracy was beset with perils, but he was confident that he could steer this ship through stormy waters. Had he not proved himself a match for Hitler, after the latter defeated him at Munich? Edvard Benes not only brought about the repudiation of Munich, but he also cleared Czechoslovakia from the Sudeten German danger "once and for all". Indeed, Dr. Benes's diplomatic successes had been unique in the history of the small European States. So was his career. He held office without interruption for thirty years. From 1918 until 1935 he was Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, and from 1935 until his abdication in 1948 her President.

From obscurity, he had stepped straight into prominence. In 1914 he was a little known lecturer in Prague, and in 1918 he was Foreign Minister. During the First World War, he ably assisted Thomas Masaryk in his propaganda and diplomatic dealings in England, France, Italy and the United States. Having made his brilliant career abroad, he lacked the experience of the politician who has worked his way up in a political party by organizing a local branch, educating its members, and by addressing party and public meetings. With all his perspicacity and tenacity of purpose, with all his devotion to democracy and agility in international conferences, Dr. Benes

did not seem to have the gift or the desire to create a team of men and women, who work loyally together for the same purpose: a political *élite* of true democrats. Yet that was an essential condition for the progressive development of Czechoslovak democracy after the Second World War.

Faced with a strong Communist Party whose well disciplined members were undeviatingly preparing themselves for the "unavoidable" and so strongly desired civil war, the democrats surely needed to assemble their best minds, to develop their ideas, to clarify their convictions and spread their faith, to sort out friends from enemies so that when in danger they would know who was loyal and who was not. Dr. Benes could have directly, or at least indirectly, promoted such a development, had he realized that it was vital. But in actual fact, he did exactly the opposite. Instead of uniting the democrats—a majority both of the people and of the politically active citizens—he attempted too much: he hoped to convert Mr. Gottwald and his associates to democracy. Indeed, those immediately around him and he himself asserted as late as spring 1947 that the Czech Communists were becoming more and more democratic and were different from Communists in other countries.\* In post-war Czechoslovakia, a citizen could be for Benes and Gottwald, or for Benes and Sramek, the leader of the Catholic Party. As long as everybody was for Benes, it did not seem to matter very much to Dr. Benes whether they had an additional loyalty to this or that party. Dr. Benes was the common denominator. But when the Communist Minister of Information made it clear that he would not permit Dr. Benes to broadcast to his nation, when the Communist police arrested Dr. Benes's most loyal supporters and the loyalty of the Minister of National Defence proved to be doubtful, it appeared to matter after all. The Communists cut off the President from the people, whereas none of the democratic parties would ever have done so.

\* In May 1947, Dr. Benes told Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, that "Gottwald was a reasonable man who believed in parliamentary democracy". See Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart's excellent article on "The Czechoslovak Revolution", in *Foreign Affairs*, July 1948.

It was all very well to say that the Communists were becoming more democratic, but if a young man observed their practices and was told that these were democratic, he acquired a wrong conception of democracy and was induced to think that this was the type of democracy Dr. Benes favoured. Those men, on the other hand, who had preserved a true concept of Western democracy, were bound to reach the conclusion that Dr. Benes in his last years preferred the new type—the mixture of West and East—to Western democracy. In contrast to this, the Communists, although their leaders occasionally said that in Czechoslovakia they would introduce Communism by constitutional methods, never ceased to show to their adherents what was their true ideal—a regime similar to that of Soviet Russia,\* and, what is equally important, they were continuously training their leaders in Soviet schools and their cadres in special party schools. They trained them for political propaganda, for disruptive work in other parties and mass

\* The democrats' eulogies of Soviet Russia were frequent, and considerably assisted the Communists in spreading illusions about her regime. President Benes himself emphasized again and again that Russia's cultural progress was stupendous and that she had turned away from revolutionary aims. In his *War Memoirs*, published in 1947, for instance, he summed up, still apparently with approval, what he had said in 1943, in the following words:

"Some changes in the Soviet Union which lately have surprised the world, were natural consequences of the war, of the completed development and of Russia's changed position in the world; the dissolution of the Communist International, her new attitude to the orthodox Church and to religion in general, her unbelievably intensive and deep cultural, artistic and literary life in Moscow and other centres of the country even during the war—although it is directed by the State—the deep Soviet patriotism and new national sentiment, her favourable attitude to the so-called Slav policy . . . *all that was not only a game, or merely tactics, or merely an opportunist exploitation of these factors which after the war could perhaps be abandoned.*" (The italics are those of Dr. Benes. *Dr. Edvard Benes's Memoirs*, Vol. I, Orbis, Prague, 1948, p. 419.)

In his aims and intentions, Dr. Benes remained a true democrat, but he failed to warn his people against the Communist danger after the war. Despite the many acts of terror which the Communists had committed in various countries of Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1947, he still found it appropriate to write in 1947 that the dissolution of the Communist International was not "merely tactics".

organizations, and for organizing civil war. They prepared special detachments for spying and violence and for special police activities.

After the putsch, several distinguished Czechoslovak émigrés gave vent to their moral indignation concerning the Communists' breaches of promise, their illegal acts and their unscrupulous desertion of their former democratic allies. One may perhaps sympathize with those who had been deceived, but this sudden indignation does little credit to the political wisdom and foresight of those who allowed themselves to be duped. After all, the Communist methods of conspiracy, intrigue and deception were not applied for the first time in 1947 and 1948. Between the two world wars, they were tested in Russia and China, and later in several of the Eastern European countries. But, of course, the Czechoslovak democrats thought and asserted that the Czech and Slovak Communists were more democratic than other Communists. Why? Because they were, above everything, Czechoslovak patriots.

But were they? In 1945 they had stood in the forefront of Czech chauvinism, perpetrating disgusting injustices on the German population of Czechoslovakia. History teaches and psychological consideration can explain, that the chauvinist is not a good patriot at all. The chauvinist wants unlimited power for himself or for his clique at the expense of another national group. His pathological thirst for domination disregards principles of justice, to which all nations are entitled. The unconscious motive for his actions is the same as that of the Communist conspirator, who wants to extend the power of his clique at the expense of another social group. His pathological thirst for domination disregards the principles of justice to which all social groups are entitled. It is, therefore, not surprising that totalitarian Communist aspirations and chauvinist leanings may be found in the same person. This real connection, which could and still can be easily observed in Czechoslovakia and in Russia, is beyond the comprehension of those who accept the Communist ideology of "internationalism" at its face value. In the Western democracies some naïve,

well-meaning Communist enthusiasts may sincerely profess to be Communists and internationalists, at one and the same time. But in the Russian satellite States, the Soviet leaders' pursuit of power has logically led to the purge of the Communist parties from these very "internationalists", insofar as they did not abandon their internationalism in practice. Similarly, those patriots who took their patriotism seriously soon found that it was incompatible with Communism.

True patriotism and internationalism are not contradictory. Both require a respect for, and an understanding of, the needs, wishes and interests of other social groups. True patriotism, the love of one's own nation, includes a just concern not only for one's own group but also for all the various groups composing the nation. True internationalism implies the acknowledgment that all nations and races, whatever their shortcomings and differences, have the same rights as our own. Justice is the common basis of true nationalism and internationalism. Injustice is the common denominator of Communism and national chauvinism.

The conception of "our Communists being better than other Communists" is based on a national prejudice, the idealization of all members of one's own nation in whom their "national instinct" is expected to prevail over all other inclinations. But in actual fact, we are living in a world society. The fight between Communists and democrats is world wide. The Communists openly acknowledge their loyalty to a religion which knows no national boundaries. The national democrats, who idealized their own Communists only attributed to them their own narrow *national* vision of world events. Culturally, every nation can make its own genuine contribution to world culture. Culturally, the Czechs, situated in the heart of Europe, could form a bridge between East and West. But it was President Benes's illusion that he could persuade the West to turn "left" and the Russians to turn "right" until they all reached the *political* symbiosis of Communism and Western Liberalism, which he created in post-war Czechoslovakia and held out to the world as a model. It was a well-meant, national-Messianic

illusion, prompted by the sincere desire to promote peace for the world and for his own country, yet nevertheless an illusion. To maintain it, he had to idealize the Soviet regime and the Czechoslovak Communists.

This illusion conveniently covered up the main dilemma in which he found himself towards the end of the Second World War. To safeguard his unmolested return to Czechoslovakia as her President after the war, he felt that he had to hand over the key posts of power to the Communists, who henceforth would be the prison warders of Czechoslovak democracy. If he refused to give the key posts to the Communists, those enemies of democracy, he could be sure neither of his Presidency or of his immediate return to his homeland. He might have had to appeal to the Western democracies for assistance against the Czechoslovak Communists who, on their part, had the backing of the Soviet Union and the Red Army. It would have become apparent already in 1945 that Czechoslovak democracy depended on the foresight and strength of the Western democracies and on the support they were prepared to give it against Soviet intrigues. Dr. Benes would have had to take the risk either of staying perhaps longer in exile, or of returning to Prague not as the generally recognized President but as the leader of all Czechoslovak democrats and therefore violently opposed by the Communists. The moral pressure on the American Army to liberate Prague, on the other hand, would have been stronger and could have been exerted publicly by the spokesmen of Dr. Benes's Government-in-Exile. (Some members of the Czechoslovak Government, which then resided in Slovakia, and certainly its Prime Minister, Mr. Fierlinger, and also Mr. Gottwald, were rather embarrassed by the American liberation of the Czech borderlands.)

It was, of course, very difficult for a practical politician to choose such a seemingly romantic and unrealistic path, particularly when there seemed to be an attractive alternative. When a member of the London Government warned the President against his going to Moscow in the spring of 1945, he replied that if he did not return to his homeland via

Moscow, Czechoslovakia would be entirely at the mercy of the Communists. Any compromise with them must have appeared to him better than none. If, then, he felt forced to make those far-reaching concessions to the Communists during the Moscow talks, it would still have been better to warn the democrats of the perils they were facing than spread the illusion that the Communists were becoming increasingly democratic. As a constitutional President, unanimously elected by the whole Parliament, Dr. Benes remained scrupulously above all parties. Although in the autumn of 1947 he became suspicious of Russian aims and in January and February 1948 privately encouraged the democratic leaders to resist the Communist intrigues, he made no single public pronouncement that would stir up the people and make them resist the totalitarian intrigues of the Czech and Russian Communists.

In his Memoirs, published in 1947, he inserted two footnotes which diplomatically indicated that he might have begun to doubt whether the Soviet leaders, in their dealings with him during the war, had been as sincere as he had been himself.\* His remarks were sufficient to arouse Soviet suspicions, but not clear enough to capture the imagination of the common man who, on the contrary, heard Czechoslovak radio quoting Benes as writing: "The Soviet Union has become the symbol of progress in world civilization and culture" (Bratislava Radio, 6 November 1947).

If Dr. Benes failed to clarify the issue, he may be partly excused by the fact that encouragement from the Western democracies was not forthcoming. In 1945, Soviet appeasement by the West reached its peak, and clarity of purpose was just as absent among the Western democrats as it was among the Czech democrats. To perceive Dr. Benes's tragic misunderstanding of these developments in its proper perspective, one has only to remember that from 1918 until 1938 he had attempted to assure his country's independence by a system of collective security and mutual concessions, whose chief guarantor was France backed by Great Britain. This

\* *Dr. Eduard Benes, Pameti, Orbis, Prague, pp. 364 and 391.*

system failed miserably at Munich in 1938. Although the Munich agreement was officially repudiated by the war-time Governments of France and Great Britain, Dr. Benes could not bring himself to set any store by the doubtful card of a Western guarantee, for he could not guess what lessons the Western democracies had learnt from the failure of Munich. Moreover, in 1943 when he concluded his Treaty with Soviet Russia, and even in 1945, he had no means of knowing whether the United States would return to their pre-war isolationism or not. As late as 1947, when individual Czech politicians tried to persuade the British and American representatives in Prague to state publicly that a Communist seizure of power would be regarded as a hostile act against their countries, they met with no success. So it can be argued that the Western democracies were in no way prepared to guarantee Czechoslovak democracy. Hence, the Czechoslovak democrats felt justified in trying to "appease" the Russians within the framework of the Anglo-American "appeasement". This appeasement led to temporary loss of prestige and a weakening of international influence of several Western democratic States. But as they were stronger than Czechoslovakia and geographically less vulnerable, their weakening was not fatal. Marshall Aid, the Brussels Treaty and the Atlantic Pact came just in time to prevent the worst. The Czechoslovak democrats, however, were mercilessly punished for their efforts at appeasement. Their tragedy became and should remain a warning to the West.

It may be questioned how far a people that has so easily fallen a prey to a clique of usurpers is able to govern itself. Looking back at the First Czechoslovak Republic, one cannot but be impressed by the great progress in self-government made between the years 1918 and 1938. Apart from the seven to fourteen per cent of the citizens who voted Communist and the much smaller number of Fascists, the great bulk of the



nation showed its sincere devotion to Masaryk's democracy quite unmistakably and the whole nation was ready to defend it by taking up arms. When, in the pre-Munich days, the mobilization of the Army was proclaimed, the response of the people was enthusiastic. Many officers and men reported to their units before the appointed hour and were prepared to sacrifice their lives and property in the defence of Czechoslovakia against the Nazi Army, which far outnumbered their own. The Munich *Diktat* forced them to surrender without fighting, and they returned to their homes dispirited and broken men. Yet no sooner had the Western Powers declared war on Hitler than they started to regain confidence and hope. Though the number of those who joined the Czechoslovak armies in France, Britain and Russia did not go beyond several tens of thousands, at home collaboration with the Nazi conquerors was but slight. The Czechs seemed to be quite immune to Nazi ideas. The Slovaks, who received preferential political and economic treatment from the Germans, were much more impressed by Nazi ideology. Collaboration with the Germans drew wider circles, and Fascist and anti-Semitic ideas found more willing ears in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. But even here experience with the Nazi regime opened the eyes of many, and by their heroic uprising in 1944 they took a clear, courageous stand against the Nazi overlords. In the western parts, the Czechs, who are more civilized, more cautious and more calculating than the Slovaks and the Southern Slavs, did not indulge in any conspicuous demonstrations, but sabotaged the Nazi war effort systematically for their underground organizations worked quite well. And in May 1945 Prague rose to arms.

Everybody had been longing for peace, freedom and the re-establishment of Czechoslovak democracy. But now came another blow. The Soviet soldiers, who had been hailed as liberators, looted, raped and pillaged. Although measures of self-defence by individual Czechoslovak citizens occasionally stopped them in their criminal deeds, these were never publicly exposed in the Czechoslovak Press. The people began to

wonder what freedom they had gained if their politicians and journalists did not, and perhaps could not, defend them against the arbitrary misdeeds of a foreign soldiery. Had they shaken off one foreign occupation only to suffer another? When in October 1945 the Red Army departed, it left one deep impression behind: rather than suffer another occupation by the barbaric Asiatic soldiers, the whole Czechoslovak nation would be inclined to make concessions to the Soviet Union. This fear of the Red Army could henceforth be exploited by the Communists as blackmail.

Although, after the retreat of the Red Army, the people began to breathe more freely, pre-war liberties did not seem to come back fully. While the political parties incessantly accused each other of misdeeds, criticism of the National Front Government and of Soviet Russia was almost entirely absent from the Press. The Press was now exclusively owned by the political parties and some mass organizations connected with them. Unless he was one to whom Communist demagogy appealed, the man in the street, who noticed some basic shortcomings of the Government, only rarely found a journalist who would express truly constructive criticism, and inspire hope.

Many people who had suffered from the Nazi terror and were aware of the power and the intrigues of the Communist-controlled police dreaded to provoke the hostility of the Communists, whose vengeance might affect not only their income but also perhaps freedom and life. Though this fear rarely found public expression, it must have been present in many minds, and it would be unfair to blame anybody if he did not speak his mind so freely as men and women are accustomed to do in the Western democracies.

As most people were employed either by the political parties or—the much larger number—by the State administration and the State enterprises run by party bosses, they had to think twice before writing an article that might offend their employers. Some courageous journalists, who could afford to take this risk, were expelled from the ranks of their political

parties and, thereby were excluded from active participation in political life as Members of Parliament or Town Councillors.

The pronouncements of the President and most Government statements remained uncriticized and unchallenged. Such an atmosphere can breed passive obedience, occasionally devotion, but certainly not active, critical political thought which is an essential condition of a true democracy. Whatever political talents and abilities lay dormant in the good Czechoslovak people, they did not receive sufficient guidance, stimulation and inspiration. Hence the ordinary people sank back into their apathy. When participation in the Marshall Aid Conference of 1947 was revoked, they dimly felt that things had begun to turn from bad to worse.

During the *coup d'état* the Communist monopoly of broadcasting permitted them to mislead many listeners. The Communist assertions that they had discovered a "reactionary plot" were supported by detailed accounts, and the other parties had no means of parrying these accusations promptly. Thus many believed the Communist reports, and if they doubted them, they could not get to know the truth. When finally President Benes nominated a Government and two hundred and thirty Deputies voted for it, they still could not know exactly what was happening, unless they themselves were affected by the purge of a political party or mass organization—and these measures, at first, were directed against a small minority of politically or culturally active individuals. But one event profoundly shook the people: the death of Jan Masaryk.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MYSTERY OF JAN MASARYK'S DEATH

A FORTNIGHT AFTER the nomination of the new Government, on 10 March 1948 Prague radio announced that the Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk, had been found dead in the courtyard of the Czernin Palace at 6.25 a.m. His head was undamaged and his eyes were closed. The first Government communiqué which was not issued until midday stated: "In consequence of his illness combined with insomnia he resolved, probably in a moment of nervous disorder, to end his life by jumping out of a window of his official apartment into the courtyard of the Czernin Palace. During the day before his tragic death the Foreign Minister did not show any signs of mental depression: on the contrary, he was full of life, agility and displayed his usual optimism." A radio commentator added that Masaryk must have been "seriously aggrieved by the malicious and tendentious attacks made against him in the Western Press." Next morning the Prague newspapers published no details about the *post mortem* on Masaryk's body except the fact that death must have been instantaneous. The Social Democratic newspaper (edited by crypto-Communists) reported that a Bible had been found on Mr. Masaryk's bed. It lay open and verses 22 and 23, Chapter V of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, were alleged to have been marked by pencil. They read: "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,—Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." These words contained, the newspaper asserted, "Masaryk's message to the world."

Such was the Communist version of Masaryk's death. This story is in striking contrast to some facts which were observed by some police officers and Government officials who were called to the Czernin Palace shortly after Masaryk's tragic end, and also to other circumstances which have been brought

### THE MYSTERY OF JAN MASARYK'S DEATH III

out by Oscar Klinger, Masaryk's personal physician, and by a distinguished Czechoslovak civil servant, who had made thorough investigations before leaving the country. From these various sources, the following facts seem to emerge :

One, Masaryk's body was found at 6.25 a.m. Some persons who had crossed the courtyard only fifteen minutes earlier did not see his body. The impression of the police doctor, who was quickly called to the scene, was that he must have been dead for at least two hours. This doctor, although he pronounced a verdict of suicide, told some of his colleagues that his first impression had been that of murder and not of suicide. A month later, the doctor was reported to have committed suicide by giving himself a petrol injection into his brain. He was found dead in his office in the building of the Prague Security Police, and it was generally assumed that he had been murdered.

Two, no bloodstains were found on Masaryk's body, except behind his ear, which was covered by a bunch of snowdrops when the body was lying in state. One police officer reported that Masaryk was probably killed by an injection inserted into his head near the ear. His arms were not broken, and the position in which his body lay in the courtyard seemed to indicate that the dead body had been thrown through the window.

Three, faecal excretions were found on the window sill of his bathroom, which suggest that he was pushed through the window and did not jump from it.

Four, the bathroom window is placed rather high, and it was not easy for a man who was not a trained gymnast to get to it. This window, moreover, has a vertical partition in the middle, so that it would be very difficult for a man of Masaryk's height (six foot) to stand on it. There is a comfortable large window in Masaryk's bedroom to which access is easy.\* If Masaryk wanted to leap through a window, why

\* Some journalists have given a description of the two windows which considerably differs from the one given above. A public inquiry could and should have ascertained beyond any doubt which account is correct.

should he make an athletic effort instead of choosing the window that was near his bed? In the courtyard, he was found in his pyjamas and barefoot so that it can be assumed he had been in his bed before his death.

Five, only a few days before Masaryk was discussing with Dr. Benes and Chancellor Smutny the attempted suicide of Dr. Drtina. Dr. Drtina, one of the resigning Ministers, a man of great integrity and deeply devoted to the ideals of President Masaryk and Dr. Benes, had attempted to commit suicide on 28 February 1948. He leapt through the window of his house in Prague, but failed to kill himself. He suffered grave injuries, was taken to hospital and later to prison and charged by the Communist Prosecutor with treason against the Republic. Masaryk remarked: "To jump through the window is stupid. That's done by servant girls. You can't be sure of success."

Six, if Masaryk wanted to commit suicide, he had other means at his disposal. He kept a loaded revolver at his bedside, and had a number of sleeping tablets and other drugs in his flat.

Seven, if, however, it is assumed, as some émigrés have done, that he intended to sacrifice his life in order to protest against the Communist regime, it is surprising that he left no written message. The Communists, aware that this lack of a message might arouse suspicion, directed the Social Democratic paper to proclaim that the two Bible verses quoted above contained his "message to the world". It is true that a Bible was found in his flat—it was his father's copy and it was marked by pencil on many pages. But the markings were not those of Jan Masaryk, they had been made by his father. Besides, in the same room lay a copy of the "Good Soldier Svejk" by Hasek.

Eight, the *post mortem* report which was not published in Czechoslovakia but was smuggled to London, says nothing of the cause of Masaryk's death. The examination was conducted by Professor F. Hajek, who during the war had been one of the experts employed by the Nazis to testify that the death of the Polish Army officers and men found in Katyn had been

caused by the Russians. The Communists proclaimed the Katyn testimony to be a Nazi falsification.

Nine, Masaryk's personal physician, Dr. Klinger, was prevented from attending the *post mortem* examination, although he told the authorities that he wished to be present. He was informed of the time when it was to be held too late to be able to attend. Although it was generally known that he was President Benes's and Jan Masaryk's personal physician, he was neither called to the Czernin Palace on the morning of Masaryk's death, nor permitted to examine his body afterwards.\*

\* Dr. Klinger asserts that he and Masaryk had arranged to escape from Czechoslovakia on the very morning that followed the night when Masaryk died. He suspects that this plan might have become known to the Security Police, which, therefore, chose to assassinate Masaryk or to force him to commit suicide (*Saturday Evening Post*, 21 August 1948, pp. 40, 42 and 43). It is, of course, conceivable that Masaryk changed his mind during the night and instead of escaping abroad chose to escape from life altogether. On the other hand, if he mentioned to somebody that he intended to commit suicide, this is no proof that he was not murdered. In an article, supplied by the *Information Service of Free Czechoslovakia* and published by *Le Figaro* on 25 April 1949, "Bohemicus" claims to know "The Truth about Jan Masaryk's Death." Bohemicus asserts that Masaryk had two plans to escape abroad, but abandoned them and told Bohemicus that he intended to sacrifice his life, because actions speak louder than words. It is conceivable that Jan Masaryk, in a state of nervous tension, told Dr. Klinger one thing and Bohemicus another. But Bohemicus claims to know too much. He says that Masaryk intended to write two testaments, one political and the other personal, and kept on writing them on the night of his death from 9 p.m. until 12.30 a.m. These long letters, he claims, were taken away by one of the two Communist Ministers who came to Masaryk's flat after his death, although both of them, as Bohemicus claims to know, declared to the Politburo that no letters had been found. Bohemicus, who apodeictically asserts that Masaryk's suicide was carefully premeditated, at the same time attributes to him the stupidity of leaving his testament in a place where he must have expected it to be found by the Communist police! And the whole assertion is based on the flimsy evidence that only a small pile of his private writing paper was found in the morning. All that may be deduced from this fact is that Masaryk had been writing extensively during the night, but not what and to whom. It would be logical to assume that he wrote letters which he intended to pass on to somebody in the morning.

Bohemicus also knows that Masaryk "opened the window and jumped"

Ten, at the time of his death, Jan Masaryk harboured no illusions about the nature of the Government of which he was Foreign Minister. As he expressed it in a message sent to Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart after the putsch, "he knew what his duty was, that he was in danger, and that he must remain as long as he could to help others and curb injustice".\* In a second message, Masaryk said that he was preparing to leave the country. † "He had stayed to serve President Benes, who had born the brunt of Munich while he, Jan, was abroad. Now it was his turn to take the burden off the shoulders of the ailing President. All hope was gone. He, a Czechoslovak, was being spied on by other Czechoslovaks. Last Sunday, he could not face the commemoration of his father's birthday by the men who were undoing his father's work and who were saying that, if the President-Liberator were alive, he would approve their violence." ‡

Although Jan Masaryk remained in the post-February Government, the Communists knew that he was a convinced democrat, and if he escaped abroad, might become their most formidable opponent. Next to Dr. Benes he was the most popular man in the country, and had he resumed his war-time broadcasts from London to Czechoslovakia, his voice alone might have caused convulsions in the Communist regime. Hence it was clearly in the interest of the Communists to liquidate him.

These facts and circumstances surrounding his death, while not proving that Masaryk was murdered, aroused the suspicion that he might have been. The conviction that Jan Masaryk had

(no mention is made that he climbed to the window) half an hour after midnight. How can he know the time? Did Masaryk tell him at what time he would jump? He also knows that Masaryk was reading the Bible that very night, and that he and not his father had underlined verses 22 and 23 and a part of verse 24. According to this account, Masaryk was very busy that night and did not go to bed. Why then was he found in his pyjamas?

\* *Sunday Times*, 14 March 1948.

† I am indebted for this private information to Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart.

‡ *Sunday Times*, 14 March 1948.



been assassinated had been openly expressed by many Czech citizens before and during the funeral, attended by 200,000 people. Why then did not the Czechoslovak Government, to whom this belief among the people and the suspicious circumstances must have been known, set up a judicial enquiry into the causes of his death? Whenever the Communist record is clean, they never cease to demonstrate it *ad nauseam*. Their failure to carry out a public inquiry into Jan Masaryk's death seems to suggest that they had something to conceal from the public and constitutes their gravest indictment.

In either case, whether Jan Masaryk was assassinated or committed suicide, his death brought it home to the world that the son of the founder and the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic could not live unmolested in the Czechoslovak "people's Republic". Although the Communist leaders, aware of the people's devotion to him, paid homage to the deceased, and attempted to prove that he had been one of their supporters, their hypocrisy was soon exploded: the book containing his war-time radio speeches from London was taken off the shelves in the Czechoslovak bookshops. The Communists are determined that the true ideas of Jan Masaryk should remain unknown to the young Czechoslovak generation.

Jan Masaryk disliked politics and politicians, and felt much more at home in the society of artists and musicians. He was a good pianist, spoke several languages excellently, and his manifold gifts were such that he could have become an outstanding actor or artist. Unlike his father, the earnest and profound thinker, Jan was a man of the world, frivolous and charming, cheerfully courting men and women with the apparently sole desire to make everybody laugh, so much so, that many did not notice his deep melancholy and his underlying sense of a burdensome responsibility. Jan had never studied political or diplomatic history but his shrewd common-sense and sure instinct allowed him to sum up difficult situations and the character of men and women within a few seconds. He held deep convictions which he expressed in a simple and unorthodox manner: "If I strip to the skin", he

once told me in his London flat, "I am a Liberal. And I don't want to be governed either from Berlin or from Moscow." But he also used to say: "I have been the *enfant terrible* of the London diplomatic corps" or "I am not a Minister, my only merit is that I chose my father wisely".

When things went well, Masaryk would neglect the administrative aspects of his official duties and hurry away from his office to indulge in his many hobbies and to enjoy the company of his numerous friends. But the times of crisis, the Nazi occupation of his country and the Second World War, brought out the best and seemingly new qualities in the man. His prestige rose from month to month. He ceaselessly assisted Czechoslovak refugees in England and France, and with great tact and diplomatic skill prepared the way for the recognition of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile. Soon he became one of the most popular Allied spokesmen. Englishmen called him, "Britain's best salesman in America". He addressed large meetings in many parts of England and the United States. He amused and cheered up millions of people, and inspired them to work harder in the factories and to fight more stubbornly on the battlefield. By embracing the Allied cause with sincerity and devotion, he, the citizen of Europe and of the world, knew, with a perfect sense of proportion and convincing modesty, how to draw the attention of his audiences to the needs of his own country. "I am fighting", he would say, "for the right of Jew and Gentile to read in the Prague tramcars *Das Kapital* and *Mein Kampf*.—Every citizen must have the right to shout in the streets of Prague: 'I don't like my Prime Minister'." To Neville Chamberlain he said: "I insist on playing in the orchestra of the world. I do not have to play the bass drum: I would be satisfied with the piccolo."

In February 1940, when addressing a students' meeting in the Cambridge Union Society, he declared: "I am the last one to criticize the inner politics of Russia, but I also must respectfully submit that just as there is a high wall round Berchtesgaden, so there is a high wall round the Kremlin . . . the dictators are not informed properly . . . Don't tell us that

Hitler is going to save us and that Stalin is going to save us. We are either going to save ourselves or be lost. This fight is for one thing—the sanctity of the human soul. In totalitarian countries, they would interfere with my improvising on the piano, if I played two bars of a certain tune. If you make politics out of art or religion or out of the innermost freedom, I don't want to live.”\*

Jan Masaryk's influence grew rapidly not only in the free countries but also in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. Whenever he broadcast in Czech from London, Czechs and Slovaks did their utmost not to miss his message. Since listening to London was forbidden, they had to take great risks and took them willingly. All soon came to realize that he was not just the son of a famous father, but a jovial and inspiring speaker who deeply understood their own feelings, apprehensions and aspirations, and they began to love him for his own sake. After his return to Prague, he became the most popular man in the country. Wherever he went, he was enthusiastically and devotedly cheered by Czechoslovak citizens. While siding with no political party, he preached mutual understanding, non-violence, peace and love, thus indirectly countering the Communist appeals to hatred, envy and violence.

When a few weeks before the February putsch the Communists were pouring violent abuse against the “bourgeois reactionaries”, Masaryk stunned a large meeting in Prague by saying: “I proudly declare that I am one of the reactionaries and bourgeois”. And he added: “The word ‘reaction’ derives from the Latin word ‘*reagere*’. If your opinion is different and you act against something—you react. As long as I live and my mind works, I shall react, and if I do not agree with others, I shall say so. That is why I am one of the reactionaries. of the people who react, and I shall always react against evil in an orderly manner. ‘Bourgeois’ is the French word for citizen: I am proud to be a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic, and I claim and accept all my civic rights and duties.”†

\* *Cambridge Daily News*, 23 February 1940.

† *Lidova Demokracie*, 13 January 1948.

Thus Jan Masaryk boldly identified himself with those whom the Communists outrageously vilified. His blunt and popular language made the Communists shudder. Were he to conduct the parliamentary campaign in the same vein—and he intended to contest Bratislava for the Social Democrats—the Communists rightly feared that his speeches alone would lose them seats.

Although his fame was rising, Jan Masaryk incessantly doubted whether he could be equal to the task he had set himself. His *risqué* jokes and his biting criticism, his occasional nonchalance and his diplomatic opportunism, covered up his gentleness of spirit and humility in which he aspired to be like his father of whom he wrote to me: "Of all the men I have known in my life, the humblest was my father." Like his great father, Jan Masaryk was a humanist who through his practical example did much to spread belief in the dignity of the individual. Like his father, he fought racial and class prejudice throughout his whole life. After the war, as Foreign Minister in a party Government, he obeyed party political orders in foreign policy, but followed his own line in fighting anti-Semitism which had been inculcated by the Nazis into some Czech and Slovak minds during the occupation. To fight prejudice is an activity that goes beyond politics. Jan Masaryk may have been on some occasions a bad politician, but he was more than a politician. Although not highly educated, he was a genuinely cultured man, who, emotionally and instinctively rather than intellectually, understood, and loved, Czechs and Slovaks, Englishmen and Frenchmen, Americans and Russians, Jews and Christians, the underdog and the well-to-do. He loved humanity and himself was a lovable human being.

## CHAPTER IX

### BENES RESIGNS

**I**N THE GLOOMY ATMOSPHERE of Jan Masaryk's death, on 10 March, the Government fittingly presented themselves to Parliament, which had assembled for the first time since the February crisis. Before convoking it, the Communists had ascertained the exact number of Deputies who would support them unconditionally, and had been proceeding with the purging of the democratic parties. On 2 March, Dr. Cepicka, the new Minister of Justice and Mr. Gottwald's son-in-law, issued an order defining the scope of the Action Committees, which henceforth would be "the supreme organs on cultural and political matters". Whereas the Action Committees in factories and offices were meant to be temporary, those controlling the political parties would be permanent, presumably until all non-Communist parties were abolished. The democratic political parties must not form new party branches to take the place of those that had been dissolved. The Central Action Committee would create new party organizations everywhere and at all levels.

Thus the Central Action Committee, not the people, as the Communists had asserted during the putsch, obtained the supreme power of completely changing the structure and the composition of all non-Communist parties. The importance of this new organ of the "re-born" National Front was further emphasized by the announcement that it had first approved Mr. Gottwald's statement of policy before it was presented to Parliament. Two hundred and thirty Deputies unanimously accepted this statement and gave a vote of confidence to the new Government on March 11.

An even greater number of Deputies, namely 246, approved the new Constitution that was recommended to them by Mr. Gottwald in a special ceremony, which took place in the Castle of Prague on 9 May 1948. This date was specially chosen because it was the third anniversary of Prague's liberation by

the Red Army. Hereby this constitutional Assembly, elected in the free democratic elections of May 1946, completed its task.

Three weeks later, on 30 May, a general election was held in which the voters were asked to accept a single list of 770 candidates drawn from all political parties. But in actual fact, the composition of the House was already determined in advance and in such a way that the Communists were allocated 211 out of 300 seats, that is, 70 per cent. As no alternative lists were offered, the only choice open to the voter was to stay at home or to hand in a blank ballot paper. But either way of avoiding a positive vote was made difficult and dangerous. Communist speakers, Press and radio, tried to impress upon the voters that it was their duty to go to the polls, and he who stayed away would not only incur the legal penalty but also arouse the suspicion of the Communists and their Secret Police. While the Central Action Committee proclaimed that polling would be "secret", the Minister of the Interior stated that there could be "no grounds for disapproval if a voter of his own free will does not exercise the right to a secret vote but votes openly". Several days before the elections the Communists declared that they would vote openly, and in some wards the population "unanimously" declared that they needed no screens. Though screens were provided in most polling stations, only the most courageous citizens went behind them. The result was what could be expected: a resounding "victory" of the National Front, which claimed to have obtained 89 per cent of all votes cast.\*

After the election the representation of full Communist Party members (not mere fellow-travellers inside other parties) in Parliament was still further increased, for on 27 June, the Social Democratic and the Communist Parties were amalgamated. Mr. Fierlinger was rewarded for the great services

\* Out of a total of 7,200,000 valid votes, the National Front obtained 6,430,000. The number of valid "Nays" amounted to 770,000. The total number of blank, non-valid and unused votes, however, was 1,570,000.

he had rendered to the Communists inside the Social Democratic Party by being promoted from Minister of Industry to Deputy Premier. Minister Zapotocky, the Communist Trade Union leader, succeeded Mr. Gottwald as Prime Minister after the latter's unanimous election to the Presidency.

President Benes, who had signed the electoral law but had refused to legalize the new Constitution, resigned on 7 June. He wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald :

“On 4 May, I announced to you my decision to resign the presidential office. At that time we discussed my decision in connection with the general political situation. I also told you that the doctors recommended me to take into consideration my present state of health . . . My wish for all my dear compatriots, their respective representatives and their Government, is that the Republic may be spared all disaster, that they may live and work together in tolerance, love and forgiveness, that they may grant freedom and enjoy freedom conscientiously. I believe in the good genius of our people, and I believe in a happy future for our dear Republic.”

Mr. Gottwald issued a statement in which he expressed profound regret at this decision and emphasized “the very urgent” medical advice given to the President. Claiming Dr. Benes as one of the creators of the new order in the Republic, Mr. Gottwald went on to give a lengthy description of his merits, including the following :

“He (Dr. Benes) realized that a new, re-born Czechoslovakia would emerge from the war, and that it would create guarantees that Munich could never occur again. The first such guarantee was a firm alliance with the Soviet Union, and the second a popular regime in the Republic which would remove from power the treacherous agrarian, capitalistic bourgeoisie and place the power of deciding the country's destiny firmly in the hands of the people.”

The Government promptly decided that Dr. Benes should continue to draw the full salary of a President and to use Lany Castle during his lifetime.

The record of his conversation with Mr. Gottwald on 4

May, to which the President refers in his letter of abdication, is fortunately available. It is most instructive. What follows is a shortened version of the official minutes :

*Having studied the proposed Constitution, the President decided on 1 May to resign. He informed the Prime Minister of his decision and requested him to call on the President.*

*The differences between his view and those expressed in the Constitution are such, the President said, that full agreement cannot be reached. His main objection is to the formulation of the will of the people. The Constitution does not determine in what forms the will of the people should express itself. Eventually it might be the 'street'. In February he yielded: according to the Prime Minister, to the will of the people, but actually to the will of the 'street'.*

*To Mr. Gottwald's objection that, according to the Constitution the people are represented by the National Assembly, by the elected organs and National Committees and that the people's right to organize public meetings cannot be forbidden, the President replied: "I have already once been exposed to the pressure of the street—that is my argument. I do not wish to find myself in the same situation again." The Premier asked whether the street had forced the President to do something which was contrary to the law of the country. The Ministers resigned, the President accepted their resignation and nominated a new Government. The President reiterated that he had been forced to do so by the street. The Premier emphasized that what the President had done was not illegal. The President said: "I have been heavily burdened with this. I feel this as a humiliation of the President of the Republic and I cannot forget it. But I was pleased to hear from you that this was not directed against myself."*

*The President then discussed other problems which he called less essential, among them civil rights. He admitted that, compared with the old Constitution, they had been*



considerably extended, but the pending Bill for the Defence of the People's Democratic Republic limited them to such an extent that their scope would practically be determined by the Ministry of the Interior. Nor did the new Constitution provide guarantees that these civil rights would be respected. There were many ambiguities and no provision had been made for the democratic control of civil rights.

The President then turned to the Electoral Law which he had signed, because its formulation appeared to him acceptable. But the elections which were being prepared were not at all democratic, because only one single, combined list of candidates was offered to the electors. The Premier defended the Electoral Law by pointing out that its formulation went back to the Laws of the First Republic. "It is true, the Government Parties have combined, but they have a right to do so. Whoever wishes can be in opposition, the combined list is not prescribed. And as to the secrecy of the elections, the word 'can' indicates that everybody who wishes has the right to vote secretly." The President retorted: "Why have they not inserted the word 'must'?"

The Premier acknowledged that they differed politically. If the President resigned at that moment, three weeks before the General Election, everybody would think so. The President replied that it was unbearable for him to remain in office. "Physically or politically?" asked Mr. Gottwald. Dr. Benes replied that after February he had not wanted to remain long in office, but later had complied with Mr. Gottwald's wish that the President's flag should again be hoisted.\* Later he thought that he had made a mistake and he still regretted that he had not resigned at that time. His health was not improving, as he had expected, but he was convinced that he would recover in a few months' time.

The Premier asked whether the President had considered all aspects of his decision. After the February events, the people breathed freely once again—they understood. The

\* When President Benes left Prague Castle on 27 February, his flag was not hoisted at his country seat.

*President said that in February he had acted as he did, in order to ease the tension.*

*The President said that he did not wish to create for the Premier a situation in which he would not sign the Constitution: he realized how his refusal would affect the public both at home and abroad. He felt that it was his duty to make it possible for the Prime Minister and his Party to elect a President who could sign the Constitution without scruples. He wished to part in friendship, and remain in touch with the Premier. He expected that the situation might become difficult, even a war was possible, and therefore he wished to remain at Mr. Gottwald's disposal. He added: "While leaving, I am deeply concerned about the future. I see what they are preparing in the West. I do not look at these matters as some of our people. I am worried. When I go, my whole life goes. What will happen, I do not know, but I would like you to be convinced that I never had and never shall have designs against the State. I repeat this to you and to your Party." The President also said he would take part in no action against the State, the Communists and the Soviet Union.*

*The Prime Minister pointed out that if the President resigned before the Constitution was approved, they would have to interpret his abdication politically and comment on it. It would cause excitement abroad. He urged the President that if he was determined to abdicate, not to do so before the General Election. Dr. Benes admitted that people might misunderstand his resignation as Mr. Gottwald said. He was prepared to find together with Mr. Gottwald a formula in which his resignation could be announced to the public.*

The record of this important, sordid conversation between the sick President and the Communist dictator should be read in conjunction with the last message that President Benes sent to his adherents abroad shortly before his death. In this message, Dr. Benes gave impromptu replies to questions put to him. Some of his answers were as follows :

*"Fierlinger and the Communist leaders are cowardly traitors to our country." "Gottwald is a mere figure-head in the hands of Russia. For a long time I believed that he at least did not tell me lies, but now I see that they all lie without exception. This is a common characteristic of all Communists, particularly of the Russian. My main mistake was that I refused until the end to believe that even Stalin deceived me deliberately and cynically, in 1935 and later. The assurances he gave to me and to Jan Masaryk were intentionally fraudulent."\**

*During the February crisis,† the Benes message continues, Mr. Gottwald told Dr. Benes that the Red Army was concentrated on the Czechoslovak borders and was ready to march if called to give assistance to the Communists. Mr. Gottwald added that, according to the Communist intelligence service, the American armed forces in Europe were small, and neither they nor their allies could put up any resistance if the Russians entered Czechoslovakia.*

*As soon as Dr. Benes heard this threat, he proceeded to send messages to the leaders of the political parties and of the Sokol organization and also to some generals whom he thought to be reliable. But these were "under house arrest", and it was impossible to get in touch with them. "When they did not act energetically, I was powerless. When Gottwald's bloodthirsty, heavily armed militia filled the Old Town Square, I expected that the others would assemble at Wenceslaus Square. I could not know that in the hour of action they would be lacking in organization and determination to that extent.‡ I believed the demonstration of un-*

\* This is a revealing admission coming from a man who did more than other democratic statesmen to build up Stalin as a reliable ally, whose peaceful intentions of not interfering with the life of Russian neighbours should be completely trusted.

† Presumably on Tuesday, 24 February 1948.

‡ This statement sharply contradicts what has been asserted by some leading Czechoslovak émigrés. On Tuesday and Wednesday, 24 and 25 February, none of the party leaders and Deputies was "under house arrest". On Wednesday morning, the Secretary General of the National Socialist Party, Mr. Krajina, went to the Castle and requested

*armed students would be the signal for a popular uprising. When, however, nobody moved, I could not permit Gottwald's bellicose hordes to massacre the helpless inhabitants of Prague. The violence they threatened to use would know no limits."*

*The twelve Ministers had surprised him by their resignation. In principle, Dr. Benes certainly approved of it, but he considered it premature and the moment particularly ill chosen. He was horrified when they informed him of this fait accompli from which there was no going back. He at once realized how dangerous it was.*

*Dr. Benes intended to resign immediately, but his state of depression and other influences made him postpone this decision. He was convinced that his resignation, before the Constitution was signed, must have been clearly understood as a protest both at home and abroad.*

*The Czechoslovak émigrés "have my blessing and the thought that they are working gives me some consolation in these difficult hours. The experienced and sensible Czechoslovaks abroad must unite, despite their party divisions. They must try to make foreign statesmen and Governments realize that Czechoslovakia has once again become the concern of all and that there will be no lasting peace until this country is free. Logically, psychologically and historically, the present*

an audience with the President. The Chancellor, Mr. Smutny, told him the President could not receive him, and would nominate Mr. Gottwald's new Government because the latter was sure to command a parliamentary majority. In the afternoon of the same day—after Prague radio had already announced the nomination of the new Government by President Benes—Dr. Ripka, as he says in his *Czechoslovakia Enslaved* on p. 293, spoke to the President's Chancellery on the telephone and requested an audience for the resigning Ministers of his Party, but none of them was received.

In view of these facts, two explanations are possible. Either Dr. Benes's messengers deceived him and were playing the Communists' game, or Dr. Benes pretended he had sent out SOS messages—although he actually had not—because after the event he felt that he ought to have done so. In either case, the legend that the Communists controlled such overwhelming forces that resistance could not even be attempted, is hereby exploded.

*state of affairs cannot last. The Czechoslovak regime rests on a faulty basis, it is a colossus on brittle wooden legs which are bound to collapse soon. Discontent is growing rapidly throughout the country, also among the industrial workers and even among the old pre-war Communists. It is very much worth while to work for our cause in Europe and in America, but our people must take care not to be seduced by the siren of the capitalistic, reactionary environment. That is just as little democratic as the Soviet dictatorship—and without democracy, we shall get nowhere.”\**

These are some of the last ideas expressed by Dr. Benes, only a few days before his death on 3 September 1948. In June 1947 he had had an apoplectic stroke, which left him partially paralyzed. In September of the same year he had another stroke. Towards the end of the year he improved considerably, but he never again enjoyed that strong constitution which for several decades—though he had suffered from Ménière's disease since his youth—had enabled him to work a sixteen-hour day with tremendous energy. The events of February could not but worsen his condition. After his resignation, he lived with his wife in social isolation—his best friends in exile, imprisoned or dead, and those who remained in the country either not daring or not able to visit him, as constant watch was kept over his visitors by Communist guards. When he was buried on 8 September the Czechs and Slovaks of all parties and of all factions mourned in him Thomas Masaryk's disciple and close collaborator, the liberator from Nazi oppression and the symbol of Czechoslovak independence and democracy, which had just been strangled. Even the Communist leaders had to bow to this popular feeling and pay homage to the deceased.

Their future attitude to his memory, however, had already

\* My analysis of the crisis in the chapters on "The *Coup d'état*" and "No Resistance" was completed, before I became acquainted with Dr. Benes's last message which is printed above. My analysis does not depend on it. But a responsible Czechoslovak politician has assured me that the message is authentic though the wording may not be quite exact as it was not taken down during the conversation.

been prescribed to them by the Cominform journalist, Mr. N. Rubinstein, who denigrated his achievements in the Moscow weekly *New Times* of 11 August 1948.\* Here are a few examples of this Communist falsification of history :

“Benes’s evasive formulations and unfounded hints, which depict Soviet policy in a false light, serve only to help the modern Munichites.” This accusation is levelled against the very man who had headed and relentlessly launched the struggle for the repudiation of Munich, and had brought it to a successful conclusion.

“During the Second World War, Benes tried to restrain the Czechoslovak people from active struggle against the Fascist enslavers.” This accusation is levelled against the very man who had led the Czechoslovak struggle against Nazi tyranny.

“The Czechoslovak Communists, waging a heroic and devoted struggle against the Fascist invaders, won the confidence of the great masses of the people. And that is why, when the war ended, the people entrusted to the Communists the helm of the State.” Mark, not President Benes and not the democratic leaders who had handed over the key positions to the Communists during the Moscow talks of 1945, but “the people” who at that time were not and could not be consulted ! Only two months earlier, Mr. Gottwald, in his answer to President Benes’s resignation, had acknowledged the Communists’ gratitude to him. But the Moscow bosses know no gratitude, they do not recognize the assistance of loyal friends. Either you are 100 per cent with them and slavishly share all their frequently changing opinions and are always willing to be a tool in their hands, or they will accept whatever you offer but push you aside with contempt as soon as you cannot or will not serve them any longer. The sincere and well-meaning friends of the Soviet Union should note this and ponder particularly over the following, very revealing sentences with which Mr. Rubinstein concludes his article.

\* N. Rubinstein. *The Memoirs of Eduard Benes*. *New Times*, Moscow, No. 33, 1948.

"Benes's failure to understand the new situation which has taken shape since the Second World War is likewise expressed in his repetition of the battered thesis that there exists a 'West' and an 'East', which is 'Czechoslovakia's great political aim' to reconcile. Benes does not understand that the split is not a matter of meridians: that the line of demarcation passes through every country, between the forces of democracy and progress, the forces of the working class and the peasantry, on the one hand, and the dark forces of imperialist reaction on the other."

If you translate the last sentence from the Communist jargon into ordinary language, you will realize what Mr. Rubinstein means. "The forces of democracy and progress" is a pseudonym for the Communist Parties who are trying to establish their own totalitarian dictatorship. By "the forces of the working class and the peasantry", he does not mean the workers and peasants who have their own wishes, interests, demands and aspirations, but only those who blindly follow the Communist lead. By "the dark forces of imperialist reaction", he does not merely mean those small groups of adventurers who harbour imperialist designs upon neighbouring countries or hope to profit from imperialist exploitation: he means all the people, the workers, the peasants and the intelligentsia—including the left-wing democrats and the Socialists—who are not Communists. Mr. Rubinstein thus reprimands Dr. Benes for not understanding that "the line of demarcation passes" between Communists and non-Communists in "every country of the world". If this is an authoritative statement of Soviet policy, and everything printed in the *New Times* is authoritative, then all their diplomatic talk about the independence of nations, all their promises of Russian non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, are just plain frauds.

While during the war Stalin welcomed the services of Dr. Benes, who sincerely attempted to reconcile East and West, now Mr. Rubinstein tells us that "in the new situation(!) which has taken shape since the Second World War", such

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services are no longer required from Dr. Benes or front Czechoslovakia; though, in the free countries, similar services are still welcome from naïvely trusting men and women who will be equally thrown into the dustbin once their usefulness to the Kremlin has been exhausted.



## CHAPTER X

### STALIN'S VICTORY

**I**MMEDIATELY AFTER the February coup; portraits of Stalin (not Gottwald's for those were added only after Dr. Benes's resignation from the Presidency) were hung on the walls of every classroom of every Czechoslovak school. Thus the Communists themselves publicly acknowledged that Czechoslovakia had become a country dominated by Stalin, a country in which devotion to Stalin would in future be inculcated in all educational establishments.

On 15 March 1948, the new Communist Minister of Foreign Trade, publicly admitted that the Soviet Union had assisted the Czechoslovak Communists during the February crisis. "We must thank our Slav allies and mainly the Soviet Union for the fact that we succeeded in overcoming all obstacles in defeating reaction."\* Mr. Zorin, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, by his very presence seemed to confirm the Communist allegations that Russia was backing them. Soviet Press and radio gave whole-hearted support to the Czech Communists during the crisis. These are clear indications of Soviet complicity in the *coup d'état*.

Moreover, the Communist parties outside Russia are only sections of a centralized international organization which is dominated by the Russian Communists. The public dissolution of the Communist International during the Second World War was merely a tactical gesture by which Stalin successfully endeavoured to please and mislead the world,† and in particular American public opinion. The secret ties and contacts, the

\* *New York Herald Tribune*, European Edition, 16 March 1948.

† Not only that. The Comintern was originally an international organization in which the Russian Communist Party, if not in practice at least in theory, was *primus inter pares*. But gradually the Russians became overwhelmingly and unmistakably preponderant, and with the dissolution of the Communist International there ceased to exist even the platform—the International Congress of the Communist Parties of the world—from which the Russian Communists could be criticised, advised and controlled by their comrades from other countries.

principles of international command and subordination, were never abandoned and in the autumn of 1947 the establishment of the Cominform, an "information organ" of the Communist parties, once again publicly confirmed the common interests of all Communist parties. The whole history of the Communist International, particularly after Stalin succeeded in becoming its dictator and the tyrant of Russia, has shown again and again how the non-Russian Communist parties had been ordered about by the Russians. Whenever a more independently-minded Communist leader attempted to act without consulting the Soviet Union, he was either forced to repent or was expelled. Consequently it may be safely assumed that the Czech Communists seized power not only with Russian advice but upon Stalin's orders.

What then did Stalin gain by the Prague *coup d'état*? A change in Czechoslovak foreign policy? That was not necessary, because from 1945 (already from 1944 to a certain degree) the Czechoslovak Government unanimously supported the Slav block, voted with the Soviet Union at international meetings, and followed Russian instructions even if they were economically disastrous for Czechoslovakia. Between 1945 and 1947 the Soviet Union had forced upon the Prague Government trade agreements which were unfavourable to the Czechs. They exported to Russia goods of greater value than they received in exchange.\*

\* The exact terms of trading with Russia before February were never published, nor submitted to parliamentary or Cabinet control. A special department in the Ministry of Foreign Trade, headed by Mr. Z. Fierlinger's brother (which, according to one, otherwise unconfirmed report, was directly—and unconstitutionally—responsible to the Prime Minister), fixed the barter terms so that not even the Ministers concerned with industry and home consumption knew how many metal tubes, for instance, the Russians actually received for how many bushels of grain.

In the autumn of 1945, all papers prominently featured the generous gift of grain which the Red Army presented to the citizens of Prague and other towns. In the spring of 1947, the Red Army demanded the return of this gift, claiming that it had been a loan. The Government complied, but this fact was never made public.

Outright gifts to Russia had also been made before February 1948.

In July 1947 the Czechs renounced Marshall Aid under Soviet pressure. One would have thought that no greater sacrifice could have been demanded and obtained from a friendly Slav state. Nevertheless, the Russians wanted far more. Their designs could be deduced from the Czechoslovak Five Year Plan, approved by Parliament in October 1948, and from the new Czechoslovak-Soviet trade agreement signed in the same month. Thereby Czechoslovakia promised to deliver to Soviet Russia many articles such as glass, porcelain, textiles and leather goods, which could have been more advantageously sold in the West in return for vital raw materials and capital equipment. Thus Czechoslovakia was bound to suffer from the lack of these goods, obtainable only from the Western and overseas countries to whom henceforth she could not offer enough goods in exchange.

In the new Czechoslovak-Soviet trade agreement, Czechoslovakia promised deliveries of products from her heavy and mining industries. To meet Russian requirements, particularly those of re-armament, the Five Year Plan envisaged the doubling of output from heavy industry by building new plants. This will disastrously affect the balance of Czechoslovak economy and its relationship to world trade.

New plants require additional workers who can be supplied only by the dismissal of all unreliable civil servants, by the complete ruin of the remaining middle classes in town and country, and by limiting the production of articles which serve non-essential home consumption.

After February, all kinds of small firms were taken over by the State. By November 1949, 95 per cent of all industry and

By a secret treaty concluded in October 1945, Russia obtained the sole right to exploit the Jachymov (Joachimstal) uranium mines. Neither the Cabinet nor Parliament were consulted or even informed about the treaty; only the Prime Minister, Mr. Fierlinger, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Masaryk, the Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr. Ripka, and the five Vice-Premiers knew about it. Whereas all investments in Jachymov had to be paid by Czechoslovakia, Russia paid nothing in return. The mines were administered by Russian personnel and worked by Russian prisoners. Czechoslovak Government officials were not permitted to approach the mines.

all wholesale trade was nationalized, whereby the total number of employees in wholesale trade was reduced by more than half. Private retail trade in textiles was almost annihilated by the end of 1948. Independent artisans and small shopkeepers are now the poorest of the poor. If they are in arrears with their payment of taxes, the Ministry of Finance imposes State administration upon their businesses. They receive no ration cards for buying textiles and shoes at controlled prices. Many of them have already had to give up their business and so have become available for work in the factories.

Although the holding of landed property not exceeding 50 hectares (1 hectare equals 2.47 acres) had been guaranteed by the new Constitution of May 1948, everything is being done to ruin those who hold more than 20 hectares. They, too, are not permitted to buy textiles and shoes at controlled prices. They must supply to the State authorities a much higher quota of grain per hectare of land than those with less land. If they fail to do so, they are expropriated by the imposition of State administration upon their farm and sent into forced labour camps as "saboteurs". If they wish to escape this fate, then they can "voluntarily" join the land collectives.

To attract farmers into collectives, they are told that they will remain the proprietors of their fields and cattle, and that the common use of tractors will shorten their hours of work. Despite this enticement, only a small number of farmers have so far joined the collectives. Not only do they dislike giving up their independence, but they suspect that once the collectives are established all over the country then more work will be demanded from them. That is, of course, the Communist aim. By intensifying the work on the land, they hope to draw labour from there for the expanding heavy industry.

Since Soviet Russia delivers goods of less value than those it obtains from Czechoslovakia and since also trade with the West is diminishing, the standard of living is bound to fall and has indeed fallen considerably since February 1948.\* This

\* Czechoslovak statistics after the putsch are construed in such a manner that no clear deductions can be made from them. Considering,

general fall in the standard of living has affected most people, including the industrial workers whose economic position had improved in the first two years after the war.

In June 1948 Mr. Zapotocky, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Trade Union Council, opened a campaign against the workers' slackness and selfishness, theft and carelessness in handling machinery, as well as simulation of illness, and demanded higher output. In November 1948, comparing output with wages, he bluntly announced that wages were too high. This combination of economic threats with demands for higher output—which according to the Russian model was to be stimulated by fake examples of Stakhanovites—served only to increase the workers' hostility to the new regime and added to general slackness, which had prevailed before February, a new feature, namely, passive resistance.

Mr. Zapotocky had exhorted the workers to work harder even before February, but at that time the Trade Unions were mainly being used as vehicles for the propaganda of the Communist Party and in this capacity they had formulated the workers' demands for social security and greater influence upon the administration of industry. But after February, they "dialectically" assumed the opposite function: to discipline the workers for the benefit of their State employers. Those Trade Union officials who were unfit for this new task were dismissed in 1948.

To provide still cheaper labour, forced labour camps were established on the Russian model. The law of October 1948 calls them "educational working centres". These camps are "to educate by work those who by their way of life, their actions, and their attitude towards the people's democratic State, have shown that they do not want to subordinate themselves to one of the main principles of the Czechoslovak Constitution, by which every citizen has not only the right but the however, that after the putsch the nominal wages remained either the same or were lowered by the introduction of lower piece rates, whereas the price of essential consumption articles—textiles, shoes, food—was increased, experts have estimated that the general standard of living fell by about a quarter from 1947 to 1949.

obligation to work and contribute to the good of all." There is a long list of offences for which persons between the ages of 18 and 60, can be sentenced to serve in these camps. Condemnations are made by special district committees, or, until these are appointed, by the Ministry for Internal Affairs.

These authorities can also forbid a person guilty of one of a long list of offences to reside in a certain district or place, and can determine the place of his residence. This is an ingenious innovation, which will assist the State planners to move workers from one place to another according to the exigencies of the Five Year Plan. During the February putsch, the Communists were able to call into the street many workers who sincerely believed that the main purpose of the Communists was to give them social security and a higher standard of living. Brief experience with the Communist regime could not but cure them of this illusion.\* If they could express their verdict in free elections, undoubtedly most of them would vote against the Communists. Hence the need for a dictatorship.

The feeling of the people found clear expression during the Sokol Festival of June and July 1948. Several hundred thousand Sokols, mostly Czechs and Slovaks, but also representatives of other Slav nations, had assembled in Prague to give their splendid gymnastic performances. With them came a large number of visitors from the provinces, eager to watch the world-famous spectacle. One day a procession was held in the streets of Prague, during which all the Sokols had to march past President Gottwald and his Communist Government. Most participants completely ignored Mr. Gottwald's

\* A Prague story tells of an American Trade Union delegation, which visited the great Bata factory in Zlin. The Americans asked some of the Czech workers: "To whom does this factory belong?"—"It belongs to us", replied the workers. "Whose are the motor-cars outside the factory?"—"They belong to our Communist bosses". A few months later, a Czech Trade Union delegation visited Detroit and was astonished to see hundreds of motor-cars parked outside the factory. They asked some American workers to whom the factory belonged. The Americans replied: "The factory belongs to Mr. Ford."—"And to whom do the cars belong?"—"They belong to us".

presence, and some detachments ostentatiously turned their heads away from the President instead of towards him. The marchers continuously cried, "We want Benes in the castle", "Long Live Benes", and they repeated their allegiance to Benes in front of President Gottwald himself. The hundreds of thousands of onlookers enthusiastically joined in their calls. Among the marchers were also Russian and Yugoslav gymnasts. While everybody was cheered, the Russians were coldly ignored in most streets. On the other hand, the Yugoslavs—this was shortly after the Stalin-Tito quarrel had become public—were humorously greeted with "Long live Tito". Towards the end of the Sokol Festival, the Communist police made many arrests, and afterwards the Sokol organizations were thoroughly purged throughout the country.

To exploit the Czechoslovak people intensively, Stalin needed a Communist dictatorship in Prague. He required it still more for military purposes. According to an agreement of 1945, Czechoslovak staff officers received special training in Soviet military academies. In a defensive war against Germany, the Czechoslovak army could thus be relied upon to stand whole-heartedly on Russia's side, but it was unlikely, in spite of the great Communist influence among the staff officers, that the Czechoslovak army could be used in an aggressive war against the Western democracies.\* The cultural ties with the West were still too strong. To make the Czechs and Slovaks reliable in the event of this contingency, they had to be cut off from every spiritual contact with the West by a severe censorship of periodicals and books, their children had to be transformed into blind robots in Communist schools, and all

\* The pre-February attitude of the Czechs to war was well indicated by the following story, which was popular in Prague in 1947. One Czech asks his friend: "What will you do if a war breaks out between Russia and America?"—"I will join the Russian army."—"Why the Russian army? Don't you know how much the Americans helped President Masaryk to found our Republic and how much food they sent to us through UNRRA after the last war?"—"Of course, I do."—"So why on earth do you want to join the Russian army?"—"You see, I want to become a prisoner of war, and I think the Americans will treat their prisoners much better than the Russians."

vestiges of independent thought wiped out by intimidation, terror and assassination. Such measures could not be carried out under a democratic regime, however obliging it wished to be to the Russians.

Already during the putsch, several army generals were relieved of their posts. In March 1948, all the officers and airmen who had served in France or Britain during the war were dismissed—many of them were arrested. Then the army leaders of home resistance and many others followed suit. It was estimated that in one year of the Communist regime almost 70 per cent of the army officers had been affected by the purge. Some of them were assassinated after a trial, among them the pre-February Deputy Chief of Staff, General Pika. Hundreds of them were condemned to long-term prison sentences, and the fate of a still greater number is not known, as they were arrested, interrogated, tortured and disposed of by the police without public notice and without public trial. The same arbitrary procedure is applied to “unreliable” civilians, journalists, civil servants, industrial workers, students, young boys and girls. Even so, the number of people whose condemnation to long prison sentences and death has been publicly announced is terrifying.

If a student wishes to enter a University or to continue his studies, he is submitted to an inquisition during which his political reliability is examined. On one occasion, the candidate was asked whether he would continue to be a Communist if the present regime fell. When he answered in the affirmative, he was reprimanded on the ground that this contingency should not be considered at all. “This regime”, he was informed, “cannot fall.”

Contacts with the Western world have been restricted by the fact that the citizen has no right to obtain a passport. The Ministry of Internal Affairs can refuse to issue a passport to any citizen “for reasons of State security”. The distribution of many foreign periodicals is forbidden. Publication of books and periodicals is the sole right of certain organizations and State institutions. The final decision about any publication



rests with the Ministry of Information. Once again it must be pointed out that such measures could not have been carried out under a democratic regime, however obliging it wished to be to the Russians.

The Russians have thus assumed complete control over an area which had been potentially under their influence from 1945 onwards. Czech Communists have risen to power, but in their relationship to Soviet Russia they have weakened their position. In 1947 it was still possible for them to vote for Czechoslovakia's participation in the Marshall Conference without requesting Russian directives (though, of course, they promptly changed their minds upon hearing Stalin's opinion). But in future, nothing of this nature could happen again. Having ruined, through the medium of Action Committees, the democratic organizations of the people, including the workers, they deprived themselves of those voluntary adherents and supporters they had had in a relatively free democracy. Now they are sitting on bayonets, facing a hostile population, and therefore must increasingly rely on Russian support. They have become mere satraps of a foreign power.\*

No sooner had the Communists assumed sole responsibility for the Government than they initiated a purge of their own ranks. On the one hand, the Party membership had risen from about 1,000,000 at the end of 1947 to 2,300,000 in May 1949. But on the other hand, over half a million members of the Party were reduced by the "proverka" (that is, inquisition) to the status of mere "candidates", some of whom later may be admitted to full Party membership, whereas others will be expelled. These figures were given to the Communist Party

\* In September and October, 1948, several people were accused of having attempted to assassinate President Gottwald and Premier Zapotocky. These trumped-up charges were perhaps made in order to exaggerate the offence of spreading anti-Government literature, but mainly to add importance to these two individuals. As most Czechs rightly feel that it matters little which Russian satrap sits in Prague Castle, and no other distinguishing qualities could be attributed to these two men by their busily searching propagandists, these quite appropriately reasoned out that Gottwald's and Zapotocky's popularity and fitness for office should be measured by the number of people who wanted to kill them.

Congress of May 1949 by the General Secretary, Mr. Slansky. He also announced that the purge would systematically proceed for three to four years until the Party was completely cleansed of all "unreliable" and "non-proletarian" elements. In October 1949 several thousand Party members, among them some high-ranking officials, were not only purged but suddenly, within a few days, arrested. This might have been intended as prophylactic action against the danger of "Titoism", but the underlying causes of this sudden onslaught and of the systematic purge were basically the same.

The politically naïve idealist intellectuals, who had hoped to bring about a better world, and the manual workers who had aspired to improve their lot by a Communist Revolution, were bound to be disappointed and disillusioned when faced with the realities of greater exploitation and less freedom for the workers. Among the Czechoslovak Communists—just as among those of other non-Russian countries—there were many who never believed that forced labour camps existed in Russia. But now they saw them officially established by a new law, promulgated unanimously by the "people's" Parliament. Some of their illusions were shattered. The Party must, therefore, be cleansed from such elements until it consists solely of those who obediently carry out Soviet orders even if they run counter to the official ideals of Communism.

As long as the workers live in a capitalist country and observe the greater advantages and riches that accrue to the more privileged classes, they may well be taken in by the Communist doctrine which tells them that they have no freedom at all and that the only people who enjoy freedom are the "bourgeoisie". It seems "dialectically" logical that if they deprive the "bourgeoisie" of their freedom, then they themselves will have a greater share of it. But when, after the Communist Revolution they look for that greater freedom which the proletariat should now enjoy and find that they cannot freely elect their own representatives as they could in capitalist democracy, that their "representatives" are on the contrary imposed upon them by the Communist Party bosses and that they themselves

are in bondage, then the realization begins to dawn upon them that by abolishing freedom for all other classes and parties, they have abolished it for themselves, for the workers, as well as for the Communist rank and file. Among the exiles from Czechoslovakia who had left their home country in 1948 and 1949, there are a few men and women who had been enthusiastic members or supporters of the Communist Party for more than a decade and who, after five or six months of life in the Communist paradise, said they felt that "it was impossible to live there". Many others whose illusions have been equally shattered may not attempt to escape, because they do not believe that refuge will be given to them or because they dread exile. Although the number of disappointed Communists cannot be ascertained, it must be considerable.

On the other hand, there are numerous members of the Communist Party who had suddenly made a phenomenal career. From subordinates they have overnight become chief administrators, managers of industrial plants, directors of educational institutions. They have gained in power, prestige and income. Those to whom this individual gain matters more than idealistic considerations, are satisfied, at any rate for the time being. As a result of the putsch a division has occurred within the Communist Party itself. The more idealistic elements tend to become apathetic or are purged, whereas the careerists and the adventurers, obsessed by a pathological thirst for power, have come to the fore. It is their pattern of behaviour that is now being imposed upon the nation. Those who blindly obey their superiors may be given posts which will enable them to command others.

This hierarchical pattern of domination and submission was typical of Nazi Germany. Blind obedience to the Fuehrer was the chief virtue of the Nazis. For compensation they could order about ordinary German citizens. The humbler Germans, for their part, while constrained to carry out the orders of the Nazi Party, were given the Jewish scapegoats, and after 1940 the conquered nations, over whom to domineer. In addition, they received the vicarious satisfaction of sharing in the rising

power of Germany and of feeling superior to any other race by reason of being members of the chosen "Aryan race". The Czech and Slovak Communists cannot offer similar nationalist satisfaction to their adherents. Far from enhancing the might of their country, their advent to power has made her more dependent on Soviet Russia. Hence, the emotional satisfaction they can offer to the masses is only the idea of participating in, or rather supporting, the Soviet experiment. While the Soviet propagandists offer their people, in addition to the ideas of Communism, the belief in the superiority of Russian culture and Russian science, the Czech Communists can play only second fiddle. Far from educating the Czechoslovak people for an equal place among the Communist nations, they are indoctrinating them with complete subservience to the Russians.\*

\* Mr. Gregor's (Minister of Foreign Trade) seemingly undiplomatic admission (p. 131) regarding Soviet assistance during the February putsch, was probably prompted by this tendency to preach complete subservience to Russia. Not only the Czechoslovak people but also the Czechoslovak Communists are constantly reminded that they owe all the benefits of "the people's democracy" not mainly to their own efforts but to the generosity, assistance and might of Soviet Russia. "Russian is the language of the future," wrote a Prague newspaper in October 1949. "In the future no doctor, engineer, artist or soldier, will be able to get along without Russian, and particularly our workers and farmers must know the language of our two hundred million allies." (*Lidove Noviny*, 9 October 1949). All boys and girls in secondary schools must learn to read Russian within a few months' time, and their teachers have been ordered to "read one Russian book a month and to discuss it with other teachers."

Mr. Frantisek Travnicek, Professor of Education in the University of Brno, wrote in an editorial article of *Lidove Noviny* on 8 October 1949: "Russian is the tool of a culture and civilization whose vitality and beneficence for all mankind is now beyond any doubt. In the Second World War, Soviet science and technics have saved mankind from disaster . . . Soviet philosophy, developing and deepening the Marxist doctrine, has not only discovered (!) the developmental laws of nature, but also of human society. . . . In the Soviet Union has risen the sun of a new culture and civilization which guarantees mankind peace and progress.

"The Soviet Socialist culture and civilization is a world one, today it has supreme importance for the whole world development, and this importance will incessantly grow; its tool of expression, Russian, is quite naturally a world language already. The importance of this language

Not only have they enslaved their own people, as every totalitarian dictatorship does, but they have enslaved them for the benefit of mighty Russia. They are traitors to the national interests of their own country.

This then is what Stalin has gained. Instead of the sincere friendship of a free Czechoslovak people, he has complete control over the bodies of Czechoslovak citizens guarded by Communist jailers. The lasting interest of the Russian people would have been better served by the former course, but dictators have their own motives and aspirations.

The costs of oppression are by their very nature heavy. Many, who in a free country would be engaged on producing goods, have instead to be employed in the steadily growing army of supervisors, secret police, security police, special police and additional police. While the Communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia can create new privileged positions for the few, it has got to lower, and has indeed already lowered, the standard of living of the many, and thereby sow the seeds of further dissatisfaction and with them the need for more informers and jailers.

Although the police corps has Soviet "advisers", its rank and file cannot be imported from Russia. Thus much depends upon the morale of the home-grown oppressive forces. Many of the tens of thousands of refugees, who escaped from Czechoslovakia in 1948 and 1949, could do so only because police and *gendarmerie*, directly or indirectly, assisted them. It is difficult to uphold the morale of a Czechoslovak police corps if its main duty is to serve the Russian overlords. On the face of it, the regime appears very strong, but it is weak in its very foundations.

To administer a modern industrial country like a colony is

will more and more increase with the need of the rest of human society to understand the Soviet world more deeply and to learn from it . . . Russian is a world language because it is the perfect tool of a new ideological development of world importance, because it is the expression of thoughts and ideas which move world history. Together with these ideas Russian has matured to its world mission, together with them it extends and will expand into the whole world."

no easy task. On the other hand, a revolt of the unarmed masses against a heavily armed minority is impossible. The unavoidable result will be moral and cultural decay, for the time being. But should Western pressure upon the Soviet bloc increase, then the inner contradictions and weaknesses of the Prague regime will become evident and hasten its collapse.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CHURCH AFTER FEBRUARY

AFTER THE PUTSCH, the Communists proceeded rapidly with the extinction of all centres of independent thought in the country and with the *Gleichschaltung* of all cultural institutions. The chief resistance they encountered came from the Roman Catholic Church. Not that this Church attempted to encroach upon the rights of the State, but she persisted in defending her religious freedom. In February 1948 the Archbishop of Prague, Dr. Beran, called upon the Catholics to observe law and order. "All have approved the programme of socialization. All did and want to work for it. Reforms, even the most radical ones, can be put through more permanently, if the path of law is pursued. Learn from history." Though the Archbishop refrained from preaching against the Communist regime, he refused to commend it to his believers and to withdraw the ban he had imposed upon Father Josef Plojhar, the Minister of Health in the February Government.

President Gottwald, probably remembering how ably he had emasculated Czechoslovak democracy by "sincere co-operation", now endeavoured to win over the Catholic Church by embracing her. He took the unprecedented step of attending, immediately after his election to the Presidency, a special *Te Deum* service at which Archbishop Beran officiated. Neither his predecessors, Masaryk and Benes, nor his Communist colleagues in Eastern Europe, had done that. But Mr. Gottwald tried to reach a "compromise" with the Catholic clergy by applying various methods—economic pressure and corruption, intimidation of the faithful and support of the "revolting" clergy. After each blow aimed at the Church, he extended his hand in a conciliatory gesture.

After February 1948, the Communists closed the Catholic schools, forbade the publication of Catholic papers and expropriated the Catholic publishing house. Most of the land belonging to the Church was confiscated so that the Church's

income was considerably reduced. The Church was willing to accept a compromise solution of her financial problems, and the Government was only too eager to pay the clergy high salaries, but on the condition that the Church publicly proclaimed her loyalty to the "people's democratic Republic" and permitted State control of Church administration. This condition was categorically stated in a Government memorandum of February 1949.

Archbishop Beran convoked a council of his bishops to Stary Smokovec in Slovakia. Shortly after the conference opened, it was adjourned, because microphones had been discovered in the assembly hall. This was disclosed by the Archbishop in his Pastoral Letter of April 1949. In it he also protested against the ban imposed on the official *Catholic Journal*, a step from which even the Nazis had shrunk. (Dr. Beran had been a courageous fighter against Nazi oppression and had been imprisoned in a concentration camp.) He refuted the Communist allegation that freedom of religion existed in Czechoslovakia. He declared that the Catholic bishops refused to make announcements which the Government demanded from them at various occasions.

The official answer to the Pastoral Letter was given by the Minister of Information, Mr. Kopecky. Addressing the Congress of the Communist Party in May 1949, he attributed the responsibility for the difficulties that had arisen between Church and State "solely to the Vatican which interferes with the internal affairs of the State". He threatened that the Government would not tolerate traitors in Holy Orders. While recognizing religious freedom, they reserved, so he announced, for the State "the mission to guide all education, inside and outside the schools, in the spirit of our ideology, of our scientific truth, in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism." The Archbishop courageously replied by urging the priests "not to sell their honour and not to betray Christ for thirty pieces of silver" and by declaring: "All attempts to negotiate with the Government from now on will be unnecessary and futile."

The police carried out "searches" in the Cathedral of St.



Vitus and in other Prague churches. On 10 June 1949, a new "progressive" committee of the "Catholic Action" was formed, headed by a theatrical producer, Mr. Pujman. This committee organized "a manifestation of Czech and Slovak Catholics". The meeting issued a proclamation recognizing the Holy Father as the visible head of the Church, but protesting that "we can accept from abroad no orders of a political nature regarding the internal affairs of the State". The participants of the meeting further declared their loyalty to President Gottwald and the Communist Government, criticized the Archbishop's relationship to the State and announced that they would endeavour to rectify the conditions inside the Roman Catholic Church in order to bring about agreement between Church and State. The proclamation, originally signed by fifty "progressive" clergymen, was sent to all Catholic priests in the country. The daily Press started to publish the names of those who were alleged to have signed the proclamation, and within a short time claimed that their number had reached almost two thousand. It transpired, however, that the Communists had included the names of clergymen who had died a long time previously, and also of those who had refused to sign. These informed their congregations of their true attitude by putting up notices at their church entrances.

On 16 June 1949 heavily armed police occupied the Archbishop's Palace and arrested his two secretaries. The archiepiscopal administration was put under the control of the Ministry of Education. The police remained in the Palace for three days. Shortly after the police detachments had been withdrawn, the Archbishop left the Palace and walked to the Strahov monastery which is nearby. There he addressed a large congregation: "Perhaps you will soon hear that I have made a confession or done something else. I hope you trust me. I do not know how many times I shall still be permitted to speak to you from the pulpit. Perhaps you will hear one day that I have concluded an agreement or approved of it . . . But I declare before God and before the nation that I shall never conclude an agreement against the rights of the Church

or the bishops. Not all of those whose names are published in the papers agree with what is being planned. Moreover, some of them know nothing of what is going on."

Next day, on 19 June 1949, which was a Sunday, when the Archbishop was due to start his sermon in St. Vitus Cathedral, a group of young Communists began to whistle. The Archbishop's voice could not be heard. He left the Cathedral and walked back to the Palace, greeted enthusiastically and with devotion by the many thousands of people who had assembled in front of the Cathedral.

Two days later the Prime Minister himself broadcast a Government declaration, which accused the Archbishop of heading "a group of Church dignitaries who have decided to sabotage the progress made during the people's democratic Government. These dignitaries work hand in hand with other enemies of the State. . . . The Government will not permit the Archbishop and the bishops to terrorize the patriotic Catholic priests and to violate their freedom of opinion." Many priests were arrested, among them were some whose names had been published as supporting the declaration of the Catholic Action.

A Vatican Decree of 20 June 1949 excommunicated all priests and laymen who voluntarily supported the Czechoslovak "Catholic Action". On 13 July another Decree ordered the excommunication of all Catholics who joined the Communist parties or supported them. The Prague Communists replied at once. Premier Zapotocky publicly threatened the Archbishop with arrest. Dr. Cepicka, the Minister of Justice, indicated that terroristic measures would be applied against the faithful priests, whereas those prepared to serve the Communists would be remunerated with high salaries.

The resistance of the Catholic clergy was heroic. They roused the enthusiasm of the believers. In some Slovak villages the peasants, armed with sticks, protected their priests against the police who had come to arrest them. The fearless attitude of the Archbishop, the clarity of his pronouncements, the wisdom of his leadership, deeply impressed many merely nominal Catholics. The example of Archbishop Beran has

inspired new hope into the hearts of all Czech and Slovak patriots. Roman Catholic leadership proved a match for Communist tactics.

Whereas in February 1948 the Communist believers had been confronted with weak men who had little faith in their ideals and still less in their mission, now in the struggle between the Church and Communism, faith stood arrayed against faith, and this time the faith of the Communists was the one to be on the wane. Whereas in February the Czech Communists, backed by their international organization, had faced Czech and Slovak democrats who felt isolated from the rest of the world, this time they encountered adversaries who had the backing of the international organization of the Roman Catholic Church.

Complete command over all means of subjugation and violence, as the Communists thought, would finally enable them to silence all Catholic priests. But thanks to these brave martyrs nothing will be left of the Communist pretence that they recognize the freedom of religion and that the Christian religion is compatible with Communism.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE LESSONS FOR THE WORLD

FROM STALIN'S STANDPOINT, Czechoslovakia was only one of many battlefields in his fight against Western capitalism and for the establishment of a world Communist regime governed from Moscow. The Prague coup was only one of the many actions of the Cominform, the Red Army, the Soviet Foreign Office and the Soviet propaganda services, which he co-ordinates and directs as supreme commander in Moscow. By that coup, he consolidated the Soviet hold over Central and Eastern Europe, which now stretches from the Soviet Zone of Germany to the frontiers of Soviet Russia, interrupted solely by the tiny strip of Austria. Czechoslovakia was thus being made ready not only for a defensive war—by the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1943 mutual assistance had already been pledged against a German attack or any State associated with Germany—but also for an aggressive war against the West. The Prague coup aimed not only at the enslavement of the Czechs and Slovaks, but at the same time was also part and parcel of the war against the Western democracies. By its success not only the Czech democrats but the democrats of the whole world lost an important battle. Yet, while paper protests were dispatched to Prague and the endeavour for a Western defensive alliance was hastened, not all politicians in the West realized that they themselves had lost a battle to the Russians. They have not realized this, because they have not yet fully learned to think in terms of a world-wide political inter-dependence.

The Atlantic Pact, the Brussels Treaty, the Council of Europe, are all important bulwarks against further Soviet expansion in Europe, but they still leave the democracies at a disadvantage compared with Stalin's centralized command over a multi-national army of Communists and Soviet satellites. Whereas Communists all over the world have drawn lessons from the struggles of their comrades in other countries,

the democrats of each country face their Communist foes single-handed and have learnt little from the anti-democratic actions of the Communists elsewhere. Furthermore, the democratic parties of the same country are so deeply preoccupied with fighting each other that they hardly ever co-ordinate their struggle against their common Communist foe. Thus, Stalin's strength is multiplied by centralization, whereas the democrats' potential forces are weakened by disunity. It is one of the chief aims of Soviet broadcast propaganda and Communist whispering propaganda to deepen this discord among the democrats of various parties and countries.

The lack of unified leadership against Communism springs from the very virtues of the good democrats. They believe that each country should seek her own salvation and do not wish to impose their will on others (while the totalitarian Communists are only too eager to order others about). Yet, when faced with a world enemy, the democrats must evolve a world strategy. Leadership should be distinguished from dominance, and democratic leadership can be displayed either by the wisest statesmen of several nations in a European, or world, assembly, or exerted by the most powerful democratic nations of the world. The latter leadership was envisaged when the permanent seats were created in the Security Council of the United Nations. By the constant use of the Veto-Right the Russians have sabotaged the work of the Council with the result that they themselves are still left with an international organization—the Communist Parties—while the democratic nations have no effective one.

Just imagine what the course of events might have been in Prague, in February 1948, if the Czechoslovak democrats had known that any infringement of human rights by the Communist insurrectionists would have been speedily punished by a police force of the United Nations, provided President Benes asked for its assistance. Actually both the Communists and the democrats knew that no practical steps would or could be taken by the United Nations. Although it may be difficult for some time to come to create such an international police force,

we should at least realize that the world has reached a stage of development when it is badly needed. As long as such an institution—ideally possible only under a World Government—does not exist, it should at least be self-evident that the defence of human rights, of democracy against a totalitarian onslaught, in any one country, must be the concern of the democrats of the whole world.

Perhaps this is the most essential lesson of the Prague coup. Democracy in a small country cannot be defended against international Communism by the sole means of its own democrats. Just as the Communists receive help from abroad, so must the democrats. In the long run, democracy will be either everywhere or nowhere.

Fatalistic political philosophers have often taught us that there are some countries that are ripe for democracy and others that are not. There are obviously many backward peoples in the world who do not practise Western democracy. Nor do they wish to live under a Communist tyranny. But in Central and Eastern Europe, we are told, the peoples are just ready for a "people's democracy", not for a liberal one. This contention might appear to have some plausibility in relation to Rumania and Bulgaria, less in relation to Poland and Hungary, but none in the case of Czechoslovakia. Her people had clearly demonstrated that they appreciated democracy. But there the Communist minority, with foreign backing, put the clock back in order to approach the Soviet ideal which is supposed to be higher than that of "bourgeois democracy". If the Communists can claim to have introduced a higher stage of development in Czechoslovakia, how can we know whether in Soviet Russia, which also claims to have a regime superior to Western democracy, there are not a sufficient number of intelligent people who would gladly replace the Communist tyranny by a democracy and make it work? Have they ever had the chance of putting democracy in practice? Democracy is a difficult form of government, and it takes some time before people learn to govern themselves, and several generations before they learn to do so well. But first of all they must have

the opportunity to do so, and the desire to be free from tyranny. Such a desire is most likely felt by at least a quarter of the Soviet citizens and probably by half of the adult population. According to conservative estimates, at least ten million men and women work in concentration camps. It is hardly too much to assume that each of them has four relatives or friends who sympathize and wish to be reunited with the prisoners, and hate a regime that inflicts such unjust sufferings upon their dearest friend, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother or sister. These people and the inmates of the concentration camps, altogether some fifty millions, represent an explosive force which, though misinformed by Soviet propaganda about life in capitalist countries, must feel a strong urge to free themselves from Communist tyranny. These are the silent, potential allies of world democracy. Of those who had a chance, many tried to escape to the West. Thousands of Soviet officers and soldiers, who had come with the Red Army into Central Europe, took refuge in the American Zone of Germany. Right up to February 1948, however, these political refugees were handed back to the Russians who at once condemned them to death for desertion and promptly informed the Red Army men stationed in Germany of their tragic end. So little did the Americans realize the political importance of these Soviet refugee allies that they handed them back to their executioners, at a time when the Soviet radio was openly fomenting discontent in the West and Soviet Fifth Columns were organizing subversive activities against the American and other democracies.

It is imperative to draw a clear distinction between the decent Soviet citizens and their Communist tyrants, lest we repeat the fatal mistakes committed in Germany. From 1933 until 1939, only a few people in the West believed that the Nazis had installed concentration camps and had aggressive designs against the West. Some democrats even assumed that the Nazi regime was quite appropriate for Germany and would enable the Germans to regain their rightful place in the world. With the outbreak of war, their attitude to Germany was

completely reversed. The only good German was the "dead German". Nazis and anti-Nazis alike were thought to be evil, until 1945. Then suddenly we were forced to look out for the good Germans who might be ready to co-operate with the Allies and evolve a democratic regime in their country. Thus, many Western citizens, including some leading statesmen, changed their opinions about the "racial" characteristics of the German nation twice within the short period of ten years. Obviously, the nature of the German people could not basically change within this brief span of time: if Western opinion changed, it could not always be right. But this opinion formed the basis of Allied policy and of its fatal mistakes.

Just as the anti-Nazis could not become politically effective under the Hitler regime, so the Russian anti-Communists cannot express their disagreement with the regime publicly, but their existence should nevertheless be acknowledged. Those same journalists who until recently have idealized the Soviet regime, will tell us tomorrow that all Russians are barbaric, fit, not for democracy but only to be held down by sheer force. If this were true, then the situation of the world would indeed be hopeless. Fortunately, in spite of all the different national and racial characteristics that contribute to the wonderful variety of national cultures, human beings in certain respects are much the same the world over. In every nation some individuals are imbued with a pathological thirst for power, others delight in masochistic submission, whereas a third group wish to govern themselves without infringing upon the rights of anybody. In totalitarian dictatorships—in the Nazi one just as much as in the Communist one—the first two groups, the tyrannical and the submissive, obtain greater scope for shaping the political life of the country than the third. But once the tyranny is broken, the third group, the potentially democratic one, will assert itself.

It should be the principle aim of democratic broadcasting to Central and Eastern Europe to shape and educate democratic *élites* there, to acquaint these *élites* with the essentials of democracy, its problems, its difficulties and the fundamentals of its



administrative machinery. The time will come when the theoretical knowledge, acquired by those citizens behind the Iron Curtain at grave personal risk through the broadcasts from the West, can be applied practically. Meanwhile, the growing knowledge of how their own country could and ought to be run, will inspire the disgruntled Soviet and satellite citizens with self-confidence and hope. From being merely dissatisfied down-trodden victims of Communism, they will be shaped into an underground political *élite* which will become an important political factor.

To use broadcasting for the systematic political education of democratic *élites* requires a great art of statesmanship. At present, American and British broadcasting to Russia and her satellites is unsystematic and, with a few exceptions, amateurish. It can become an effective political weapon of the cold war only if its final political aims are determined on the highest level, and if it is carried out by the finest social psychologists, political scientists and social philosophers that are available.

In formulating broadcasts and also public foreign policy statements, particularly those made at the meetings of the United Nations and the European Movement, the needs, the desires and the understanding of the peoples living behind the Iron Curtain should be taken into account. While it would be unwise for the democrats to compete in demagogy with Mr. Molotov and Mr. Gromyko, who have delivered many speeches at international conferences solely for propaganda purposes and made many promises that cannot be fulfilled, alternatives to Soviet policy should be offered in such a way that the Russian people would find them desirable. Take, for instance, the Baruch Plan for the control of atomic energy. It has never been explained to the Soviet and satellite citizens how much they have lost economically and politically by Russia's refusal of this plan. (I have also met many British audiences who had a completely distorted, almost "Gromykan" conception of the matter.) Yet the plan brought into relief one of the essential aspects of contemporary international relations. It showed that a great World Power, the United States, was prepared to forgo

an advantage in rearmament provided an international authority were vested with atomic power. In the suggestion for international inspection, it clearly demonstrated the need for putting this international authority above the national state, for restricting to a certain degree national sovereignty. A body such as the United Nations, in sole control of a powerful weapon or a vast source of potential energy, could prove how beneficent it was for mankind, and thereby become the embryo of World Government. Though holding all these propagandistic trump cards, the democratic Powers let the opportunity slip by without driving home to the Soviet citizens the fact that their security and their economic well-being was being jeopardized through the sabotage of this plan by their own leaders, who thereby forced on all Powers of the world the expenses of rearmament, expenses in both labour and raw materials that might otherwise have been more profitably applied to production for peaceful purposes and for the raising of the general standard of living. The ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed Soviet people would certainly welcome such an alternative to the Soviet planning for more guns and less butter.

Such an education of the Soviet citizens would be the more effective, the more it approached any problem from the point of view of the One World, the more it featured the possibility and the advantages of peaceful trading between nations, and of an equitable distribution of essential economic resources between them, and stigmatized the folly and criminality of tyrants who bar their subjects from peaceful and mutually advantageous co-operation with other nations. Only if alternatives to Communist policy are offered can hope be engendered. Only if such alternatives are realistic will disillusionment in the future be avoided. Only if they aim at tying the peoples of the world more closely together, will they be progressive.

Without such an education, every criticism and attack on Soviet power is likely to draw the Soviet citizens more closely behind their Government. The lack in democratic quarters of a positive policy for the peoples behind the Iron Curtain springs from the same standpoint that inspired the ominous

policy of "unconditional surrender". That was a fortuitous gift to the Germans, worth many army divisions. Mr. Goebbels was well aware of that when he wrote in his diary that if he were in charge of Allied propaganda, he would direct propaganda against the Nazis, not against the Germans.\* The Allied omission of exploiting the difference between the Nazis and non-Nazis in Germany prolonged the war for several months. Similar blunders in the "cold war" against the Soviets, however, would be much more disastrous because the Communist

\* "A much more clever form of propaganda against the Reich has been proposed in the United States. The idea is not to attack the German people but Nazism. I perceive a certain danger. Fortunately enemy propaganda is not unified and consistent enough to stick to such a propaganda slogan for a period of years. If this were done, we would face great difficulties every time we came under any new and heavy strain. If I were on the enemy side, I should from the very first day have adopted the slogan of fighting against Nazism, but not against the German people. That was how Chamberlain began on the first day of the war, but, thank God, the English didn't pursue this line." Thus wrote Dr. Goebbels in his private diary on 27 March 1942. (*The Goebbels Diaries*, translated and edited by Louis P. Lochner, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1942, p. 102.) And on 23 May 1942, referring to a statement by Lord Vansittart, he remarked: "The English are very foolish to insult the German people thus brusquely. If they were to make a difference between the people and ourselves they could undoubtedly gain more than they do now." (idem, p. 171.)

It was only consistent from Dr. Goebbels' standpoint that publicly he and his subordinates should have expressed exactly the opposite view. A furiously insulting article published under the headline "Jew Friedmann gives advice," in the *12 Uhr Blatt, Berlin*, on 12 December 1942, dealt with my book on *Broadcasting for Democracy* and particularly my suggestion that Allied psychological warfare should be directed against the Nazis and not against the German people. The writer of this unsigned article—either Dr. Goebbels himself or somebody writing according to his directives—attempted to show that my suggestion was merely a propaganda trick and that "this Hitler is Germany and this Germany is Hitler. To divide an organism means to kill it. Do you, gangsters, really fancy that you can achieve this?" The last two sentences are particularly revealing if read in conjunction with Dr. Goebbels's entries in his private diary. By analogy, one can deduce from some violent outbursts of the Russian Press and from its emphatic denial of certain facts that the Soviet leaders know these facts to be true but wish to hide them from their people. Of course, Soviet propaganda considerably differs from that of the Nazis, but in this respect its technique is very similar.

ideological weapons and diversionary activities are much more powerful than those of the Nazis ever were.

It may be objected that a truly efficient psychological warfare of the democracies might hasten Soviet armed attack upon the West. This objection is based on a complete misunderstanding of the Soviet leaders' mentality. People, who never cease to interfere with the affairs of other nations and to prepare revolutions and attacks against them, are psychologically bound to expect and to fear retaliation even if none is contemplated by their opponents. Though nobody could have displayed a greater credulity towards them and a more sincere devotion to the Soviet Union than did the Czechoslovak democrats, the Russian Communists still suspected them of conspiracy. Similarly, they will remain suspicious of the Western democracies whatever these may or may not do. And should they feel superior in arms and believe that they stand a good chance of winning a war against the West, they will attack us even if, in our broadcasts, we express only admiration for the Soviet regime as did the Czechs. If they do not consider themselves strong enough and are afraid of our armed retaliation, they will commit no openly hostile attacks. But our political warfare, if ably conducted, would considerably weaken their position both at home and in the Soviet satellite States, and thereby most likely prolong peace. The Soviet leaders, on their part, have carried out revolutionary propaganda by radio against all the Western States from VE-Day onwards at a time when they certainly did not wish to bring about an armed conflict. They must have been rather surprised when we did not retaliate immediately. When a few years later, very belatedly, we started with some sort of counter-propaganda, it was certainly resented by the Soviet leaders. Did they not call even some of their friends, whose suggestions they objected to in one way or another, "Fascists" and "warmongers"? Yet they did not start an armed conflict and they will not do so in the future only because our propaganda has become more efficient.

While militarily a few Powers may agree on a purely nega-

tive policy and on a mere defence pact against aggression, such limitations are dangerous and demoralizing in the sphere of ideas. Whoever does not make public all the facts about N.K.V.D. terrorism, economic mis-planning and social injustices in Soviet Russia, unwittingly assists the Communists in his own country and in all other countries where his information could be made available. If he says that democracy is good for his country but not for the peoples of Central Europe, then he is actually admitting that they deserve no better treatment than that meted out by a tyrant, and disparages their efforts to free themselves from a dictatorship. No country that has only just shaken off tyranny can evolve a democracy equally effective as that of a country where it has grown for generations. But here we are concerned with the most elementary aspect of democracy, with the right of the citizen to choose an alternative government by secret ballot and with the equal right of any political leader or political *élite* to present their ideas to the electorate. Every country of Central and Eastern Europe is ripe for that. If you deny to the citizens of these countries the ability of choosing or changing their Governments, then you encourage in your own adherents, particularly in the youth of your own country, a demoralizing feeling of national and racial superiority which, in the long run, will hamper international co-operation between the peoples of the world. But most important of all, you are not upholding the truth and are therefore blunting the edge of that wonderful, inspiring and supreme weapon of human progress that truth is.

For some time there has been going on in many countries of the world a controversy between those who want more economic planning and those who want less. This, like any other controversial problem, can in a democracy be resolved by discussion, experiment and experience. Mistakes in economic policy can cause unnecessary hardships, but in a democracy they can be rectified by fresh decisions taken by the electors who have drawn their lesson from bitter experience. Which ever side we take in this dispute about planning, we should

realize that neither side stands to gain anything from Soviet patronage: indeed, both stand to lose everything. Here the Czechoslovak example is instructive. Before the Communists seized power, 70 per cent of all industry had been nationalized, and economic planning had been going on for over two years. The crucial difference between the Communists and all the other parties was not about socialism, economic planning or social security. It was the difference between democrats and those who wanted unlimited, totalitarian power from which nobody, not even the majority of the working people, should be permitted to dislodge them. Consequently, in other countries all democratic parties, even those belonging to the most radical Left, should realize that the embrace of Communism endangers their very existence and will be mortal, whatever tactical advantages they may temporarily derive from flirting with it. Parliamentary democracy, although by itself no cure for the evils of the world, is an elementary condition of human progress.

Those who believe in democracy, whatever their race, creed or social and cultural programme, should be fully conscious that in this era of mortal danger to democracy their first duty is to support the democrats—even if these are more to the Left or to the Right, and more or less religious, than they themselves—against Communist oppression everywhere. In some circumstances this attitude may be difficult to adopt, but it is demanded by sheer prudence. Once the down-trodden peoples living under the Communist boot and the democrats in countries directly endangered by Communism are aware that they can reckon with the moral and material support of democrats all over the world, they will carry on their task with renewed confidence and defend their ideals with hope and vigour. In the past, the Communist minorities in democratic countries felt strengthened, and their moral ardour heightened, by the belief that, although isolated, they had powerful friends abroad. Let the democrats of the world have a like source of hope and strength. Communism will then begin to crumble and pass into oblivion as a strange deviation of the human spirit during

a crucial period of human history. But democracy will survive, deepen and extend.

In every country democracy can be endlessly improved by abolishing various sources of social injustice, by educating the masses and by producing better and wiser leaders. By defending democracy against Communist totalitarianism, we are not defending the former's present shortcomings, but are safeguarding an essential condition for future progress. Even Marx and Lenin recognized the advantage of democracy, and they hoped that a "proletarian democracy" would be a better democracy. But by abolishing opposition parties, the Communists uprooted democracy, even for the "proletariat". More democracy for the proletariat is only possible if there is more democracy for all. Democracy everywhere can be improved by the insight, devotion and efforts of each individual citizen.

Whereas democracy has a great future, bigoted democratic nationalism has none. From 1945 to 1947 the Czechoslovak democrats attempted to build up their own democracy while siding with the Soviet dictator in many international controversies. Never once did they show any loyalty to the democrats who were being insulted, attacked and liquidated in Poland and Hungary. They expelled from Czechoslovak territory—apart from Nazis and their criminal supporters—democratic German citizens. Even in the controversy between Czechs and Slovaks, the Czech democrats supported Czech Communists against Slovak democrats. Having thus of their own free will isolated themselves from the democrats in other countries, they dared not and could not look for friends elsewhere when they were faced with the Communist onslaught. It has already been shown that they could plead extenuating circumstances. Yet the fact remains that you cannot defend democracy in your own country if you are not prepared to defend it, at least morally, in neighbouring countries and indeed in all countries of the world. Democracy must go hand in hand with justice towards other nations and races; or else deep conflicts are engendered between democrats in different parts of the world, so that they cannot offer a united front to the Com-

munist conspirators and aggressors. Isolated from their democratic friends abroad, only a few countries could today withstand the Communist onslaught. Perhaps some decades ago, he who was concerned with democracy in his own country only, could still be a good democrat, but today, he who preaches democracy at home and practices injustice against neighbouring countries, endangers the very foundations on which the democracy in his own country rests.

Pride in the cultural and economic achievements of one's own country is a good thing, and nobody can devote so much time and energy to the problems of other countries as he can to his own. But just as a man's deep love for his own family should not prevent him from seeing that there are many other good families in the neighbourhood, so should a healthy nationalism not bar our vision and understanding of the many common characteristics, virtues and vices of all humanity. Moreover, in this atomic age, the military, economic and even cultural limitations of the national State are becoming increasingly obvious. Although nationalism still represents a powerful bond between man and man, the growing realization of the insufficiency of the national State, particularly in the smaller European countries, has in some people tempered the resistance they might have offered to a conqueror, who promised to unite a Continent, whether it be Hitler or Stalin: for instance, some members of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie were only too ready to sacrifice national independence for the economic advantages which might accrue to them from the absorption of Czechoslovakia into an enlarged German Reich. On the Left, on the other hand, there have been others who, equally realizing the economic disadvantages of the small Czechoslovak territory, favoured its incorporation into the planned economy of the Soviet Union. Thus in either case, the demand for a larger economic unit offered a stimulus to the activities of the national traitors, the Nazi collaborators and the Communists. This sensible demand cannot be countered merely by an appeal to national sentiment, but it can be efficiently dealt with by a genuine attempt to create a larger



economic unit through the voluntary decisions of equally sovereign peoples—by federation. The federation of the Central European States, as a step towards a wider European unity, is an indispensable condition of economic progress and peace in Europe.

The small, economically too limited territory of the national states accentuates and deepens the economic difficulties of each country and thereby emphasizes the social antagonisms which breed Communists. In our time of mass production, only "home" markets that are much larger than the territories of several European states can guarantee economic prosperity and political stability.

During and after the Second World War, the Russians strongly objected to the federation of Central Europe, pretending that it would lead to the revival of the *cordon sanitaire*, but actually fearing that a united Central Europe would be less at their mercy than a number of isolated small states. When in 1948 the Bulgarian Communist Prime Minister, Mr. Dimitrov, advocated a federation of the now Communist-controlled States of Central Europe, he was promptly and severely reprimanded by Moscow. Since the excuse that Russia feared the *cordon sanitaire* could not be upheld this time, Stalin's prompt action against one of the outstanding non-Russian Communist leaders showed unmistakably that the idea of a Central European Federation touched upon a vulnerable spot in Soviet policy. Hence, by advocating this federation the democrats can demonstrate that the Soviet leaders are not interested in Communism as such, as they claim in their propaganda, nor are they interested in larger territorial units that permit better economic planning, but that they are interested only in extending their grip over other nations and territories.

By abandoning under Russian pressure the idea of a Central European Federation, and by refraining from participation in the European Recovery Programme, the Czechoslovak democrats gave up the very ground upon which Czechoslovak democracy could have developed and flourished. While the Communists' programme was expansive and dynamic—finally aim-

ing at the incorporation of Czechoslovakia and Central Europe into the planned economy of Soviet Russia—that of the democrats was based on the illusion that Stalin, out of consideration for each nation's right to self-determination, would permit them the luxury of running their little democracy in their own way inside the larger Communist orbit. The Tito-Stalin quarrel has, meanwhile, shown that Stalin is not satisfied even with a Communist regime in another country unless it recognizes unconditionally the overlordship of Soviet Russia. Those Communists in the satellite countries who want to loosen their dependence on Russia would welcome a federation of Central and Southern Europe which should be allied to Russia but independent of it as far as possible. But Russian apprehension lest Tito's disobedience be emulated in the neighbouring countries and lead to the unification of anti-Moscow Communists, have prompted them to pour out violent abuse upon Yugoslavia, to stage the Rajk trial in Hungary and "prophylactically" to arrest in the satellite Soviet states all those in whom Titoist inclinations might be rightly or wrongly suspected. But the federation of Central Europe can only be delayed and not finally prevented by Russian violence and intrigue. The more spectacular the unity of Western Europe becomes, the more will the peoples of Central Europe be tempted to unite and join a United Europe.

Admittedly, the creation of a united Western Europe will not be easy to achieve. Before it is brought about, many national idiosyncracies, political habits and temporary advantages of member-nations, will have to be sacrificed, but even then the price of European unity will be infinitely smaller than that of a third world war, after which the European problem would still await solution. Thus creative imagination, vision and the art of educating one's nation for close and permanent co-operation with several other nations, have become essential conditions for democratic survival. Yet such abilities are only rarely to be encountered in democratic leaders and foreign ministers. They rise to power because they have displayed quite different properties: organizational ability, the gift of oratory,

the shrewdness to exploit a class prejudice or national sentiment, and the capacity to hold the balance, or to find a compromise, between quarrelling factions of their political party. Theirs is the skill of making "realistic" adjustments to the changing opinion of the public which knows little of the scope and possibilities of foreign relations. Such leaders are only too easily tempted to avoid bold and unpopular decisions that are categorically demanded by the long-term needs of their country and of the world.

It is this lack of vision and courage, this lack of perspective and confidence that, in democratic countries, induces some able young men and women either to turn away from politics, or be impressed, at least temporarily, by Communist propaganda which seems to offer a final solution to social injustice, economic crises and the danger of war.\* True this propaganda is deceptive, but when people find out that they have been deceived, it is usually too late to shake off the Communist yoke. Moreover, even if before the Communists have seized power, their adherents discover that the Communists have broken some promises, the Communists can point out that the democratic parties are not much better. Actually, as has been shown in the preceding chapters, Communist duplicity cannot be surpassed. No democratic party can indulge in such double-dealing, as they can, because it would never be re-elected. However, promises which cannot or are perhaps not

\* Many adherents of the Communist parties have, of course, been attracted to them by their own often unconscious craving for intrigue, their love of conspiracy, a deeply rooted protest against parental authority and the urge to "gang up" with their comrades—brother and sister figures—to overthrow father figures. These mentally impoverished people whose productiveness has been blocked (often by a traumatic childhood experience), who cannot healthily enjoy their own achievements and unite with others in love, seek to discharge their energies by blindly emulating Stalin, "the greatest statesman of all times and of all nations", and by busily and energetically planning the infiltration and conquest of a trade union group, scientific association or any other organization. Such people form the backbone of the Communist parties. But if these parties did not succeed in attracting and misleading some of the mentally healthier men and women, Communist influence in Western Europe would be much smaller than it is at present.

intended to be kept, are again and again made by some democratic parties. In that case, the immense duplicity of the Communists is arraigned against the petty duplicity of the democrats, often disguised as honesty. But dishonesty cannot be fought by less dishonesty: it must be fought with nothing less than complete honesty. The orthodox Communist believes that it is his duty to foster his Party's aims by deliberate lies, deceit and intrigue. The man who cherishes truth and honesty cannot become a Communist. But the practice of these virtues has been undermined partly by the democratic politicians themselves. In other words, the partial demoralization of democratic politics provides fertile ground for complete and shameless demoralization, which is the common feature of Communist and Fascist totalitarianism.

Some liberals believe that vision and political propaganda cannot be reconciled with truthfulness and honesty. How can anybody, they argue, foresee future political developments? And if he cannot, yet makes promises and prophecies, is he not deceiving himself and his followers? Indeed, even great and wise statesmen may err. Certain to err is the politician who is ignorant of history, social science, economics and political psychology. The present stage of these sciences, incomplete though they be, should offer to the politician an understanding and knowledge of the real possibilities of progressive development. If, in addition, he cherishes truthfulness, honesty, social and racial justice, as well as such ideals as a United Europe and World Government, he can do no more than strive for them—the measure of his success will then depend both on his actions and on several conditions beyond his control. Nobody is guilty of dishonesty and deceit who, after having done his utmost to keep his promises, has been defeated through adverse circumstances. But unfortunately, modern history and particularly the history of international relations, abounds with examples of solemnly proclaimed principles which have been deserted without a struggle, only for the sake of slight temporary advantages or simply because the responsible politicians were unequal to the difficult task of fighting for their applica-

tion. Small wonder that some people consider politics a dirty business, and so either turn away from it or else decide to practice it in the dirtiest manner possible: the manner of the Communists. These at least cannot be accused of inconsistency. Their Party morality demands that they should unscrupulously deceive, intrigue against, and liquidate, any friend or honest man, should their Party aim be thereby furthered. The religious fervour with which they consistently apply themselves to this desperate task, often arouses admiration and gains them new followers.

The Communists, however, do not seek to gain an unlimited number of adherents or even the numerical majority of the working class: they concentrate rather upon the intensive training of a smaller number of devoted comrades who occupy, or are directed to take up, key positions in Government departments, factory councils, voluntary economic and cultural organizations. They have brought to perfection a technique which enables them to conquer a large organization by a very small number of their comrades.

Suppose, for instance, they want to obtain control over a local Trade Union group consisting of two hundred members. Most of these members do not attend the meetings, or if they do so, then only irregularly: perhaps ten members are regular attendants. If of these three are Communists, and as such know each other while nobody else suspects that they are Communists and are systematically plotting together, all three will, after some time, contrive to be elected to the Committee of the group. They will impress the members by their readiness to take on the most dreary tasks and by their devotion to the trade union organization. When the local group is asked to send a delegate to the national congress of their organization, two of them will commend to the group their third comrade as delegate. As he has gained the confidence of the other ten members and is so strongly recommended, he is the most likely to be elected. In this way, three Communists are able to represent a group of two hundred trade union members. If, in the same manner, the Communists have succeeded in having their

man elected in fifty local groups, they will have fifty delegates at a conference attended by five hundred delegates, representing one hundred thousand members. Whilst most of the delegates do not know each other, the fifty Communists will have received detailed instructions from their Party, and will hold a special secret meeting before the conference. Eight of them will make popular speeches, and their comrades will loudly cheer them, thus inducing many other delegates to join in the applause. When the time comes to elect the Council, two of the eight popular Communist speakers will commend the election of six Communists, and their suggestions will again be loudly cheered. They may thus succeed in occupying six seats on a Council of eleven or twelve members. With one hundred and fifty men they have conquered a trade union organization comprising one hundred thousand members.

Once in control of the organization, they will become more political, although not necessarily disclosing that they are Communists. They may actually be members of the Socialist, or any other, Party, and emphasize their allegiance to it whenever this serves their purpose. They will take exception to one or two political measures of the Socialist Party or perhaps to one or two of its leading politicians. Thus they will be undistinguishable from sincere members of the Socialist Party who happen not to agree with this or that. At the same time, they will take care that truly able democratic trade unionists—their most dangerous opponents—have only a limited influence upon the organization, or if possible, are completely eliminated from the organization. Gradually they will become more daring and disclose in stages their political convictions. They will misuse trade union publications for disguised Communist propaganda. When addressing trade union meetings, they will sow distrust and dissatisfaction with the democratic order of the country. At the same time, they will systematically prepare for the day when the Party gives them the call to revolutionary action.

The February events in Czechoslovakia have convincingly demonstrated how extremely difficult it is for the democrats

to resist the Communists once these have obtained control over the trade unions and important Government departments. It is, therefore, vital to counter Communist intrigues at the initial stages of their penetration into voluntary organizations and Government departments. A good Communist will always attempt to help his comrades to rise to leading positions in the factory, the office, education or voluntary organizations, without regard to qualifications or the true needs of such institutions, because, according to Communist doctrine, all "bourgeois" institutions must first of all be exploited for the benefit of the Party. Honest democratic citizens are, of course, reluctant to suspect their colleagues of double-dealing on circumstantial evidence alone: even if they notice some impropriety in their dealings, they gladly accept their Communist colleague's excuse that this impropriety was due to an error, ignorance, or some particular circumstance. But if they took the trouble to read the various tactical instructions written by Lenin, Stalin, and other Communist experts, they would note that their Communist colleague's impropriety followed a general pattern and was the result of premeditated action.

The systematic undermining of all democratic institutions and organizations is the avowed aim of the Communist Party. If a Communist promises that he will abide by the rules of an organization, it should be clearly understood that he will secretly do what best serves his Party and Moscow, although outwardly he may appear to be playing the game. Democracy in a voluntary organization or in a State works only if the majority of members or citizens respectively play the democratic game fairly. Once a considerable minority apply underhand and foul means, the majority will have to take emergency measures which may restrict some rights of the individuals; in other words, it will have to defend democracy by undemocratic means. To avoid this disagreeable and perilous contingency, it is vital to combat Communism before it becomes a political force. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance directed both against the autocratic leanings of those in power, and against the Communist and Fascist conspiracies

from below. Exaggerated suspiciousness is a morbid symptom, but so is complacent credulity in the presence of conspirators. If they are detected in the early stages, they can be defeated by democratic means: democratic majorities can remove them from posts they have usurped and put in their place citizens who will honestly observe the rules of a trade union or any other organization. Such a procedure presupposes a deepening of the political education of the democrats and a widening of the circle of active members in every local group of every political, economic and cultural organization.

The Lenin-Stalinist creed demands from its adherents that they should subordinate their family relations, their work in factory or office, and their pursuits of leisure to the profession of a revolutionary. Indoctrinated with the sense of a religious mission, the Communists devote most of their aggressive and destructive energies to political action.

Democratic citizens, on the other hand, rightly have their interests divided between family, work, church, art, science, films and sport, and they do not devote all their energies to politics. Their adherence to democracy is usually a passive one. But when faced with the Communist peril, they can preserve and extend their liberties—on which the enjoyment of their private pursuits depends—only if they turn some of their constructive and aggressive energies to politics and become active, militant democrats.

This change of attitude is not easy, but it is by no means impossible. The large mass of the population is either politically uninterested, or follows the lead given by the political and cultural *élites*: the Members of Parliament and local councillors, the functionaries of political parties and of trade unions, the leaders of Churches and cultural organizations, the school teachers and university lecturers. It was this democratic *élite* that proved unequal to the Communists in post-war Czechoslovakia.

The Communist *élite* derives its strength not only from the emotional outlets it offers to the aggressive and destructive energies of its members, but also from the peculiar nature of



the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist doctrine and view of life. In a world of growing scientific specialization, in which the students are not taught to grasp the relationship between one social science and another, Marxism appears to offer a scientific, unified explanation of historical development and of the relationship between economics, politics and culture. Distorting and false though this doctrine is, it does satisfy the legitimate and sound striving for scientific integration, and it does serve as a "scientific" guide to political morality and action. Such pseudo-integration the democratic intellectual fights with incoherent and inconsistent arguments derived partly from Greek and Christian philosophy and partly from the science in which he happens to be an expert, whether it be economics, law, history, psychology, physics or chemistry. But each of these sciences describes only one aspect of society and nature, an aspect which does not exist as a separate entity in society, whereas political action affects the whole gamut of human relations. Consequently, in practice every democratic politician makes assumptions about the effect of his contemplated action upon society as a whole (comprising the minds of his followers and of the administrators, economic and international relations, problems of power and many other aspects)—assumptions which often are less adequate than the Marxist pseudo-integration, and certainly less adequate than the conclusions that could be drawn from all available data. This state of affairs is not necessarily the fault of the individual politician, but springs rather from the way in which the social sciences have been taught in most contemporary universities. The social sciences have grown extensively at a rapid pace over the last fifty to a hundred years, so that no one person can hope to master all of them. Moreover, as most attempts to link the social sciences together by a formula, like that of Marxism, have been obviously unscientific, the conviction has grown in academic circles that an integration and unification of the social sciences is scientifically impossible. As long as the study of human and social motives was in its infancy, this was impossible. But 20th-century research in psycho-analysis, social

psychology, sociology and anthropology, has furnished sufficient results to supply at least some of the essential links between the social sciences. If scientific efforts at integration were encouraged by the universities, it should be possible to give to would-be politicians and administrators a deeper understanding of man and society than has been offered in the past. Undoubtedly many gaps in our knowledge of the interrelationship between various factors of social development will still remain, but what we know now of this interrelationship is already worth teaching and should make the students not only immune from the attractions of Dialectical Materialism, but also capable of more constructive politics than has been displayed by the generations who did not know how to prevent two World Wars and the rise of National Socialism and Communism.

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