Across the Iron Curtain: European Socialism between World War and Cold War, 1943-1948

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Submission: April 2015
Abstract

This thesis is a comparative history of the post-war European socialist parties, 1943-1948 – with a focus on the Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party and the Polish Socialist Party in Eastern Europe as well as the French Socialist Party and the Italian Socialist Party in Western Europe. Its foremost aim is to demonstrate that the countries of East and West, far from already being divided by an Iron Curtain, faced much the same challenges during these first post-war years. Contrary to the conventional historiographical picture of an international socialist movement split along Cold War lines, therefore, it draws attention to the divergences within and parallels across the two putative 'blocs'.

To do so, the thesis moves the spotlight away from geo-politics and focuses upon that set of problems that really dominated the agendas of the post-war European socialist parties – the problems of post-war reconstruction. The thesis addresses socialist attitudes towards two of the key dimensions of post-war reconstruction.

Its first part deals with socio-economic reconstruction. This part demonstrates that there was often a profound disconnect between socialist leaders in national government and the workers at their grassroots. Whereas rank-and-file (socialist) workers berated their leaders for their failure to improve the material situation, for their inability to clamp down upon the black market, and for the remaining inequalities of post-war life, national party leaders scolded workers for their unruliness and for their unwillingness to make sacrifices towards the greater political good.

Its second part deals with political reconstruction – more specifically with the question of rebuilding democracy. This part demonstrates that, contrary to what many historians of post-war (Western) European socialism claim, there was no across-the-board socialist conversion to a parliamentary road to socialism. Yet, the fault lines between those parties insisting on a strict adherence to the rulebook of political democracy and those advocating a radical departure from representative democracy did not divide neatly between East and West.
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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Word Count: 90.446
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<tr>
<td>AAN</td>
<td>Archiwum Akt Nowych</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACS</td>
<td>Archivio Centrale dello Stato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdL</td>
<td>Archivio del Lavoro</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADN</td>
<td>Archives Departmentales du Nord</td>
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<td>AMP</td>
<td>Archiv Města Plzně</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANM</td>
<td>Archiv Narodního Muzea</td>
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<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDL</td>
<td>Departmental Liberation Committees [Comité Départemental de Libération]</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGT</td>
<td>General Confederation of Labour [Confédération Générale du Travail]</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHS</td>
<td>Centre d’Histoire Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHSP</td>
<td>Centre d’Histoire des Sciences Po</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLN</td>
<td>National Liberation Committee [Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLNA</td>
<td>Company National Liberation Committee [Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Aziendale]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNR</td>
<td>National Council of the Resistance [Conseil National de la Résistance]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cominform</td>
<td>Communist Information Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comintern</td>
<td>Communist International</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRR</td>
<td>Commissariat Régional de la République</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Central Planning Office [Centralny Urząd Planowania]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ČSDSD</td>
<td>Czech Social Democratic Workers’ Party [Československá Sociálně Demokratická Strana Dělnická]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ČSL</td>
<td>Czech People’s Party [Československá Strana Lidová]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ČSM</td>
<td>Czechoslovakian Youth Union [Československý Svaz Mládeže]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ČSNS</td>
<td>Czech National Socialist Party [Česká Strana Národně Sociální]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ČSSD</td>
<td>Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party [Československá Sociální Demokracie]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Party [Democrazia Cristiana]</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Slovak Democratic Party [Demokratická Strana]</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>Popular Democratic Front [Fronte Democratico Popolare]</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFT</td>
<td>Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati</td>
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<tr>
<td>FJJ</td>
<td>Fondation Jean Jaurès</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLB</td>
<td>Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso Isocco</td>
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<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>Fondazione Nenni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSE</td>
<td>Socialist Enterprise Groups [Groupes Socialistes d’Entreprise]</td>
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<tr>
<td>IISH</td>
<td>International Institute of Social History</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSMLI</td>
<td>Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISRT</td>
<td>Istituto Storico della Resistenza in Toscana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOA Plzeň</td>
<td>Státní Oblastní Archiv v Plzni</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Labour Party [Stronnictwo Pracy]</td>
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<td>UDSR</td>
<td>Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance [Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance]</td>
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<tr>
<td>UJRF</td>
<td>Union of the Republican Youth of France [Union de la Jeunesse Républicaine de France]</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRRA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÚRO</td>
<td>Central Council of Trade Unions [Ústřední Rada Odborů]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Všeodborový Archiv</td>
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<tr>
<td>WiN</td>
<td>Freedom and Independence [Wolność i Niezawisłość]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRN</td>
<td>Freedom, Equality, Independence [Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość]</td>
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I want to express my gratitude to all of the organisations and institutions that have supported this PhD project. In the first place, I would like to thank the Centre for European and International Studies Research at the University of Portsmouth for awarding me a three-year bursary in 2011. Secondly, I am very grateful to those associations, institutes, and societies that have generously funded my foreign archival trips: the German Historical Institute in Warsaw for providing me with a stipend to conduct archival research in Warsaw and Łódź for six weeks, the Society for the Study of French History for making possible my research trips to Paris and Lille, and the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies for supporting my archival sojourn in Prague and Plzeň. Thirdly, I am grateful to the editorial board of the International Review of Social History for allowing me to reprint segments from my recent article in their journal in this thesis.

Above all, I want to thank my first supervisor – professor Wolfram Kaiser. His guidance and support have been invaluable to this project. His comments on draft chapters, which he read even at the shortest possible notice, have greatly improved the thesis. His veritable web of academic contacts was of great support in helping me prepare and find funding for my archival trips and in allowing me to receive specialist feedback on my findings. I could not have wished for a better supervisor.

Any remaining mistakes are obviously my own.
Dissemination

Journal Articles


Presentations and Papers

– ‘The Left between Zero Hour and Cold War: Window of Opportunity?’, paper to be given at international conference “Socialism and the Cold War in Western Europe”, Queen’s University Belfast, April 2015.


Introduction

‘Everything can be done in the first year following the Liberation [...]. What is not done in the first year will never be done, because by then all the old habits will have been resumed.’\(^1\)

André Philip, 1944

It is now commonplace to argue that the liberation of Europe saw a window of opportunity open up. In this narrative, a wave of socio-political radicalism swept the continent in the wake of the Second World War. Manifesting itself both in the substantial swing to the Left in the first post-war elections and in the rise of revolutionary forms of direct democracy through such grassroots bodies as factory councils and liberation committees, this radicalism is often understood to have opened the way to a democratic, libertarian, and participatory socialism. Yet, this purported window of opportunity was smashed to a close once the inexorable forces of the budding Cold War made themselves felt at the national level. Between the leaders of the post-war Left – backed, bribed, or bullied by their American or Soviet ringmasters – deliberately defusing every wave of popular passions and the occupying armies unwilling to see a rival authority emerge under their watch, few of the radical aspirations of the liberation remained by 1948.

This thesis seeks to shed fresh light on the first post-war years by focusing upon a group that, if not neglected completely, is at the very least taken for granted in traditional historiography on the post-war period – the European socialist parties.\(^2\) The disregard these parties are often shown is unwarranted for two reasons. Firstly, socialists were represented

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\(^2\) The international socialist movement was traditionally made up both of parties calling themselves ‘socialist’ and of parties calling themselves ‘social democratic’. For the sake of clarity, this thesis will use ‘socialist’ throughout to describe the party family of which both socialist and social democratic parties formed part. It will only use ‘social democratic’ where it is dealing with an individual party describing itself in that manner (e.g. the Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party or the German Social Democratic Party).
both in their countries’ national governments and in grassroots factory or local bodies for most of the post-war era. Secondly, the socialist parties repeatedly refused to dance to the tune of the Cold War.

This is very much the case for the four socialist parties under review in this thesis – the Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) in Eastern Europe as well as the French Socialist Party (SFIO) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSIUP)³ in Western Europe. Upon liberation, each of these four parties took office in the broad-based national coalition governments, bringing together communist, socialist, and anti-fascist centre-right (Christian democratic, peasant, or bourgeois-liberal) parties, so typical for post-war continental Europe. Yet, as these coalitions began to disintegrate during 1946/47, they resolved upon widely divergent strategies. On the one hand, the Italian and Polish socialists, sharing the conviction that the Left should close its ranks to prevent fascists from ever taking power again, stood by the socialist-communist united front. On the other hand, the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, increasingly viewing communism as the greater threat to democracy, more and more veered towards the parties of the centre-right. What is striking about these divergences is that they not only do not fit with the Cold War dichotomies of East versus West and philo-communist versus anti-communist, but also emerged at a time when the two new superpowers were still on speaking terms. If clearly not the result of some premature geopolitical division of the continent, therefore, how can we explain these similarities across and differences within the two putative ‘blocs’?

³ From its creation in 1892 to August 1943, the Italian Socialist Party went by the name Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party – PSI). In August 1943, after a merger with the resistance group called Movimento di Unità Proletaria (Movement of Proletarian Unity – MUP), the party changed its name to Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity – PSIUP). Amid fears that the party’s anti-communist wing, which had broken away at the January 1947 PSIUP congress, would start using the old name, the PSIUP changed its name back to PSI in 1947. For the sake of clarity, this thesis will use the abbreviation PSIUP throughout to describe the post-war Italian Socialist Party. It will only use the abbreviation PSI where it is dealing with the pre-war Italian Socialist Party.
This thesis endeavours to address that question by challenging the Cold War paradigm still so dominant in scholarly accounts on post-war Europe. Rather than teleologically projecting back the Iron Curtain that separated the two halves of the continent after 1947/48, it concentrates on that set of problems shared by socialists in East and West during the first months and years after liberation – the problems of post-war reconstruction. The thesis explores two specific dimensions of post-war reconstruction. Its first part is devoted to socio-economic reconstruction, studying the tensions between the various production ‘battles’ proclaimed by socialist leaders in government and the everyday struggles with insufficient wages, the lack of basic necessities, spiralling inflation, and the black market facing rank-and-file (socialist) workers in four industrial cities – Plzeň for Czechoslovakia, Łódź for Poland, Lille for France, and Milano for Italy.

The second part deals with political reconstruction, analysing how distinct national political histories and societal structures affected socialist conceptions of democracy. Thus moving the spotlight away from post-war European socialism’s divided future to its entangled pasts and presents, this thesis for the first time brings together in comparative research and analysis the parallel histories of parties thus far considered worlds apart.

**Research Questions**

The ‘problems of post-war reconstruction’, even if confined to their socio-economic and political dimensions, represent a vast interpretative category. For that reason, this thesis chiefly explores those aspects of post-war socio-economic and political reconstruction that were controversial within and/or amongst the four parties.

In socio-economic terms, its focus lies primarily on the grassroots-elites dynamics that the material demands of the reconstruction effort generated within each of the four
parties. These dynamics, as we will see, constitute one particularly under-researched facet of post-war socialist history and are much overdue scholarly analysis. To what extent, therefore, can intra-party grassroots-elites dynamics account for the striking differences and similarities between the four parties? This main research question for the first part of the thesis has been divided in six sub-questions. The first three concern the views taken at the grassroots. What were the foremost concerns of rank-and-file (socialist) workers? Did they feel these concerns were taken seriously by their provincial and national leaders? And how did this affect their attitudes towards the discipline and sacrifice demanded by party leaders? The final three concern the views taken by socialist elites. Which socio-economic priorities were formulated by provincial and national socialist leaders? To what extent did these priorities conflict with those of workers? And how did their interactions with the grassroots shape their views of post-war society as a whole?

In political terms, the thesis concentrates specifically on the rebuilding of democracy. (Western) socialism’s strong identification, both before the Second World War and during the Cold War, with a parliamentary and reformist road to socialism has tended to obscure the fact that many socialists in East and West were actually calling for newfound democracy to take a more revolutionary form in the immediate aftermath of the war. To what extent, therefore, can we attribute the striking differences and similarities between the four parties to these disparate conceptions of democracy? This main research question for the second part of the thesis has been divided in two sets of sub-questions. The first set concerns the historical and societal perceptions informing the four parties’ understandings of democracy. What political lessons had they drawn from their countries’ and parties’ historical peculiarities? And how far did they consider their societies to be prepared for the many temptations of democratic politics? The second set concerns the pathways to democracy the four parties drew up. To what extent did they place their trust
in the traditional institutions of parliamentary democracy? And what role did they see for the grassroots participatory bodies that had arisen in the wake of the liberation?

**Literature Review**

This thesis draws principally upon three interconnected strands of academic literature, which will now be dealt with one by one in this literature review. The first section addresses international affairs and high politics, discussing historiography on the national ramifications of the Cold War in post-war Europe. The second section moves on to social relations and low politics, providing an overview of academic accounts on post-war reconstruction and its local impact across Europe. The third section assesses to what extent the main tenets of these political history and social history approaches have trickled down onto scholarship on post-war European socialism and identifies which lacunae still remain in this body of literature.

**The Cold War**

For at least the first three decades after the onset of the Cold War, writing the political history of post-war Europe was a straightforward business. The Soviet Union and the United States won the Second World War, carved up the continent in two halves, and set about creating regimes after their model in their respective spheres of influence. Submerging the continent’s distinctive national features to the great levelling forces of Sovietisation in the East and Americanisation in the West, such accounts often portray the Europeans as mere bystanders in a story where all the real decisions were made in Moscow and Washington.
This is especially true for the earliest academic interpretations of the political history of post-war Eastern Europe, in which allusions to a Soviet ‘master plan’ to establish communist dictatorships across the region abound. In Hugh Seton-Watson’s standard work on the theme, communist takeovers are described as having followed a three-stage ‘pattern’ in most of Soviet-dominated Europe: from the ‘genuine coalitions’ that came to power at liberation via ‘bogus coalitions’ already clamping down upon the anti-communist opposition to the ‘monolithic regime’ that emerged after all social and political organisations had been brought into line with communism.  

A similar Soviet ‘blueprint’ for post-war Eastern Europe is identified by Thomas T. Hammond, this time characterised by the use of ‘armed force’ (the pressures exerted by the Red Army), ‘camouflage’ (initial communist moderation), ‘gradualism’ (the piecemeal ‘salami tactics’ with which the communists eliminated their political opponents), and ‘planning’ (the communists making sure to occupy key positions within government and mass organisations). While other historians have allowed for more national varieties upon this model, the lasting impression traditional historiography on post-war Eastern Europe leaves is still that of a determined Stalin instigating, commanding, and micro-managing the campaign to Sovietise his sphere of influence.

Traditional scholarship on the American role in post-war Western European politics is likewise marked by a significant degree of determinism. For all of their debate over whether American intervention in the region was essentially benevolent or malevolent,

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both those ‘orthodox’ historians blaming Soviet aggression for the onset of the Cold War and their ‘revisionist’ counterparts pointing the finger at American belligerence adhere to a more general plot in which Washington is the key actor in post-war Western Europe. This purported American hegemony was achieved primarily through the skilful use of what has often been described as ‘dollar diplomacy’ – awarding the cash-strapped Western European governments with vital credits in exchange for their political obedience. Even before the Marshall Plan formalised its business model, the argument runs, these quid-pro-quo politics had effectively shackled Western Europe to the American bloc. When the time was ripe, the United States, wholly in line with its natural disposition to favour the Right over the Left ‘wherever it might do so’, could effortlessly strong-arm its right-wing allies into removing the communists, and with them the last remaining challenge to full American preponderance in Western Europe, from government.

Since the opening of the archives in both halves of the continent – from the late 1970s in Western Europe and after 1989 in Eastern Europe – these superpower-centric accounts have come under sustained attack from two directions. On the one hand, there is a growing body of literature stressing the tenacity of the national conditions and traditions with which the superpowers had to contend. On the other, scholarship nowadays has the superpowers themselves coming off not only as flexible but sometimes even as dupable in their dealings with various groupings on the continent. Together, these two fresh

approaches to post-war European history have combined to recast the spotlight upon the European centres and to restore agency to European political actors.\textsuperscript{12}

This comes to the fore very clearly in the more recent historiography of post-war Western European politics, which has performed various u-turns upon the teachings of traditional Cold War literature. First of all, it dispels the notion that the United States operated in some sort of vacuum. Several case studies have demonstrated that “Americanisation” must be understood in a local context.\textsuperscript{13} Western Europe might have been run over militarily and reduced to ruins, but political elites were back to their feet quickly to press for the overdue modernisation of their countries.\textsuperscript{14} To have their hands free for this task, they required American security guarantees and financial backing. That meant a re-run of 1919, when the United States had turned their back on the continent, was to be avoided at all costs and the wavering Americans had to be locked into European problems this time around. For post-war France, for example, Irwin Wall has concluded that whereas ‘the Americans showed little eagerness to become deeply involved in French affairs’, ‘[i]t was the pull of the French, rather than the push outward from Washington, that characterized different aspects of American involvement, diplomatic, economic,

\textsuperscript{12} This broader ‘European turn’ in the historiography of the early Cold War dates back to a series of conferences in the 1980s. These conferences were all part of the long-range European research project – ‘Perceptions of Power in Western Europe between 1938 and 1958’ – which brought together historians and political scientists from France, Great Britain, Italy, and West Germany. Amongst the various edited volumes that this project brought forth, the most significant from the perspective of this thesis is the product of a conference to which more than eighty scholars contributed: Josef Becker & Franz Knipping (eds.), \textit{Power in Europe: Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany in a Postwar World, 1945-1950}, (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1986).


political, and military’. This has been developed into a more generalised thesis by Geir Lundestad, who argues that the American ‘empire’ in post-war Western Europe was formed upon local ‘invitation’. Once such invitations had been acted upon, however, the Americans often found themselves on the receiving end of European machinations. Being the paymaster of the Marshall Plan, for instance, turned out to be but a ‘feeble weapon’ as participating governments regularly flaunted American free trade provisions in view of domestic political reasons.

Far from imposing its will upon a despondent political class in Western Europe, then, the United States were forced to tap into national considerations and traditions across the region. But local preferences frequently coincided with the broader American agenda. Nowhere was this more the case than with Western Europe’s rampant anti-communism. Rather than being some continental emulation of McCarthyism, recent studies have persuasively argued how much of this anti-communism was home grown and shared right across the (non-communist) political spectrum. In these circumstances, the Americans ‘often ignored traditional notions of Left and Right and supported whichever party or collection of parties facilitated continued U.S. influence in Europe’. In practice, that frequently meant co-opting those moderate centrist and socialist politicians who were considered best-placed to fight off the communist electoral threat. The historiographical focus, accordingly, has shifted from ‘dollar diplomacy’ to ‘labour diplomacy’, with various

authors now exploring the Atlantic links of post-war leaders of the non-communist Left.20

Once again, the main drivers of this story are the Western Europeans, sometimes even subverting their American funding for domestic campaigns wholly unrelated to the Cold War effort.

A similar trend towards endowing national political actors with a far greater stake in national political history is discernible in recent scholarship on post-war Eastern Europe. To be sure, no historian would claim that Stalin’s dictatorial Eastern bloc was somehow an ‘empire by invitation’, but few likewise still stand by the old maxims of ‘master plans’ and ‘blueprints’. The debate about whether Stalin had been planning to establish communist dictatorships in his sphere of influence all along is still on-going.21 There is widespread agreement, however, that a takeover was not on the menu for 1945 and that the Kremlin envisioned its coalition strategy to last for possibly as long as decades. This message was lost on many communists on the ground in Soviet-controlled Europe, however, who set about creating local as well as national regimes in the Soviet image. In his much-acclaimed history of the Soviet Zone of Germany, Norman Naimark describes just how messy and uncoordinated the Soviet occupation initially was – with lines of communication often blurred, the survival of political pluralism could depend on so random a factor as the mind-


set of the local Red Army commander. Even where proper channels of communication did exist, however, national communists frequently overstepped their mandate in their dealings with rival parties. In Poland, for example, Stalin had to intervene personally twice to prevent the premature unification of communists and socialists.

But if the perimeters of Soviet plans for post-war Eastern Europe were not even clear to many communists themselves, they were certainly not to non-communist political actors in the region. Accordingly, there has been a revaluation of the role played by those politicians and parties working with the communists and the Soviets in national coalition governments. Frequently denounced as either hopelessly misguided or downright traitorous in more traditional historiography on post-war Eastern Europe, a recent book on post-war Hungary insists that ‘those who sought compromise and attempted to get along with the Soviet occupiers were not knaves and fools, but people who had legitimate hopes that some degree of Hungarian democracy could be saved’. As ‘local politics mattered’ even for Stalin, then, the domestic political struggles along the ‘national road to socialism’ merit attention. Various case studies on this theme have demonstrated how the communists had to interact not only with the diplomatic exigencies of the Soviet Union, but also with the stubbornness of national constellations and stakeholders across Eastern Europe.

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Sovietisation, therefore, was far from a uniform process as significant disparities between countries,\(^{27}\) and even between different regions within countries,\(^{28}\) remained.

**Post-War Reconstruction**

The social history of post-war Europe often has a complicated relationship with Cold War political historiography. On the one hand, it seeks to steer clear from its foremost paradigm – that public life in early post-war Europe was already completely overshadowed by the superpower struggle. Portraying the period between the liberation of Europe over 1943/45 and the real onset of the Cold War in 1947/48 as a historical era in its own right, it claims altogether different forces were at play during these first months and years after liberation – forces representing a radical alternative to the restorationist continent, communist in the East and capitalist in the West, that would eventually emerge out of the ashes of the Second World War. On the other, it attributes the ultimate defeat of these forces very much to the superpowers and their national co-conspirators. In this respect, the traditional Cold War narrative has left an even more profound mark on post-war Europe’s social history than on its political history, as those historians arguing that the revolutionary potential of the first years after liberation was limited and that post-war reconstruction was unlikely to produce other results than it did are still but a distinct minority.

Reconstruction was set in motion locally. In the immediate aftermath of liberation, former resistance cells now turned liberation committee or factory council assumed responsibility for such vital tasks as food distribution, clearing rubble off the streets, and getting paralysed industrial production going again. The autonomy and self-direction of

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such grassroots bodies has exerted a powerful attraction upon many social historians. In
their view, the discipline shown by workers in plants abandoned by their collaborationist
owners and the participatory nature of the post-war popular and factory assemblies carried
the germs of a veritable worker democracy – a decentralised system of worker self-
management fundamentally different from both Western market capitalism and Soviet state
capitalism. Their foremost case in point has often been Germany, where the Antifa council
movement is considered to have represented a ‘third way’ out of Americanisation or
Sovietisation. More recently, however, this school of thought has produced various case
studies on countries likewise affected by an upswing in grassroots activism after
liberation. Almost invariably, such works convey a sense of missed opportunities, as the
fluidity and ‘radical openness’ of the first post-war years were not capitalised upon to
create a different Europe.

That this revolutionary transformation failed to come to fruition is often blamed on
the formidable coalition of superpowers and labour leaders opposing the empowerment of
grassroots participatory bodies. In keeping with the traditional Cold War account, there is a
broad body of literature attributing the defeat of post-war Europe’s council movement
primarily to the malicious intervention of the occupying armies. In the case of the
Americans, this was very straightforward. Viewing any form of grassroots activism as a
dangerous affront to property relations and the political status quo, they proceeded quickly

29 Lutz Niethammer, Ulrich Borsdorf & Peter Brandt (eds.), Arbeiterinitiative 1945: Antifaschistische
Ausschüsse und Reorganisation der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland, (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1976);
30 Peter Heumos, ‘Betriebsräte, Einheitsgewerkschaft und staatliche Unternehmensverwaltung: Anmerkungen
für Geschichte Osteuropas, 29/2 (1981), pp. 215-245; Robert Mencherini, La Libération et les entreprises
sous gestion ouvrière, Marseille, 1944-1948, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994); Tom Behan, The Long Awaited
Moment: The Working Class and the Italian Communist Party in Milan, 1943-1948, (New York: P. Lang,
1997); Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski, ‘Give us back our Factories! Between Resisting Exploitation and the
Master and to Own: Workers’ Control from the Commune to the Present, (Chicago: Haymarket Books,
2011), pp. 191-209; Gerd-Rainer Horn, The Moment of Liberation: Western Europe (1943-1948), (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
to disband the revolutionary bodies that had sprung up at liberation. Often by military
decree, then, liberation committees were ordered to hand over their weapons and the
competencies of factory councils were curbed,32 thus nipping in the bud ‘the molecular
forms of a different and more radical version of post-war reconstruction’.33 The Soviet
occupiers did obviously not share the intuitive conservatism of their American counterparts
and many of the revolutionary visions espoused by the post-war popular assemblies
resonated with long-standing Soviet rhetoric. Yet, following a short-lived interlude of
tolerance, the Soviets, too, went with their ‘stronger instinct […] to mistrust any
organisation “from below”’.34 So once compliant local administrations and industrial
managers had been put in place, they moved swiftly to rid themselves of direct democracy
and worker self-management by submerging the liberation committees and factory
councils into communist-dominated mass organisations that were frequently no more than
transmission belts for the regime.35

Still more important a role in the demise of post-war grassroots activism is often
ascribed, particularly in more recent academic work, to the political and trade union
leaders of the organised Left in Europe. Other than in the political historiography of the
period, however, this stronger focus on national political actors has not been matched by a
commensurate diminution of the leverage imputed to the two superpowers. In fact,

32 Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerillas and the Allies*, (London/New York: Pluto Press,
Realpolitik and the coming of the Cold War remain the exclusive tools for explaining political behaviour in most of this scholarship.

This is very much the case for social and socio-political histories of the post-war European communist parties, which invariably portray Stalin as the evil genius behind dismissive communist attitudes towards the radicalism at their grassroots. Even though their rank and file was forcefully represented in the revolutionary liberation committees and factory councils, returning communist leaders arrived with clear instructions not to get embroiled in any undertakings that might disquiet the Soviet Union’s Western allies. Instead, they were to showcase Stalin’s good faith by cold-shouldering every manifestation of popular radicalism, accepting a moderate economic programme, and committing fully to the reconstruction effort. The concomitant discourses of production ‘battles’ and labour discipline put the communists on a collision course with their working-class supporters, who increasingly took matters into their own hands in the wildcat strike movement that swept Europe’s industrial centres between 1945 and 1947. When Stalin’s relations with the West turned sour and the communists were finally allowed to change tack, it was too late to heal these wounds as the purported revolutionary moment had by and large passed.

Some scholars even go so far as identifying communist duplicity with the ‘betrayed revolution’ of the first post-war years.40

This particular historiographical strand is very pervasive. Practically every textbook on post-war Europe now opens with a section or chapter on the continent’s initial radicalisation and its subsequent pacification at the hands of the Allies and the Left, before moving on to the coming of the Cold War. Often on the basis of meticulous grassroots research, however, some historians have challenged this new paradigm. Contrary to the familiar picture of widespread popular radicalisation, these authors have stressed that the overwhelming majority of Europeans emerged from the war exhausted, depoliticised, and disinterested in new participatory structures.41 Their research has underlined the deep gulf between the hard core of activists within liberation committees and factory councils – so often the focal point of social historical studies of post-war Europe – and the population as a whole. In his ground-breaking work on German Schwarzenberg – the unoccupied ‘no man’s land’ between the American and Soviet Zones where the Antifa’s had free reign for a couple of months – Gareth Pritchard has documented the mutual resentments between the region’s inhabitants and their new rulers: whereas the anti-fascists loathed the unquestioning support for Hitlerism amongst large swathes of the public, the locals often viewed the anti-fascists as usurpers who were to blame for the dismal material situation. As such ‘social divisions’ between the minority that had actively resisted fascism and the majority that had tolerated or even supported it were replicated across the country, it was

40 This theory of a communist-betrayed revolution is particularly strong in the historiography on post-war Italy: Guido Quazza, Resistenza e storia d’Italia: problemi e ipotesi di ricerca, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976); Pietro Secchia, La resistenza accusa 1945-1973, (Milano: Mazzotta, 1973). But even while taking an all-European perspective, Mark Mazower has argued that ‘many former partisans and members of the underground were left with the feeling that their cause had been betrayed’: Mark Mazower, Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1999), p. 211.
clear that post-war Germany ‘could have either antifascism, or […] democracy, but it could not have both’. 42

This focus on existing social relations has become the defining characteristic of those social histories that seek to get away from the Cold War explanatory framework. Rather than presenting the moment of liberation as some sort of Zero Hour at which the world could be remade from below, these studies point both to the continuities with the interwar period and to the far-reaching social change wrought by war. Jan T. Gross, for example, has suggested that the ‘social consequences’ of the Second World War had paved the way for a communist takeover in Eastern Europe well before the Red Army set foot in the region. As the predominantly Jewish and/or German urban mercantile bourgeoisie had been wiped out by racial extermination and population transfers respectively and the state had already been assuming considerable control over the economy through expropriation and planning during the German occupation, the new communist-dominated governments were certainly operating in fertile ground. 43 Building upon Gross’ thesis, other scholars have added such dimensions as the failure of the interwar state and the demographic transformation wrought by the First World War to the equation 44 – all leading to the conclusion that ‘no conservative reconstruction was actually possible after the war’. 45

But where all of these historians stop short of claiming that post-war Eastern Europe would also have gone communist without Soviet interference, Martin Conway’s work on post-war Western Europe has been accredited with demonstrating ‘very

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powerfully how the stability of Western European politics around a Christian Democratic model of democracy can be explained without significant reference to the Cold War.\textsuperscript{46} According to Conway, both those historians lamenting the political leaders of the post-war Left for failing to act upon the widespread socio-political radicalism and their counterparts praising those same leaders for channelling the revolutionary sentiments amongst their rank and file work from the mistaken assumption that the working class emerged strengthened from the Second World War. After a war of attrition in which industrial cities were hit particularly hard and years of repression by regimes (those imposed by the German occupiers as well as their authoritarian predecessors in many countries) specifically targeting the Left, he argues, the working class was bound to lose out relative to other social groups. As power within post-war society resided chiefly with those segments producing food or having the means to buy it, an alliance between rural interests and the urban middle classes constituted the lasting consequence of the Second World War.\textsuperscript{47}

European Socialism

The historiography on the post-war European socialist parties has passed through roughly the same stages as more general political and social histories of post-war Europe. Whereas earlier literature divulges a strong impression of socialist marginalisation at the hands of the superpowers, more recent accounts have underlined the considerable room for manoeuvre the parties held in both their national and international dealings. What is

\textsuperscript{46} Holger Nehring, ‘What was the Cold War?’, \textit{The English Historical Review}, 127 (2012), pp. 920-949.

striking about this particular academic body, however, is just how profoundly even contemporary scholarship remains captive to the traditional Cold War conceptual binaries of East versus West, pro-communist versus anti-communist, and dictatorship versus democracy. It is these strongly normative academic preconceptions of how a socialist party is supposed to behave that seem to have stood in the way of a social historical approach to post-war European socialism.

The socialist parties have long been depicted as the losers of the post-war era in both halves of the continent. If socialists had good cause to be ‘euphoric’ about their prospects at the liberation – Léon Blum’s well-known claim that socialism was ‘the master of the hour’ is often quoted in this context ⁴⁸ – they had been driven onto the defensive towards the end of the decade. In Western Europe, socialist parties had either become junior partners within coalitions dominated by the Christian democrats or were on their way out of government altogether. In Eastern Europe things were worse still, as socialist parties were browbeaten into mergers with the communists – not to return onto the political scene before the collapse of the Iron Curtain. A generation of historians has attributed these socialist woes squarely to the Cold War. With the local superpower being ill-deposed to socialism in the West and to democracy in the East, they argued, European socialism’s destiny was sealed as soon as the Cold War took off in earnest. In Western Europe, the Americans were alleged to have favoured the Christian democrats – doing all in their power to dilute the unity and leverage of the post-war labour movement both by intervening directly to curb its influence and by endeavouring to ‘bribe and cajole’ socialists into alliances with the Right. ⁴⁹ In Eastern Europe, meanwhile, the Soviets were

⁴⁹ The quote is from: Geoff Eley, ‘Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence and the Start of the Cold War’, International Labor and Working-Class History, 40 (1990), pp. 91-102, 100. Other works suggesting strong American meddling in Western European social democracy include: Ronald Filippelli, American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953: A Study in Cold War Politics, (Stanford: Stanford University
held to have masterminded and coordinated the entire crusade against socialism – prohibiting pre-war socialist leaders from returning to positions of power and having their place taken by (crypto-) communist agents who were to gradually undermine socialist independence from within.\textsuperscript{50} This left Europe’s socialists with a choice between being side-lined by the superpowers and selling out to them, both detrimental to their influence and popularity for years to come.

As so many of the Cold War commonplaces on post-war Europe, these premises have by and large unraveled under closer archival scrutiny. First and foremost, more recent and more thoroughly researched histories of the post-war European socialist parties portray their relations with the regional superpower as far less of a one-way street. In fact, both the Americans and the Soviets were quite accommodating towards the socialists so as to keep them on board in the struggle against their real enemies – the rival superpower and its (perceived) national agents. As long as they vouched for a minimum of conformity in this vital strategic question, then, there was real leeway for the socialist parties to win concessions in other spheres.

Thus, in exchange for their adherence to an electoral bloc that would exclude the ‘enemies of Poland’s independence’ (i.e. the Polish Peasant Party, on which the Americans had pinned their hopes), Stalin granted the Polish socialists that there would be no more communist meddling in their inner-party affairs, that they would be able to run their own election campaign, and that there would be a more equitable division of ministerial posts in

\textsuperscript{50} Arguably the most influential work on post-war Eastern European social democracy to be published during the Cold War was an edited volume produced by exiled Eastern European social democrats: Denis Healey (ed.), \textit{The Curtain Falls: The Story of the Socialists in Eastern Europe}, (London: Lincolns-Prager, 1951). The frequently highly polemical contributions to this volume formed the basis of the only book-length analysis of post-war Eastern European social democracy to be published thus far: László Révész, \textit{Die Liquidierung der Sozialdemokratie in Osteuropa}, (Berne: Schweizerisches Ost-Institut, 1971).
the next government. A similar sacrifice of national communist interests to the greater Soviet good was discernible elsewhere. In Hungary, for example, the supreme commander of the Red Army seemingly gave the green light for an inner-party palace revolution against the pro-communist leadership of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. While anti-communists in national politics, however, its independence-minded orchestrators were on message about the need for communist-socialist unity on the international level and about the countless vices of ‘American imperialism’. It follows that the traditional historical picture of post-war Eastern European socialism’s progressive infiltration by (crypto-) communists has been turned upside down: after having verged very close on communism at the moment of liberation, it is held these days, socialist parties across the region adopted increasingly autonomist positions as the years went by.

With such misgivings about communism surfacing even in socialist parties where the pre-war right wing had largely been sidelined, it should come as little surprise that the Western European socialists often needed little American encouragement to embrace anticommunism. There is now a broad body of literature documenting just how deep the anticommunism within many Western European socialist parties ran. Socialist leaders not

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only enthusiastically participated in anti-communist campaigns served up by the Americans,55 but sometimes even took the lead themselves to shield their parties from right-wing attacks of the ‘all roads of socialism lead to Moscow’ type.56 Their admiration of New Deal economics and their generally more internationalist outlooks, moreover, frequently rendered the socialist parties more receptive to Atlanticism than the nationalist Right. Far from being continuously thwarted by the United States, then, many post-war Western European socialists figured amongst their ‘favored clients’.57

But if superpower attitudes towards the European socialist parties were primarily inspired by pragmatism, there must have been more to their post-war undoing than the coming of the Cold War. For that reason, more recent scholarship has often represented the socialists as accessories to their own misfortunes. In an article on the history of the Eastern European socialist parties, André Gerrits argues that the ‘image of impotence and victimisation’ cultivated in so many accounts published during the Cold War is not so much wrong as overly one-sided – leaving out ‘the sometimes paralyzing political indecisiveness and divisiveness during the first crucial years of the interbellum, the compromising collaboration with the region’s authoritarian regimes in the decade which followed, the level of dissension within most parties after the Second World War, and, as a result, how much social democratic parties contributed to their own demise’.58

Historiography on the post-war Western European socialist parties has likewise seen

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55 See, for example, the contributions to: Giles Scott-Smith & Hans Krabbendam (eds.), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

56 This was the famous slogan the West German Christian democrats used to scare the electorate off voting SPD. A strong example of post-war social democrats taking the lead in anti-communist campaigns is to be found in the Netherlands, where the social democrats were amongst the instigators of an attempt to dissolve a communist city council and giving all local power to its appointed social democratic mayor. See: Susanne Keesman, ‘The Communist Menace in Finsterwalde: Conspiring against Local Authorities? A Case Study on the Dutch Battle Against Communism, 1945-1951’, *Historical Social Research*, 38/1 (2013), pp. 211-231.


increasing attention for the frailties contained in the socialist position both before and after
the war – including the unresolved spats between revolutionaries and reformists,\textsuperscript{59} the
organisational weaknesses vis-à-vis the communists,\textsuperscript{60} and the failure to break loose from
the working-class electoral ghetto.\textsuperscript{61}

Scholarship on the post-war European socialist parties has thus mirrored more
general histories of the post-war continent in substituting superpower-centric accounts for
narratives doing more justice to the national traditions that explain party attitudes. Yet, this
allowance for diverse national experiences has only gone so far, as parties deviating from
the dominant model of anti-communist, governmental and reformist socialism still tend to
be dismissed as crypto-communist. This already becomes abundantly clear in
historiography depicting the post-war international socialist movement, which often
alludes to an insurmountable gulf between the ‘Marshall socialists’ of the West and the
‘Molotov socialists’ of the East.\textsuperscript{62} Despite one contribution arguing that transnational
socialist relations cannot be reduced to such black-and-white terms,\textsuperscript{63} the overwhelming
understanding remains that the Eastern European socialist parties were ‘nothing but front
organisations of the Communists’,\textsuperscript{64} who were completely in cahoots with the Soviet
Union,\textsuperscript{65} and of whom the Western European socialists had wanted to rid themselves all
along.\textsuperscript{66} But even within the two blocs, there are strong tendencies to distinguish between
‘good’ and ‘bad’ socialists. In Western Europe, the Italian Socialist Party has often been
described as an ‘anomaly’ for refusing to take up anti-communism, having itself ostracised

\textsuperscript{59} Alexander De Grand, ““To Learn Nothing and to Forget Nothing”: Italian Socialism and the Experience of
\textsuperscript{60} Paolo Mattera, Storia del PSI: 1892-1994, (Rome: Carocci, 2010).
\textsuperscript{61} Dietrich Orlow, Common Destiny.
\textsuperscript{62} This terminology was originally coined by Rolf Steininger, Deutschland und die Sozialistische
\textsuperscript{63} Peter Heumos, Europäischer Sozialismus.
\textsuperscript{64} Dietrich Orlow, Common Destiny, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{65} Guillaume Devin, L’Internationale Socialiste. Histoire et sociologie du socialisme international (1945-
\textsuperscript{66} Sørensen, Denmark’s Social Democratic Government, pp. 53-59.
from power along with the communists, and not partaking in the West’s ‘social democratic moment’ as a consequence. In Eastern Europe, at the same time, the Polish socialists have been charged with being ‘compliant’ and ‘conformists’ in relation to their efforts to talk the centrist leaders of the Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party into a united front with the communists along ‘the leftist-socialist, revolutionary political line’.

What seems to be the implicit assumption here – that revolutionary socialism is somehow anathema to the socialist tradition – is also what seems to have underlain the dearth of studies taking a grassroots approach to post-war European socialism. Whereas the sudden restraint practiced by communist leaders is considered to have caused real disillusionment amongst their rank and file, socialist reformism is often taken to be so self-evident that it should have come as a surprise to no-one. Yet, even in existing literature there are hints that things might not have been as straightforward during the first post-war years. For one thing, the socialist parties seem to have emerged much radicalised from the Second World War. Their first post-war party programmes often went further than those put forward by the communists, especially on such socio-economic issues as nationalisations and land reform. What is more, socialists frequently appear to have taken a considerably more positive attitude towards worker self-management than their

communist counterparts. In many countries, it were socialist leaders pressing for the empowerment of the newly constituted works councils, sometimes even in direct opposition to the communists.\(^\text{72}\) What is lacking, however, is a study systematically analysing the relations between rank-and-file workers and party leaders within post-war European socialism. This thesis represents an attempt to fill that void in the existing literature.

**Concepts & Methods**

To do so, the thesis draws upon a comparative historical research framework. Its approach is situated between the ‘universalising’ and ‘variation-finding’ approaches identified by Charles Tilly in his classic four-pronged model of historical comparisons.\(^\text{73}\) On the one hand, it seeks to explain the historical phenomenon of post-war European socialism with reference to varieties in national experiences and social structures (variation-finding). On the other, it points to similarities between socialist parties sharing such experiences and structures, even where they might seem unlikely bed-fellows in view of their diverse geopolitical locations (universalising). The purpose of comparisons in this context is to perform what Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt have described as ‘defamiliarising the familiar’. ‘When examined in the light of observable alternatives’, they argue, ‘a specific development can lose the “matter of course” appearance it may have possessed before’.\(^\text{74}\) By looking for such alternatives across the Iron Curtain that certainly


still exists in the academic body on post-war European socialism, the thesis endeavours to
de-familiarise the East-West matter of courses dominating its historiography and to
revaluate party histories that have been misinterpreted or misconstrued to fit this box.

Thus working from the assumption that there was a pan-European playing field
during the first months and years after liberation, the thesis borrows conceptual tools from
current research on post-war reconstruction. In his summary of the contributions to the
recent Balzan Project on the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War, Mark
Mazower suggests that the Cold War dichotomy between the two halves of the continent
might in fact have ‘obscured the variety of national experiences in Europe immediately
after the war’ and questions the extent to which ‘either “West” or “East” Europe existed
before the Cold War helped reify them and fill them with meaning’. The topic of post-war
reconstruction, as ‘a common set of responses to a common set of challenges’ across the
two purported blocs, provides a way out of this polarity.75 Reconstruction should be
understood broadly here to include various processes of rebuilding that were felt all over
the continent. In an earlier article, Mazower has identified commonalities between East and
West both in socio-economic – the wave of industrial unrest caused by austerity-driven
reconstruction programmes – and political – the broad-based coalition governments that
took power upon liberation gradually giving way to more exclusive constellations –
developments.76 On a more general level, Naimark has argued that ‘[s]trike movements,
electoral struggles, street clashes, and the initiatives of political parties, personalities, and
diplomats, both in the East and the West, have to be figured into the calculus of post-war

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European developments'. Both at the grassroots and in government, socialists were often right at the heart of these developments.

The thesis explores the role socialist parties played in the post-war reconstruction of Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, and Poland on the basis of the hermeneutic interpretation of archival as well as published sources. The research for the thesis was conducted at two levels: local and national. To reconstruct the views taken by rank-and-file (socialist) workers, grassroots archival and library research was conducted in one industrial city/region for each of the four countries: Lille for France, Łódź for Poland, Milano for Italy, and Plzeň for Czechoslovakia. The criteria for selecting these particular cities were two-fold. Firstly, each of these four cities had been major socialist strongholds before the war and by and large remained so in the face of far stronger communist competition following the liberation. Secondly, these cities each found themselves at the centre of regions with long traditions of industrial unrest, which certainly continued into the post-war years.

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78 In post-war Lille (and the North of France more generally) and Milano, the socialist vote vis-à-vis the communists held up much better than nationally, with Lille electing a socialist mayor in 1945 and the socialists (34.1%) finishing well ahead of the communists (23.5%) in Milano in the June 1946 parliamentary elections. As there were no fair elections in post-war Poland, no reliable numbers are available for Łódź, but, there too, the PPS is considered to have had a strong grassroots organisation dominating much of local trade unionism. Only in Plzeň did the social democrats lose their dominant position to the communists, but the ČSSD vote in the city was still some 50% above the national ČSSD average. On Lille/the North of France: Martine Pottrain, Le Nord au cœur: historique de la Fédération du Nord du Parti Socialiste, 1880-1993, (Lille: SARL de Presse Nord-Demain, 1993), pp. 89-91. On Milano: Claudia Magnanini, Ricostruzione e miracolo economico: dal sindacato unitario al sindacato di classe nella capitale dell’industria, (Milano: Franco Agnelli, 2006), p. 52. On Łódź: Kenney, Rebuilding Poland, p. 43, 49. On Plzeň: Jakub Šlouf, ‘Rivalita komunistické strany a sociální demokracie na Plzeňsku v letech 1945–1948. Poválečné dědictví prvorepublikových tradic’, in: Zdeněk Kárník, Jiří Kocian, Jaroslav Pažout & Jakub Rákosník (eds.), Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu VI, (Prague: Dokořán, 2009), pp. 113-137, 124-125.
79 The coal mining region in the North of France had been a hotbed of strike activity right from the celebrated miners’ strike in Anzin of 1884 (which had ushered in the legalisation of trade unions) and remained one of the foremost centres of the strike waves that swept post-war France. Milano, for its part, had been at the forefront of the factory occupations and strikes after the First World War (during the so-called biennio rosso of 1919-20) and was the scene of many (mostly spontaneous) agitations and strikes in the first post-war years. Łódź was home to an entrenched labour community that made it into the most strike-prone city in post-war Poland. And the Plzeň working class, above all the workforce at the Škoda Works, retained its interwar syndicalist traditions to become one of the main strike centres in post-war Czechoslovakia. On post-war industrial unrest in the four countries/regions, see, e.g.: Robert Mencherini, Guerre froide, grèves rouges: Parti communiste, stalinisme et luttes sociales en France: Les grèves "insurrectionnelles" de 1947-1948,
During this local research, a wide variety of materials, pertaining both to local/regional socialist parties and the local working class more broadly, was consulted. Things were most straightforward in Łódź, where the local party archives were preserved and broad use could be made of the protocols of PPS factory circles. As for Lille, the archives of the SFIO’s Northern Federation have likewise survived, but these were unavailable for the duration of the project on account of re-inventarisation. For that reason, the thesis relies on the detailed reports of local SFIO meetings in the industrial Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, produced by police and prefecture observers and informers, which have been preserved in the provincial archives of France’s Northern Department. In Milano and Plzeň, on the other hand, no archives of the local party branches remained. In the Milanese case, this was made up for by a study of both the PSIUP weekly in Sesto San Giovanni (the industrial district on the outskirts of Milano) and the correspondence between the Milano province Chamber of Labour (the most important provincial trade union organisation) and the internal commissions (company-based trade union bodies) at various Milanese factories. With regard to Plzeň, an even more extensive assortment of sources was drawn upon, including the protocols of its post-war revolutionary city council, materials on the factory council at the Škoda Works, documents on the post-war Plzeň ČSSD in the local communist archives, and issues of the provincial ČSSD newspaper. Where possible, the findings on the local level were supplemented by relevant materials (e.g. the correspondence between local party branches and the national party leadership) found during the research on the national level.

The prime aim of the national research, however, was to determine the attitudes socialist leaders took towards socio-economic and political reconstruction. To that end, research was conducted both in (national) party archives and in the private archives of various post-war socialist leaders. Party archives were drawn upon to examine the reports of party leadership meetings, the protocols of party conferences and/or congresses, and party programmes. The private papers of party leaders – amongst them Zdeněk Fierlinger and Bohumil Laušman (ČSSD), Daniel Mayer (SFIO), Lelio Basso and Pietro Nenni (PSIUP), and Stanisław Szwalbe and Henryk Wachowicz (PPS) – were studied for the articles, speeches, and tracts they produced, for their personal correspondence, and for materials relating to their period at the top of the party. Special attention, finally, was given to party publications, both to (national) party newspapers and to theoretical party journals, as these were frequently a treasure trove for intra-party discussions on socio-economic and political reconstruction.

**Chapter Structure**

The thesis consists of two parts: one on socio-economic and one on political reconstruction. Each part comprises three chapters and is followed by a short Part Conclusion. In order to provide the most essential background information about the four parties and countries, which, after all, represent a highly unusual combination of cases, these six analytical chapters are preceded by an introductory context chapter (Chapter 1). This chapter first outlines the foremost post-war socio-political developments in the four countries, with special reference to the role played by their socialist parties. It then moves on to briefly address the pre-war histories of the four parties, from their inception in the late nineteenth century to their temporary demise in the face of fascism.
Chapter 2 deals with socio-economic reconstruction from a bottom-up perspective. It analyses the sentiments amongst rank-and-file (socialist) workers in and around post-war Lille, Łódź, Milano, and Plzeň. In doing so, it identifies three worker grievances that were shared right across the four cities: a deep-seated discontent over the insufficient supply of everyday essentials, a stark outrage over the countless abuses of the black market, and a widespread bewilderment about the remaining socio-economic inequities under governments in which their leaders participated.

Chapter 3 introduces the views taken by provincial and national party leaders. It explores the arguments that went behind their calls for workers to muster industrial discipline, to make sacrifices towards the reconstruction effort, and to participate in the ‘battle for production’. In doing so, it lays bare a profound divide between socialist elites and their grassroots over the nature of socialism.

Chapter 4 moves from the material to the moral aspects of socio-economic reconstruction. It sets out how, for party leaders, worker unruliness was part of a larger ‘moral crisis’ afflicting post-war society. If socialist leaders in each of the four countries agreed that the experience of dictatorship, occupation, and war had generated this crisis, however, the chapter highlights that it was in their distinct appraisals of the depth of societal ‘demoralisation’ that the four parties began to diverge.

Chapter 5 outlines the experiences and perceptions that informed socialist attitudes towards political reconstruction. It explains how very different sets of historical vicissitudes shaped the four parties’ views about political and social alliances. It subsequently illustrates how these views lay at the root of their opposite conceptions of democracy: with the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists embracing ‘bourgeois’ democracy and the Italian and Polish socialists advocating a ‘new’ or ‘popular’ democracy.
Chapter 6 delves deeper into socialist perspectives on the three principal institutions of bourgeois democracy – elections, parliaments, and constitutions. In doing so, it exposes a deep rift between the two sets of parties: whereas the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists saw elections, parliaments, and constitutions as sacred principles of democratic politics, the rulebook of bourgeois democracy was designed to perpetuate bourgeois domination for the Italian and Polish socialists.

Chapter 7 elaborates further on what was, for the Italian and Polish socialists at least, the defining characteristic of popular democracy – direct grassroots participation in political and economic decision-making. It demonstrates how the question of popular participation in public life, through such grassroots bodies as liberation committees and factory councils, constituted another bone of contention between the four parties: whereas the Italian and Polish socialists viewed popular participation in grassroots bodies as a crucial stepping stone towards democratising society, the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists often dismissed grassroots participatory bodies as unrepresentative and wholly self-serving.
Chapter 1: The National Road to Socialism

In early post-war Europe, talk of ‘national roads to socialism’ was rife. The conception that the road towards socialism, far from being the same always and everywhere, had to respect national traditions and histories was communist in origins. In their efforts to dis-associate themselves and their parties from the feared Soviet model, communist leaders across Europe professed their willingness to work within national political systems and with non-communist national actors. For all of the academic debate as to whether this outreach was genuine,¹ we must not lose sight of the fact that the notion of a ‘national road to socialism’ was not limited to communism. Indeed, a wide variety of left-leaning individuals took up the premise of a road to socialism that would not repeat the bloody excesses of the Soviet experience.² This was certainly true for many socialists, who eagerly embraced the idea of a socialism taking its inspiration from national experiences, traditions, and circumstances rather than universal schemes.³

¹ The sincerity of the communist outreach has often been measured by national communist leaders’ willingness to uphold the concept of ‘the national road to socialism’ after it fell out of favour with Stalin. In this respect, if we confine ourselves to the four countries under review in this thesis, scholarship tends to portray Italian and Polish communist leaders as rather more sincere and Czechoslovak and French communist leaders as rather less sincere in their advocacy of a national road to socialism: e.g. Aldo Agosti, Palmiro Togliatti: A Biography, (Oxford/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Iazhborovskaia, ‘The Gomułka Alternative’; Jiří Pernes, Takoví nám vládli: komunističtí prezidenti Československa a doba, v níž žili, (Prague: Brana, 2003); Jean-Paul Scot, ‘Contradictions d’une tentative de “voie française”’, Nouvelles Fondations, 3/3-4 (2006), pp. 104-109.
This chapter provides the necessary context for the six analytical chapters by exploring the various national circumstances in which socialists and social democrats in post-war Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, and Poland operated. In the first place, it addresses post-war political developments within the four countries and the four parties. Starting from the formation of the post-war coalition governments, it identifies the key issues, debates, and turning points for each of the four countries and elaborates on the socialist attitudes towards these. Subsequently, the chapter places these attitudes in a broader context by briefly delving into the pre-war histories of the four countries and parties. From the nineteenth-century political and socio-economic climate in which the four parties came into being right to the moment of their countries’ liberation, it reconstructs the experiences and traditions that shaped the socialists’ responses to their post-war challenges. For it is only from the perspective of their pre-war vicissitudes that we can begin to make sense of what drove the four parties in opposite directions after the Second World War.

The Rise and Fall of the Post-War Coalition

The mainstay of the national road to socialism was a broad-church governmental coalition, consisting of all anti-fascist parties. The shared experience of wartime resistance as well as the national unity required for the reconstruction effort, the rhetoric of the day went, warranted the broadest possible political cooperation. The coalitions that rose to power upon liberation in each of the four countries and by and large remained in place until 1947, accordingly, brought together communists and socialists with a wide variety of (usually three or four) centrist, liberal, peasant, and Catholic and Christian democratic parties. Finding compromise amongst such a diverse group of parties was always going to be a challenge, however, and so it proved. In the face of ever-increasing tensions between the
communists on the one side and the centre-right on the other, the socialists often found themselves right in the middle holding the balance of power.

The Provisional Governments

With the communists still moderate in their political behaviour in the immediate aftermath of the liberation, though, the fault lines were initially rather different. In fact, it was frequently the socialist parties who were on the extreme left of the provisional governments that were installed in the wake of liberation. Especially in the two Western European cases, the socialists consistently found themselves outvoted and (near-) isolated in their demands for a more radical economic and/or political settlement.

This was very much the case in post-liberation Italy. After the September 1943 armistice between the Anglo-American Allies and the Italian Kingdom, a military government was formed under Mussolini’s former Chief of Staff Pietro Badoglio. The new government, consisting exclusively of erstwhile fascists and accountable to a monarch who had supported fascism all along, quickly ran into conflict with the political-military umbrella organisation of the Italian resistance – the National Liberation Committee (CLN). The six parties represented in the CLN – the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the Italian Socialist Party (PSIUP), the Action Party (PdA), the Christian Democratic Party (DC), the Democratic Labour Party (PDL), and the Italian Liberal Party (PLI) – initially rejected any cooperation with Badoglio and the King.4

All of this changed, however, when communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, upon his return to Italy in April 1944, announced that the PCI would be setting aside its objections to the monarchy for the duration of the war and seek to join the Badoglio government. This

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announcement came as a ‘cold shower’ to the socialists, who, in spite of a unity of action pact with the communists, had not been informed of the pending volte-face beforehand. Yet, the PSIUP grudgingly followed the PCI into government and, for a brief period, it appeared that things were moving the resistance’s direction.

Upon the liberation of Rome in June 1944, Badoglio was replaced by Ivano Bonomi (PDL), the president of the CLN, as a new government including all of the six CLN parties took office. As it turned out, though, the liberal Bonomi was opposed to any socio-economic radicalism and set about to restore the unreformed and unpurged fascist bureaucratic apparatus. Exasperated by the near-complete lack of administrative purges and the police’s heavy-handed crackdown on peasant land occupations in the Southern Italian countryside, the PSIUP provoked a governmental crisis. In late November 1944, the CLN passed a socialist motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister. But Bonomi refused to even meet with the CLN and instead tendered his resignation to the King. Outraged by this snubbing of the resistance, the PSIUP refused to join any government that would not explicitly recognise the institutional role of the CLN. Once again, however, the communists left their official partners in the cold and joined the second Bonomi government alongside the three moderate parties (the DC, the PDL, and the PLI).

The liberation of Northern Italy in the spring of 1945 offered the PSIUP fresh hopes. In the aftermath of the partisan insurrections in several of the North’s large cities, demands for far-reaching socio-economic reforms and a thorough purge returned with a vengeance. This more radical ‘wind from the North’ made Bonomi’s position untenable.

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8 It was with reference to this vento del Nord that PSIUP leader Pietro Nenni initially demanded the position of Prime Minister for the socialists: Francesco Malgeri, La stagione del centrismo: politica e società nell’Italia del secondo dopoguerra (1943-1960), (Soveria Manelli: Rubbettino, 2002), p. 14.
and, in June, a six-party ‘government of the resistance’ under former partisan commander Ferrucio Parri (PdA) came into being. Yet, the programme that Parri drew up – which included ‘a serious purge’ and such ‘socialist-influenced economic proposals’ as wealth redistribution and currency reform – found little favour with the Allies and the Italian liberals.9 By November, the PLI withdrew from the government. The socialists still tried to save Parri by suggesting that the liberal ministers would be replaced in a new five-party government. But as the DC and the PDL rejected this outright and the PCI remained non-committal, Parri resigned.10

The demise of Parri spelt the end of the more radical aspirations of the liberation. Under the new six-party government led by Alcide De Gasperi (DC), in which the liberals ‘obtained a stranglehold over economic policy’,11 and which saw the anti-fascist purge result in ‘a disastrous failure’,12 the PSIUP adopted a strictly defensive stance. Placing all its hopes on the elections to the Constituent Assembly, which, after painstaking governmental negotiations, had finally been scheduled for June 1946, the party primarily sought to avoid further political crises.

In France, by comparison, the interlude between the liberation and the first post-war elections was much shorter, but it was a similarly frustrating period for the French socialists. In the wake of the August 1944 liberation of Paris, General Charles De Gaulle formed a government of ‘national unanimity’. It brought together anti-fascist politicians and parties from right across the political spectrum – with the French Communist Party (PCF) and the French Socialist Party (SFIO) on the left, the newly-founded (Catholic)

Popular Republican Movement (MRP) and the Radical Party (PRS) in the centre, and a series of mostly non-party liberals and moderates on the right.

Much like their Italian counterparts, the French socialists were frequently ill at ease with the countless compromises that ‘national unanimity’ entailed. As early as January 1945, the SFIO leadership observed ‘a malaise within the country and the government’, reflected in an insufficient purge, the absence of a governmental programme, sluggish nationalisations, disagreements over the financial politics, the continuation of state subsidies for faith schools, and the ‘anti-constitutional’ practices of De Gaulle. During the first months of 1945, though, the socialists lacked both the authority and the allies to press their views on these questions.

This was especially true for socio-economic questions. A commitment towards nationalisations was part of the ‘action programme’ of the umbrella organisation of the French resistance – the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) – which had been underwritten by all the main parties and by General De Gaulle in March 1944. Yet, the socialists quickly found the nationalisation drive – after the initial wave of ‘punitive’ expropriations of collaborationist owners in the immediate aftermath of liberation – wanting. The chief culprit, in the SFIO’s view, was De Gaulle, who wanted to postpone any further nationalisations until after elections had been held. But in reality, as Augustin Laurent pointed out, the socialists were ‘isolated’, as both the PCF and the MRP supported the General. The SFIO was likewise on the losing side of the debate on economic planning. The socialists supported Pierre Mendès France – the Radical Minister of the National Economy – in his proposals for a state-directed economy with strong wage and

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price control.\textsuperscript{16} It was the laissez-faire policies advocated by liberal Finance Minister René Pleven, however, that won the ‘all-important backing’ of both General De Gaulle and the communists\textsuperscript{17} – effectively putting on hold socialist aspirations of indicative planning at least until the October 1945 elections.

If the essential dynamics were very much the same in the two Eastern European cases, the major issues facing their socialists were of a different nature. The post-liberation socialists in Czechoslovakia and Poland, like their counterparts in France and Italy, were frequently on the far left of the post-war coalition governments – their demands for nationalisations and land reform going much further than those of the communists.\textsuperscript{18} With large-scale industrial and rural expropriations swiftly implemented in their countries, such socio-economic issues were far less contentious for the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the Polish socialists. Their struggle, in the immediate aftermath of liberation, was above all one for legitimacy.

The Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) suffered heavy losses during the war years.\textsuperscript{19} The party that took office in the provisional Czechoslovakian government – alongside the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (KSČ), the Czech National Socialist Party (ČSNS), the (Catholic) Czech People’s Party (ČSL), and the Slovak Democratic Party (DS) – was in many ways unrecognisable compared to the interwar ČSSD. Its incoming chairman and the provisional government’s Prime Minister, Zdeněk Fierlinger, had never even held a position within the party. As the former Czechoslovakian

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[19]{Whereas Bradley Abrams argues that much of the ČSSD’s pre-war leadership was ‘too old to continue’, Jiří Pernes notes how ‘the German occupiers took the life of many of its functionaries’. Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, p. 59; Jiří Pernes, ‘Vztahy ČSSD a KSČ v době třetí republiky’, in: Hynek Fajmon, Stanislav Balík & Kateřina Hlušková (eds.), \textit{Dusivé objetí: historické a politologické pohledy na spolupráci sociálních demokratů a komunistů}, (Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury, 2006), pp. 25-33, 26.}
\end{footnotes}
ambassador to the Soviet Union, however, he did command the trust both of the communists and of President Edvard Beneš (ČSNS).  

In fact, the communists had shown a strong preference for representatives of the ČSSD’s pre-war left wing during crucial wartime talks in Moscow, propelling such relatively unknown social democrats as Bohumil Laušman and Evžen Erban – the new Minister of Industry and the Secretary General of the united trade union movement respectively – to positions of real power. If the new ČSSD leadership was initially very close to the communists, though, it was not necessarily out of touch with the party grassroots. The October 1945 ČSSD congress confirmed several pro-communists in leading positions and the principle of cooperation with the communists was shared right across the party.

The post-liberation leadership of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) experienced far greater difficulties in establishing its legitimacy. These difficulties had their origins in the dispute over the rightful Polish government. In February 1943, the Kremlin had severed diplomatic relations with the Polish government in London exile over the controversy surrounding the Soviet massacre of Polish officers in the Katyn forests. Moscow then proceeded quickly to set up what was effectively a rival government in exile – the heavily communist-dominated Polish National Liberation Committee (PKWN). The PKWN formed the provisional Polish government that took office in Soviet-liberated Lublin in August 1944. The Lublin government was notionally a coalition – of the newly-founded

20 There is much debate as to whether Fierlinger, who was instrumental bringing about the June 1948 merger of the ČSSD and the KSČ, was a communist double agent all along. The who’s who of twentieth-century Czechoslovakian history even claims that he had been collaborating with the NKVD – the Soviet Union’s secret service – since the mid-1930s: Milan Churaň, Kdo byl kdo v našich dějinách ve 20. století, (Prague: Libri, 1994), p. 111.


22 Ibid, pp. 61-62.

(communist) Polish Workers’ Party (PPR) as well as three left-wing and centre-left parties with roots in interwar Poland: the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the Democratic Party (SD), and the People’s Party (SL). In reality, though, the leaders of the three non-communist parties had often been hand-picked by the PPR and were completely subservient to the communists and the Soviet Union.

This was certainly true for the Lublin PPS. Its leader – Edward Osóbka-Morawski – had been part of a left-wing splinter group of the mainstream PPS underground organisation Freedom, Equality, Independence (WRN). He was amongst the very few Polish resisters who were willing to work with the communists in the first place. In May 1944, as part of a communist-socialist delegation, he made his way to the territories liberated by the Red Army. Visiting Moscow that same month, he joined forces with pro-communist Polish socialists who had spent the war in the Soviet Union and was promptly appointed as Prime Minister of the PKWN by Stalin. Dominated by fellow-travellers who had been on the radical left of interwar socialism, then, the Lublin PPS initially bore little resemblance to the pre-war PPS. Small wonder, its legitimacy was fiercely contested by both the London PPS and the WRN, which denounced the Lublin PPS leadership as usurpers of the Polish socialist tradition and branded the party the ‘false’ or ‘concessionary’ PPS.

Towards the end of 1944, though, things began looking up both for the Lublin PPS and for the Lublin government. In November, Stanisław Mikołajczyk – the Prime Minister of the London government – resigned his post in frustration over his fellow ministers’ reluctance to compromise with the Lublin government and the Soviet Union. Several London socialists followed in his footsteps and together they entered into negotiations with the Lublin parties. In June 1945, these negotiations led to the creation of a new government.

– the Provisional Government of National Unity – in which Mikołajczyk became Deputy Prime Minister, leading London socialist Jan Stańczyk became Minister of Labour, and two further interwar political heavyweights took up ministerial roles. Even if the communists and their partners very much remained in control, the new government was sufficiently representative for the Western Allies to recognise it as the legitimate government of Poland – effectively ending any hopes the London government might still have enjoyed of returning to Poland.

The legitimacy of the Lublin PPS, meanwhile, was strengthened considerably by the inclusion of former Londoners. What is more, the WRN dissolved itself in February 1945. Much of the WRN’s rank and file seems to have subsequently decided to join the Lublin PPS, which saw its membership rise spectacularly in the first half of 1945. Whatever the origins of the membership surge, it was certainly accompanied by a more independence-minded mood within the Lublin PPS. This became very clear at the party’s July-August 1945 congress, where the party leadership failed in its attempt to push through a new party programme and former WRN member Josef Cyrankiewicz replaced former Muscovite Stefan Matuszewski as the party’s Secretary General. Unlike the two other non-communist parties that had been part of the PKWN, then, the Lublin PPS managed to wrest itself from complete dependency upon the communists. Together with the PPR and Mikołajczyk’s new Polish Peasant Party (PSL), it was to become one of the three key forces in post-war Polish politics.

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First Electoral Tests

The provisional period came to an end with the first post-war parliamentary elections. Compared to the last pre-war elections, these elections witnessed a strong left-wing surge in each of the four countries. For socialist parties, though, the results were mixed. To be sure, with right-wing parties, liberal parties especially, suffering heavy losses, the socialists were now able to govern without those liberals who had often been their strongest adversaries in the provisional governments. At the same time, however, it was the communists rather than the socialists who turned out to be the main beneficiaries of the post-war swing to the Left. Gradually abandoning their post-liberation moderation, moreover, the communist parties began urging socialists to unite with them against the Right – forcing the four parties to show their hands for the first time.

Almost three years after Allied troops first set feet on Italian soil, national elections were finally organised. In certain respects, these elections, which took place on 2 June 1946, were a success story for the Italian socialists. The PSIUP became the largest force on the Left in the freshly-elected Constituent Assembly, winning 20.7% of the popular vote and 115 seats to the PCI’s 18.9% and 104 seats. The socialists were likewise on the victorious side of the institutional referendum, held on the same day as the parliamentary elections, in which more than 54% of the electorate voted to replace the monarchy with a republic. At the same time, however, the elections were a major defeat for the Italian Left. The combined Left – even if we include such centre-left parties as the Action Party and the Italian Republican Party (PRI) – fell well short of a parliamentary majority. Both the PSIUP and the PCI, moreover, were dwarfed by the Christian democrats – the DC winning 35.2% of the vote and 207 seats.
In the new De Gasperi government that was formed in the aftermath of the elections – a four-party coalition of the PCI, the PSIUP, the DC, and the PRI – the Christian democrats thus remained very much in charge. The PSIUP’s new Minister of Industry – Rodolfo Morandi – experienced this first-hand. By contemporary European standards, his proposals were far from radical. Widespread nationalisation programmes, by that time well-underway in a string of countries in East and West, were not on the table in post-war Italy to begin with. Yet, even Morandi’s moderate agenda – which included the legal recognition of factory councils and a modicum of state intervention in industrial financing and planning – was consistently voted down by the centre-right parliamentary majority. The ‘fourteen points’ – a series of planning measures and economic controls to combat rampant inflation and speculation, which Morandi presented to the Council of Ministers in March 1947 – did not even make it that far. 29 ‘[W]ithin fifteen days’, Morandi lamented to the PSIUP Directorate, De Gasperi had created a situation in which the fourteen points ‘no longer have value’. 30

In these circumstances, just as many other Western European socialist parties were moving away from the communists, the PSIUP decided to renew its Unity of Action Pact with the PCI in October 1946. 31 According to the PSIUP’s foremost post-war leader, Pietro Nenni, the pact was to re-affirm left unity in the face of the DC. 32 But for the right wing of the party, led by Giuseppe Saragat, the alliance with the ‘totalitarian’ PCI would necessarily result in the PSIUP’s progressive subjugation to and eventual liquidation by the communists. Matters came to a head after the PCI made substantial gains at the PSIUP’s expense in November 1946 local elections. In a newspaper interview that had the effect of

31 The pact has been published in: Orientamenti: Bollettino di Commento e Indirizzo Politico, 2/1-2 (1948), pp. 35-37.
an ‘atomic bomb’, Saragat denounced the party leadership for harbouring secret desires to merge with the PCI.\(^{33}\) To settle the debate once and for all, an extraordinary PSIUP congress was called to Rome’s *Città Universitaria* in January 1947. When, at that congress, the motion put forward by Nenni and Lelio Basso, Saragat’s main adversary in the PSIUP leadership, won the backing of 65% of the delegates, Saragat and his supporters left for the nearby *Palazzo Barberini*. There, they founded the Italian Socialist Workers’ Party (PSLI), which, over the next couple of months, was to wean from the PSIUP fifty-two of its parliamentarians.\(^{34}\)

The first parliamentary elections in post-war France also saw the three large currents of communism, socialism, and Christian democracy take approximately three-quarters of the popular vote. Unlike in Italy, however, there was almost nothing between the three parties in the October 1945 elections to the Constituent Assembly: the PCF emerged as the largest party with 26.1% of the vote, the MRP followed in second place with 25.6%, and the SFIO came third with 24.6%. If the elections returned communists and socialists with an overall majority, nothing much seemed to change initially as the Assembly re-elected General De Gaulle as Prime Minister. Yet, De Gaulle quickly became embroiled in a bitter struggle with the parties dominating the Assembly. At stake was the nature of the new constitution. De Gaulle, viewing strong parliaments as arenas of crippling indecision and petty party squabbles, favoured a presidential system with large powers for the executive. The three main parties, conversely, by and large wanted to retain the parliamentary system of the pre-war Third French Republic.\(^{35}\) After the parliamentary groups of the PCF and the SFIO had united to demand a 20% reduction of the military

\(^{33}\) Di Scala, *Renewing Italian Socialism*, p. 58.


\(^{35}\) Even if the three parties got their way in the end, the Fourth Republic was of course not an exact replica of the Third. For the new elements, see: Emmanuel Cartier, ‘The Liberation and the Institutional Question in France’, in: Andrew Knapp (ed.), *The Uncertain Foundation: France at the Liberation, 1944-1947*, (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 23-40.
budget, De Gaulle, complaining that ‘the exclusive regime of the parties’ had reappeared, resigned in January 1946.36

A new tripartite government of the PCF, the SFIO, and the MRP was then formed by the socialist Felix Gouin. During its six-month tenure, the new government implemented many of the socialist-supported socio-economic policies that the provisional government had rejected: the gas, electricity, and (most of the) insurance sectors were nationalised, whilst the SFIO’s André Philip set about to realise a state-directed economy as the new Minister of the National Economy and Finance. The three parties could not agree on the new constitution, however. The PCF and the SFIO, mindful of how the upper house had obstructed left-wing governments before the war, were proponents of a unicameral system in which all power lay with the directly elected Assembly and the President would take a largely ceremonial role. The MRP, on the other hand, called for the powers of the Assembly to be counterbalanced by an indirectly elected upper house and for the President to be given real powers. By virtue of their parliamentary majority, communists and socialists managed to put their version of the constitution before the country in the May 1946 constitutional referendum. But the MRP fought a successful anti-communist campaign for a no-vote, leading the constitutional project to be defeated by 10.5 million to 9.4 million votes.37

In the elections to a fresh Constituent Assembly that followed in June, the MRP (28.2%) gained, whereas the PCF (25.9%) and the SFIO (21.1%) lost ground. A new tripartite government – led this time by Georges Bidault (MRP) – was to arrive at a compromise over the constitution. This revised constitutional project, which provided for a weak upper house and a President with some powers, was adopted by 9.0 million to 7.8

million votes (on a turnout of just 68%) in October 1946. On the basis of the new
constitution, elections to the National Assembly were held in November. In these elections,
the last parliamentary elections for five years, the PCF (28.3%) obtained its best ever
result, overtaking the MRP (26.0%) and leaving the SFIO (17.9%) well behind.

By that time, the SFIO’s steady electoral slide had already resulted in the demise of
its post-liberation Secretary General Daniel Mayer. A close ally of the SFIO’s pre-war
leader Léon Blum, Mayer had sought to broaden the party’s appeal by reaching out to
Christians and the lower middle classes. But in a party strongly attached to its proletarian
character and fiercely anti-clerical in its outlook such designs met with much suspicion.
The lack of electoral success sealed Mayer’s fate. At the August 1946 SFIO congress, Guy
Mollet, whose successful pitch for the party leadership revolved around a re-affirmation
of the party’s traditional revolutionary rhetoric and a renunciation of anything suggesting that
the SFIO had become ‘a party of the system’, replaced him as Secretary General. If Mayer
had warned that a victory for Mollet would amount to a major success for the
communists, the reality was that his election did not essentially change the party’s
course. Much like Mayer, Mollet was quick to turn down communist overtures for PCF-
SFIO unity of action. And when the new party leadership tried to whip its parliamentary
group into supporting the PCF candidate for the Prime Ministry after the November 1946

38 Ibid, p. 106.
39 Alain Bergounioux & Gérard Grunberg, L’ambition et les remords: Les socialistes français et le pouvoir
(1905-2005), (Paris: Fayard, 2005), pp. 168-169; Bruce Desmond Graham, Choice and Democratic Order:
40 In a segment of his address that was not without hyperbole, Mayer warned of the Europe-wide
repercussions of his defeat. According to Mayer, a majority for Mollet would result in ‘the failure of the
current politics of the Italian Socialist Party and the victory […] of the [Italian] Communist Party over the
Italian Socialist Party. There will be the same type of problems in Belgium. [And] there will be municipal
elections in Germany in two weeks. You know of the struggles between the independent Schumacher and the
communist Grotter Vohl [sic]. The French Socialist Party has an enormous influence. People are watching
what it does, what its leaders think and want’. ‘Parti Socialiste SFIO: 38ème Congrès national, 29, 30 31 août
URL: http://flipbook.archives-socialistes.fr/index.html?docid=51052&language=fra&userid=0
(last consulted: 22 March 2015).
elections, ‘the fierceness of the reactions’ was such that the leadership decided to retreat and give its parliamentarians a free vote.42

In Czechoslovakia, the electoral divide between communists and social democrats was even more pronounced. In the May 1946 parliamentary elections, the KSČ came out as the largest party by far with 38.0% of the popular vote, whilst the ČSSD finished last out of the five parties that had been part of the provisional government with a mere 12.3%. Abysmal as the ČSSD’s result may have been, however, the parliamentary elections did see the social democrats emerge as kingmakers in Czechoslovakian politics. With its thirty-seven parliamentary deputies, after all, the ČSSD was in a position to provide both the communists and the three centre-right parties with a majority. In the new government under KSČ leader Klement Gottwald, which was made up of the same five parties that had formed the provisional government, the ČSSD leadership set about to make the most of its role as ‘balance-tipper’.43

The party, accordingly, abandoned its post-liberation politics of extremely close, almost unquestioned cooperation with the communists. After the elections, this more autonomous line vis-à-vis the KSČ won the support of a clear majority in the ČSSD leadership. In fact, only the ‘left-wing group’ of now Deputy Prime Minister Zdeněk Fierlinger still favoured the old formula of ‘no struggle on the Left’.44 But both the ‘centrists’ around returning Minister of Industry Bohumil Laušman and the ‘right wing’ led by Minister of Food Václav Majer called for the ČSSD to more emphatically underline its independent character.45 That did not mean, however, that the party turned its back on the communists altogether: the stronger demarcation between communism and social democracy on the left was to be matched by a commensurate demarcation between the

42 André Philip is reported to have said that he would ‘rather cut through his wrist’ than vote for PCF leader Maurice Thorez. Elgey, *La République des illusions*, p. 231.
43 Kaplan, *Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis*, p. 79.
45 Pernes, ‘Vztahy ČSSD a KSČ’, p. 29.
ČSSD and the three parties to its right and, especially for the centrist, the communists very much remained the preferred partners. Yet, with the possibility of conflicts with the KSČ no longer ruled out, the social democrats quickly found themselves at loggerheads with the communists.

For the ČSSD responded to the increasingly authoritarian conduct of communist leaders at the head of key governmental departments and the trade union movement. The social democrats’ complaints about the communists chiefly revolved around three issues. In the first place, they protested against the state of affairs at the Ministry of the Interior, where KSČ minister Václav Nosek was steadily expanding the communist hold over the security forces by centralising command structures and making overtly political appointments. Secondly, they expressed serious misgivings about the methods used by the communist Minister of Agriculture Julius Šuriš, who repeatedly reverted to street and village campaigns to force the KSČ’s ever more radical proposals on land reform through parliament. Thirdly, they sharply condemned ‘the communist terror against social democrats’ in factories, which sometimes went as far as attempts to liquidate entire ČSSD factory organisations. This more and more heavy-handed demeanour on the part of the communists had two effects upon the ČSSD: it increasingly drove the party into the arms of the three centre-right parties, with which the social democrats voted to amend or defeat significant parts of the legislation put forward by Nosek and Šuriš, and it completely pitted the social democratic grassroots against the communists. These twin developments strongly affected ČSSD attitudes when socio-political polarisation reached new heights in the second half of 1947.

If political relations in Czechoslovakia only truly came under strain after the elections, Poland had effectively been divided in two camps before parliamentary elections.

46 Kaplan, Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis, pp. 78-80.
were finally held in January 1947. When the Provisional Government of National Unity came into being in mid-1945, the communists had still indicated that elections would be held as soon as possible – with early 1946 mentioned as likely at the time. Yet, over 1945 and 1946, the PPR and the PPS kept pushing the date for elections forward. For both communists and socialists were acutely aware of their weakness vis-à-vis the Polish Peasant Party. The November 1945 elections in Hungary, a country with a social structure similar to that of Poland, had seen a peasant party that was in many ways the mirror image of the PSL win an absolute majority. In Poland, where elections were likely to turn into ‘a plebiscite’ on the Soviet Union, prospects for the parties most closely associated with the new order were, if anything, even bleaker.

To neutralise the electoral threat from the PSL, communists and socialists first suggested that all (legal) parties, rather than presenting separate lists, would run the elections as a common bloc. In February 1946, the PPR and PPS leaderships published a joint proposal for the creation of a ‘bloc of six’ – consisting of the four Lublin parties as well as the PSL and the small (Christian democratic) Labour Party (SP). It soon became apparent, however, that the parties could not agree on how parliamentary seats would be distributed after the elections. The original communist-socialist proposal stipulated that the four ‘larger’ parties (the PPR, the PPS, the SL, and the PSL) would each receive an equal number of seats and the two ‘smaller’ parties (the SD and the SP) a lower number. Well aware that this would guarantee the PPR and its vassals in the SL and the SD a parliamentary majority, the PSL demanded instead that, in line with the social make-up of Poland, three-quarters of the seats would be awarded to ‘representatives of the

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48 This was at least what communist leader Władysław Gomułka expected. See: Kersten, The Establishment of Communist Rule, p. 234.
This was an unacceptable condition for the communists as well as the socialists, though, and the negotiations broke down in mutual recriminations.

In March 1946, the communists decided to postpone the elections again. In their place, a ‘popular referendum’ was called for June 1946, in which the Polish people were asked whether they approved the abolition of the upper house (question 1), whether they approved nationalisations and land reform (question 2), and whether they approved the new Polish-German border along the Oder-Neiße line (question 3). Both communists and socialists campaigned for a yes-vote on each of these three questions. Yet, the PSL urged its supporters to vote no on the first question, effectively turning the referendum into a showdown between the two opposing camps. The communists certainly did all in their power to obtain the ‘three-times-yes’ they so desired: the referendum campaign saw a massive propaganda effort for a yes-vote and those calling for a (partial) no-vote met with administrative obstruction and police intimidation.

Despite all this, as many as 80% of voters may have voted no on the first question, with the second question possibly also defeated. Although the communists, assisted by falsification ‘experts’ from the Soviet Union, made sure that the official results gave the yes-camp a clear victory on each of the three questions (68% on question 1; 77% on question 2; and 91% on question 3), the real outcome spoke volumes about the prospects of the Lublin parties in parliamentary elections. Chiefly on the initiative of the PPS, therefore,

49 The vagueness of this formulation – the communist-dominated SL, after all, also claimed to represent the countryside – leaves some room for interpretation. Yet, both Anita Prazmowska and Jan Tomicki understand it to mean that the PSL demanded 75% of parliamentary seats for itself: Prazmowska, ‘The Polish Socialist Party’, p. 349; Jan Tomicki, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 1892-1948, (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1983), p. 474.
50 The report that the PSL drew up on the abuses surrounding the referendum estimated that 83.3% of voters voted no on the first question. As no vote count actually took place and the communists simply replaced no with yes ballots, burning or flushing down the toilet the discarded no ballots, it is impossible to verify this claim. We do know some local results, however, and these seem to confirm the PSL report. For even in such industrial towns as Rzeszów and Stałowa Wola, where the communists had expected to perform far better than in the countryside, 79% and 80% of the voters respectively voted no on question 1. What was more, these towns also voted no on question 2 by 73% and 69% respectively. See Kersten, The Establishment of Communist Rule, pp. 280-282; John Coutouvidis & Jaime Reynolds, Poland 1939-1947, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986), pp. 253-254.
socialists and communists renewed their offer of an electoral ‘bloc of six’ in the aftermath of the referendum. But the PSL remained unwilling to join the bloc on the terms set by the PPR and the PPS and, by late September, the four Lublin parties announced that they would run the January 1947 elections on a common list – as the ‘Democratic Bloc’.

The months that followed witnessed the increasing polarisation of Polish society. In November, the PPR and the PPS entered into a united front agreement, the text of which committed the two parties to an eventual merger. The PSL, meanwhile, became the subject of ‘mass repression’, which included the arrest of countless, frequently local and provincial, party leaders, a search of the party headquarters by the security services, and the repeated police interrogation of party activists. The election itself, finally, took place in an atmosphere of intimidation – with Democratic Bloc agitators forcing their way into millions of homes during the campaign and factory workers and local communities being led to the polling station collectively to cast their vote before the eyes of such agitators on election day. In these circumstances, the parliamentary elections in Poland, which, after due falsification, returned the Democratic Bloc with 80.1% of the popular vote, were no more than a farce.

**The Endgame**

The kind of left-right polarisation that came early to Poland gradually took hold across continental Europe. During 1947 and 1948, the post-war grand coalitions were reconstituted on a narrower basis in each of the four countries. At least three (interconnected) factors were at play in the demise of the post-war coalition. In the first

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52 Spalek, ‘Między pragmatyzmem a zdradą’, pp. 203-204.
54 On the many abuses surrounding the elections, see: *Ibid*, pp. 316-341.
place, the coalitions were already crumbling under their own weight. As conventional politics steadily gained the upper hand over the immediate needs of the reconstruction effort, it became increasingly difficult to find common ground amongst the unlikely bedfellows that made up the post-war coalitions. Secondly, the coalitions were rattled by various forms of social unrest as 1947 progressed. Strikes, street campaigns, and large demonstrations, often instigated by those same actors that had preached moderation and national unity in the aftermath of liberation, all contributed to putting relations between the parties under strain. Thirdly, the coming of the Cold War was accompanied by fresh pressures upon governments in East and West. As the Americans began to push for the communists to be removed from government in Western Europe and the Soviets instructed the communists to consolidate their hold on power in Eastern Europe, the four parties had to decide where their allegiance lay.

In Italy, the impetus for the denouement of the grand coalition definitely came from the Christian democrats. In the same November 1946 local elections that had seen the PCI overtake the PSIUP for the first time, the DC suffered bad losses. Support for the party had more than halved compared to the June parliamentary elections, whilst the neo-fascist and populist Front of the Common Man made spectacular gains. The Vatican and the business community then started to press De Gasperi to remove the Left from his government. But the Prime Minister, who still needed communists and socialists to back (and share the blame for) the unfavourable peace treaty that the Italian government would have to sign at the Paris Peace Conference in February 1947, did not consider the time ripe just yet. In the absence of any governmental agreement on economic policy, however, inflation remained rampant and, as a consequence, the Christian democrats kept losing support.

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56 During a September 1946 conversation with Henry Tasca, the economic counsellor at the American Embassy, De Gasperi had already indicated that he only foresaw a rupture with the communists after the signing of the Peace Treaty: Marialuisa-Lucia Sergio, *De Gasperi e la “questione socialista”: l’anti-communismo democratico e l’alternativa riformista*, (Istituto Luigi Sturzo: Rome, 2004), p. 105.
After another disastrous round of local elections for the DC in April, and buoyed by the removal of the PCF from the French government in early May, De Gasperi finally resigned on 13 May 1947.

Following a brief interlude during which the liberal Francesco Saverio Nitti failed to obtain a majority for a new government, De Gasperi then set about to form a coalition without the PCI and the PSIUP. Yet, his preferred partners on the centre-left, the republican PRI and Saragat’s PSLI, refused to join. This forced De Gasperi to form a minority DC-only government, which needed the support of the combined Right (including the Front of the Common Man) to get its programme through parliament. The new government’s policies reflected this transformed support base. Luigi Einaudi, the liberal Minister of the Budget charged with bringing inflation under control, swiftly implemented an austerity programme that, in its reliance on the free market, was in many ways the polar opposite of Morandi’s fourteen-point agenda. Although the ‘Einaudi line’ succeeded in bringing down inflation to much lower levels, its severe credit restrictions quickly saw business investment drying up.

The resulting rise in unemployment further aggravated already tense social relations. Mass lay-offs unleashed a wave of mostly spontaneous worker protests and strikes during the autumn of 1947, which were met with an increasingly heavy-handed response from the Minister of the Interior Mario Scelba (DC). Ever since taking office in February 1947, he had been purging all levels of the police of former partisans. The officers who took their place were told to clamp down forcefully on every manifestation of

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57 Whilst officially a single-party DC government, the new government did include some non-DC ministers – most notably Carlo Sforza (PRI) as Foreign Minister and Luigi Einaudi (PLI) as Minister of the Budget: Malgeri, La stagione del centrismo, p. 50.

58 La linea Einaudi, therefore, was by no means uncontroversial with Italian employers. In fact, the ‘great majority’ of protests against the government’s credit politics came not from trade unions but from employers’ organisations: Agostino Giovagnoli, L’Italia nel nuovo ordine mondiale: politica ed economia dal 1945 al 1947, (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2000), pp. 173-177.
left-wing radicalism. And so they did. In the context of Scelba’s endeavours to ‘conquer the streets’, which saw the notorious riot police repeatedly opening fire upon industrial or rural agitations, Lelio Basso even spoke of ‘a veritable fascist danger’.

In this climate of mounting socio-political polarisation, the PSIUP drew ever closer to the PCI. It was the socialists, who, in November 1947, proposed that the two parties would run the April 1948 parliamentary elections on a common list. After successful experiences with common lists in several local elections, both communists and socialists were confident that they would be able to defeat the DC by presenting a united front – and, in December 1947, the Popular Democratic Front (FDP) was formed. The first months of 1948, however, witnessed a sharp upswing in Christian democratic fortunes. As the first Marshall Aid began to arrive, the material situation improved. During the election campaign, moreover, the DC benefitted greatly from the backing of both the Vatican and the United States. The PCI and the PSIUP, meanwhile, were forced on the defensive by the February 1948 communist coup in Czechoslovakia. After the PSIUP leadership had justified the events in Prague as a ‘popular revolution’ and sent a congratulatory telegram to Fierlinger, the international socialist movement formally endorsed Saragat’s Socialist Unity list against that of the FDP.

All of these factors came together to turn the April 1948 parliamentary elections into a particularly traumatic experience for the PSIUP. Whereas the DC won 48.5% of the

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59 Paul Ginsborg, for example, argues that the police ‘were encouraged to intervene incisively and brutally against all working-class or peasant protests that transcended narrow boundaries’: Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 112.


61 As Aldo Agosti points out, the PSIUP offer was motivated in part ‘by a desire to camouflage in a single result the expected electoral losses of the socialists, weakened by the split’: Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*, p. 191.


vote and an absolute parliamentary majority, the FDP lost almost a quarter of those who had voted communist or socialist in June 1946 and only obtained 31.0%. Worse still for the socialists, the overwhelming majority of votes cast for the FDP had gone to communist candidates, leaving the PSIUP with just 41 parliamentarians against 140 for the PCI. The rupture with mainstream Western European social democracy that was already very much on display during the election campaign, moreover, quickly proved beyond repair. When even the new, more autonomist party leadership that was briefly in charge after the election defeat refused to renounce the Unity of Action Pact, the PSIUP was first suspended and then expelled from the international socialist movement, with the PSLI taking its place. It was not until the PSIUP abandoned its alliance with the PCI after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 that the party would manage to escape from its domestic and international ostracism.

In France, by contrast, the events of 1947 and 1948 made sure that the socialists would remain at the heart of government for most of the next decade. In just how pivotal a position the SFIO found itself already became very obvious during the protracted negotiations following the November 1946 parliamentary elections. After both Maurice Thorez (PCF) and Georges Bidault (MRP) failed to obtain a parliamentary majority to form a new government, eyes turned towards the socialists. To break the deadlock, the SFIO leadership convinced Léon Blum, in old age and poor health, to put himself forward as Prime Ministerial candidate of a transition government. Whilst the Assembly almost unanimously invested Blum with the power to form a government, he was unable to put together a coalition. As the largest party, the PCF demanded one of the three ‘grand ministries’ (Interior Affairs, Foreign Affairs, or Defence), but the MRP refused to join the government if Blum were to give any of these posts to the communists. The only option that commanded majority parliamentary support, then, was a temporary single-party SFIO
government to address pressing economic issues whilst seeing the newly-founded Fourth Republic through the elections to the Presidency and the Speaker of the National Assembly.

As soon as these offices were filled, Blum resigned. In the new government subsequently formed by the socialist Paul Ramadier – a four-party coalition of the PCF, the SFIO, the MRP, and the Radical Party (by that time re-branded as the RGR) – the communists did obtain one of their prized ministries: with François Billoux becoming Minister of Defence (though he was immediately stripped of any command over the armed forces by the creation of three separate Ministries for War, for the Air Force, and for the Marine). And it was on military questions that the first cracks in the coalition quickly appeared. By March 1947, the PCF made it clear that it could no longer support the colonial war France was waging in Indo-China. Ramadier then called a confidence vote, in which the communist ministers voted for the government and the remainder of the PCF parliamentary party abstained. The coalition survived, but the episode convinced leading socialists that a rupture with the communists would be ‘inevitable’ sooner or later.64

They would not have to wait long. When, in late April, a Trotskyite-inspired strike broke out at the Renault factory, the communist-dominated trade union confederation (CGT), after unsuccessfully trying to quell the strike, found itself forced to come out in favour of the strikers’ wage demands. Ever since the liberation, the CGT, in an effort to showcase the communists’ good faith, had done all in its power to hold back strikes. Yet, in a situation of decreasing working-class living standards, by mid-1947 they were at half their 1945 levels, this had come at the price of alienating a growing part of the communist industrial clientele.65 The Renault strike was the final straw. Faced with the prospect of

64 Elgey, La République des illusions, p. 261.
65 In the first trimester of 1947, the CGT had seen its membership decline by 7%, whereas, in the April 1947 elections to the (trade union managed) social security organisations, the CGT had done particularly poorly in
losing (further) control of the working class, the communists revoked their support of the
government’s wage restraint policies. Ramadier did not wait long to call a new confidence
vote, which he won handsomely, but in which the communist ministers, along with the
PCF parliamentary party, voted against their own government. In an extraordinary session
of the Council of Ministers on 4 May 1947, the Prime Minister expelled the communist
ministers from his government – bringing an end to the tripartite experiment in post-war
France.

The question of how to proceed divided the SFIO. Amongst socialist ministers and
parliamentarians, there was strong support for moving ahead with a centrist government of
the SFIO, the MRP, and the RGR. A majority in the Mollet-led SFIO Directorate,
however, wanted Ramadier to resign and the SFIO to press for a new single-party socialist
government. To resolve the matter, an extraordinary session of the SFIO’s National
Council was called for 6 May. Opening the session, Mollet reiterated the foremost
argument that had won him the party leadership: that an exclusive socialist coalition with
the MRP and the Radicals would estrange the SFIO from its working-class roots. This time
around, however, that argument was trumped by the more urgent considerations put
forward by Ramadier, Blum, and a series of socialist ministers. With delegates voting by
2529 to 2125 for the Ramadier government to remain in office, the National Council
heeded their warnings that a socialist exit from the government would see the country
descend into chaos, see inflation spinning out of control, and endanger the Republic
itself.66

This perceived danger to the Republic had everything to do with General De
Gaulle’s return to the political scene. After his January 1946 resignation, De Gaulle had

URL: http://flipbook.archives-socialistes.fr/index.html?docid=51980&language=fra&userid=0
(last consulted: 22 March 2015).
remained silent for almost six months – offering no comment on the constitutional project that was defeated in the May referendum. Following the June elections to the Constituent Assembly, however, he presented his outline for a presidential constitution at a mass rally in Bayeux. Over the next year-and-a-half, this type of mass political gathering was to become the trademark Gaullist intervention in public life. The most significant of these came in Strasbourg in April 1947, where De Gaulle announced the founding of his own political movement: the Rally of the French People (RPF). This new formation, with the aim of propelling De Gaulle to power on the wings of a new constitution, took France by storm during the first months of its existence. Within a couple of months, it boasted 400.000 members, second only to the PCF. And in the October 1947 local elections, it made spectacular gains: winning 38% of the vote and seeing its candidates become mayor in a quarter of cities with more than 9000 inhabitants (including Bordeaux, Lille, Marseille, and Rennes). Buoyed by the result, De Gaulle called for the immediate dissolution of parliament, for fresh parliamentary elections, and a revision of the constitution.

To make matters worse for the government, the RPF offensive coincided with a PCF offensive. In the first months after their removal from government, communist leaders, expecting a rapid return to office, had still urged caution – seeking to restrain the strike wave of the summer of 1947 and even taking a moderately positive attitude towards the Marshall Plan when it was first unveiled. All of this changed, however, after the PCF attended the founding conference of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) – effectively a new Communist International for those six Eastern European and two Western European communist parties deemed sufficiently significant by Stalin – in September 1947. At this secret meeting, during which the French and Italian communists

67 Apart from the rallies mentioned above, there were to be further major episodes in Épinal (September 1946), where De Gaulle denounced the constitutional compromise arrived at by the PCF, SFIO, and MRP, and, surrounding and after the establishment of the RPF, in Bruneval (March 1947), Bordeaux (May 1947), Lille (June 1947), Rennes (July 1947), and Vincennes (October 1947).

came under severe attack for their ‘parliamentarian illusions’ and for having allowed themselves to be removed from government, the Soviets signalled the end of the national road to socialism.\(^69\) In line with these fresh Soviet instructions, the PCF made it clear that it would not be joining any more coalition governments, whilst embarking on a press campaign vilifying the socialists as ‘imperialist lackeys’. It was this newfound rhetorical bravado, rather than some insurrectionary design on the part of communist leaders, that led a fresh strike wave in November and December 1947 to spin rapidly out of control.\(^70\)

Irrespective of the PCF’s real intentions, though, socialist leaders certainly believed they were dealing with a communist insurrection. When the Ramadier government collapsed at the height of the strike wave, therefore, far fewer socialists had qualms about renewing the coalition with the MRP and the Radicals than six months before. In fact, the conception of ‘the Third Force’ – a centrist coalition of those parties committed to parliamentary democracy, simultaneously fighting off the communist challenge on the Left and the Gaullist challenge on the Right – was now also taken up by Mollet. In the new government under Robert Schuman (MRP), accordingly, the SFIO would cement its position as ‘party of the system’. Jules Moch, the incoming socialist Minister of the Interior, immediately mobilised the riot police and the army against the strikers and managed to defeat the strike wave by mid-December. By restoring order, the government won a double victory: it had seen off a communist ‘insurrection’ and had proven to the nation that France could be governed without General De Gaulle.\(^71\) Thus stabilised, the Third Force coalition would remain in office until 1951.

\(^70\) Starting in Marseille, strikes spread rapidly through the country, with more than a million workers on strike within weeks, and saw such overt acts of sabotage as the derailment of the Paris-Tourcoing express, which left fifteen death. See on this strike wave: Mencherini, Guerre froide, grèves rouges. 
Czechoslovakian politics entered a similarly stormy phase in the summer of 1947. For, much like their French and Italian counterparts, the Czechoslovakian communists suddenly found themselves confronted with the Soviet disavowal of the moderate line they had followed up to that point. After first having accepted an invitation to the Paris conference on the Marshall Plan, the Czechoslovakian government was forced into a humiliating retreat by Stalin personally in July 1947. At the founding conference of the Cominform, moreover, the KSČ became the object of much criticism in the slipstream of the PCI and the PCF – with one delegate going as far as arguing that the Czechoslovakian communists had already missed their chance to take power and would meet the same fate as their French comrades. In these circumstances, the KSČ leadership decided to go on the offensive in August 1947.72

This offensive found its first expression in the far more radical and populist approach the communists took to socio-economic questions. There was ample scope for such a politics, as, by mid-1947, the Czechoslovakian economy was stalling, the food situation worsening, and the working class becoming increasingly restless. The communists did all in their power to play to worker sentiments: instigating a series of violently anti-Semitic strikes against returning state-managed companies to their rightful Jewish owners and proposing a special ‘millionaires’ tax’ to prevent the state-sanctioned price of grain from going up. The bitter and confrontational street campaigns that frequently accompanied these communist initiatives much alarmed the ČSSD leadership. At a meeting of the party presidium in early September, Laušman claimed that the KSČ seemed determined on following the path already taken by the other Eastern European communist parties. ČSSD Secretary General Blažej Vilím, for his part, argued that the KSČ wanted to create ‘an atmosphere of fear’ in order to win a majority in the May 1948

parliamentary elections. Once again, only those on the Left of the party leadership struck a more conciliatory tone, attributing the recent communist excesses to a feeling of isolation to which the ČSSD had itself contributed.\(^{73}\)

Even if most other leaders roundly rejected this reasoning, the ČSSD leadership did sanction three of its left-wingers to begin talks with the communists. The delegation of three – consisting of Deputy Prime Minister Zdeněk Fierlinger, trade union leader Evžen Erban, and Deputy ČSSD Chairman František Tymeš – entered into the talks with strict instructions, though. At the very least, the KSČ had to speak out for democracy and stop the ‘terror’ against social democrats in factories. Any agreement between the KSČ and the ČSSD, moreover, had to be extended to the National Socialists of the ČSNS. On 11 September, the two delegations reached an agreement in principle, which committed the two parties to concerted action in the ‘millionaires’ tax’ controversy, to continued cooperation with all governmental parties, and to a revival of the wartime ‘Socialist Bloc’ of the KSČ, the ČSSD, and the ČSNS. Yet, before the ČSSD leadership and parliamentary group had signed off on the agreement, the KSČ published it.\(^{74}\) The result was a huge backlash. The ČSNS vehemently attacked the social democrats for having succumbed to communist pressure for ‘a Marxist bloc’. Minister of Food Václav Majer, the foremost leader of the ČSSD’s right wing, tendered his resignation and could only be convinced to stay on by a joint plea of the entire presidium except for Fierlinger and Deputy Speaker of Parliament Oldřich John. At the local and provincial level, moreover, several ČSSD branches began calling for Fierlinger’s head.

In this atmosphere, the ČSSD’s November 1947 congress turned into a showdown between the left-wingers who had by and large been in charge since 1945 and those faithful to the party’s pre-war traditions. The centre and the right wing of the ČSSD now

\(^{73}\) Kaplan, *Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis*, p. 121.

\(^{74}\) Pernes, ‘Vztahy ČSSD a KSČ’, p. 31.
united behind Laušman’s bid to oust Fierlinger as party chairman. What had already become obvious at the pre-congress meetings of provincial ČSSD departments was confirmed at the congress, as Laušman defeated Fierlinger by 283 to 182 votes.\textsuperscript{75} What was more, as Denis Healey, attending the congress as British Labour Party representative, pointed out, the incoming party presidium ‘contains in a large majority supporters of an independent line to the Communists’. With the much-maligned Erban voted off the party leadership altogether, the ‘only outstanding party leader’ still supporting Fierlinger was John.\textsuperscript{76}

The new ČSSD leadership, however, was at pains to stress that the personal changes would not alter the party’s course.\textsuperscript{77} During the months that followed Laušman’s election, then, the social democrats stuck to the line they had pursued since the parliamentary elections: advocating co-operation with the communists as a matter of principle, but often siding with the three centre-right parties in practice. This line was soon to become untenable, though. After defeats in separate disputes about wages and land reform had already prompted the KSČ to convene mass worker and peasant meetings, the Council of Ministers of 13 February 1948 was rattled by another bombshell: the communist-dominated Ministry of the Interior had dismissed eight borough commanders in the Prague police force for no other apparent reason than that they were not communists. As Interior Minister Nosek was (conveniently) ill,\textsuperscript{78} however, the communist ministers refused to even discuss the matter. In response, the ministers of the four other parties united to pass a decree instructing the Interior Ministry to reinstate the commanders. When

\textsuperscript{75} Kaplan, \textit{Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis}, pp. 132-136.
\textsuperscript{76} Quoted in: Heumos, \textit{Europäischer Sozialismus}, p. 389.
\textsuperscript{77} Kaplan, \textit{Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis}, p. 137.
no action had been taken by 20 February, the ministers of the three centre-right parties tendered their resignations to President Beneš.

Events then started to unfold quickly. The communists pressured the social democrats to join them in a majority left-wing government. But the ČSSD refused, calling instead for reconciliation between the five parties that had governed Czechoslovakia since the liberation. Yet, the KSČ was not about to throw away the tactical advantage it had been gifted by the three centre-right parties and took the governmental crisis to the streets. The communists wasted no time in calling mass meetings across the country and creating ‘action committees’ in factories, communities, and institutions. Within a matter of days, the press of the three centre-right parties had been paralysed, demonstrations in favour of the centre-right were forbidden, and action committees prohibited anti-communist ministers (including Majer) access to their own offices. Even in this atmosphere of overt intimidation, though, the ČSSD persevered in its refusal to help the KSČ to a majority for a left-wing government. On the evening of 24 February, therefore, communist activists and social democratic left-wingers occupied the ČSSD headquarters. Gottwald then presented Laušman with an ultimatum: if he did not reverse his decision, the communists would move ahead forming a government without the social democrats. In these circumstances, Laušman capitulated. That same night, Majer’s right wing was excluded from the ČSSD leadership, whilst Fierlinger’s left wing returned with a vengeance. The following day, President Beneš accepted the resignation of the centre-right ministers and swore in a new, communist-controlled government.79

The ‘Prague Coup’, as the February 1948 events in Czechoslovakia came to be known, spelt the end for both Czechoslovakian democracy and the ČSSD. The widespread purge that followed the coup saw independent politicians in the Czech non-communist

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79 This account of (the run-up to) the February 1948 events is based on: Kaplan, The Short March, pp. 166-186.
parties replaced by communist stooges and the Slovak Democratic Party outlawed. All legal parties then ran the May 1948 parliamentary ‘elections’ on a common list, which obtained 89.2% of the vote. The next month, the ČSSD and the KSČ officially ‘merged’ into a single working-class party. With the great majority of former ČSSD members barred from the new party 80 and the KSČ not even bothering to change its name, however, the fusion is more properly described as a hostile take-over.

In post-war Poland, as we have seen, communist suppression had been a major factor in political life all along. In the wake of the rigged January 1947 parliamentary elections, there was a brief reprieve in the persecutions as more than 25,000 military and political prisoners were released under a post-election amnesty. But from May onwards, the repression returned with fresh vigour. 81 Several socialists outside the PPS, especially those who had been part of the wartime WRN underground organisation, were now actively targeted by the security services. And the clampdown on the PSL, or at least on those of its functionaries and leaders unwilling to join the newly-created communist-backed ‘PSL-Left’ breakaway party, continued likewise. Fearing for his life, Stanisław Mikołaczyk fled Poland in October 1947.

The liquidation of the PSL as an independent political force meant that the PPS remained the only credible counterweight to the communists in Poland. This was reflected in a membership surge. After its membership had rocketed from 500,000 to 660,000 in the space of just a month-and-a-half, the PPS even began a new membership drive under the slogan: ‘PPS – party of a million’. 82 This was part of a far more self-assured attitude on the part of the socialists in the aftermath of the elections. The months following the elections,

80 Pernes, ‘Vztahy ČSSD a KSČ’, p. 33.
82 Though this target was never met, PPS membership stood at 750,000 by the time of its December 1947 congress: Spałek, ‘Między pragmatyzmem a zdradą’, p. 210.
accordingly, witnessed increasing ‘discussions and polemics’ between the PPR and the PPS over ‘political, economic and ideological problems’.83

These communist-socialist arguments, however, often did not run along the same lines as in Czechoslovakia. To be sure, the PPS, much like the ČSSD, called for the empowerment of parliament and for cross-party control over the security services.84 Yet, in many ways, these were moot points: the PPR and its two vassal parties had a solid parliamentary majority and the socialists had acquiesced in Poland effectively becoming a police state during the election campaign. What still hung in the balance, though, was the economic future of Poland and it was on this issue that major conflicts developed between the PPR and the PPS.

The ‘Polish road to socialism’, in its original communist-supported conception, foresaw a mixed, three-tier economy consisting of a state, a cooperative, and a private sector. By mid-1947, however, the communists set about to roll back the two sectors that did not fall directly under the control of the state. Under the guise of a government offensive against ‘speculation’ and ‘high prices’, the communist-dominated Ministry of Industry unleashed the ‘battle for trade’: a series of tax hikes and repressive measures directed at shopkeepers and tradesmen, the ‘aim of which was the elimination of private wholesale trade, a drastic reduction of private retail trade, and a subjection of cooperative trade to state control’.85

Yet, the socialists, who had considered the three-tier economy to be a permanent feature of socialist Poland and who were particularly strongly represented in the cooperative movement, quickly disowned the ‘battle for trade’. In its first public rebuttal of

a communist scheme since the liberation, the PPS claimed that the material shortages and high prices were to be addressed by revising investment plans rather than by curbing private trade.\(^{86}\) This was part of a larger dispute between the two parties: where the communist-led Ministry of Industry backed heavy investment in capital goods and fast industrialisation after the Soviet model, the socialist-led Central Planning Office (CUP) had consistently favoured consumer-goods-producing medium and light industries in its funding decisions.

Of course, the balance of forces in post-war Poland was such that the socialists could never win the ‘battle for trade’ and, by early 1948, the communists forced the CUP leadership to resign. Yet, the strength of the socialist reaction to the communist plans belies the assertion that the PPS, having turned its back on the PSL and signed a Unity Pact with the PPR in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, effectively surrendered to the communists. In fact, the PPS was probably at its most autonomous during its December 1947 congress. In what was widely regarded as a rebuff of communist pressure for a merger, Josef Cyrankiewicz – who had become Prime Minister and PPS leader after the January 1947 elections – exhorted that ‘the PPS is and will remain indispensable to the Polish nation’; in response, the congress rose to sing the party anthem.\(^{87}\) Socialist leaders were confident that this line had the backing of Stalin, who, in his role as ‘arbitrator’ between the PPR and the PPS, had repeatedly come out in favour of the socialists.\(^{88}\) They might well have been right at the time. But in the changed international context after the Prague Coup, Stalin demanded complete loyalty in his sphere of influence. Upon his return from a state visit to Moscow in March 1948, Cyrankiewicz announced that the time for a communist-socialist merger had come. Even then, socialist resistance to a fusion appears to


\(^{87}\) Quoted in: Spalek, ‘Między pragmatyzmem a zdradą’, p. 222.

\(^{88}\) Spalek, ‘Między pragmatyzmem a zdradą’, pp. 201-203; Moldenhauer, ‘Kommunistische Blockpolitik’. 
have been so strong that the ‘unification congress’, originally scheduled for the summer, had to be postponed and the new Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) could only be established in December 1948.89

**From the Nineteenth Century to the Second World War**

This discussion of the first post-war years clearly brings to light parallels and differences between the four parties that cannot be explained through the traditional Cold War narrative. From the perspective of their pre-war histories, however, the roots of these similarities and differences become much clearer. To begin with, the four parties came into being in very diverse socio-economic settings. France and the Czech lands, on the one hand, were advanced industrial economies: in the nineteenth century they had witnessed strong industrial development, rapid urbanisation, and a spectacular drop in illiteracy. Italy and (what was to become) Poland, on the other hand, by and large remained backward rural economies: industrialisation only came late and in a very uneven manner, primitive and semi-feudal farming was still the norm in agriculture, and overall illiteracy hovered around 50%. These very different societal structures provide the background for the divergent political histories of the four parties and countries between the late nineteenth century and the Second World War.

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When the four parties came into being, however, these divergences were not directly obvious. In fact, each of the four parties initially modelled themselves after German social democracy in their political behaviour: theoretically and rhetorically, they were committed to a revolution and to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but, in practice, they frequently worked within the parliamentary system and with non-worker parties to achieve reformist or nationalist goals. Yet, in the first decade of the twentieth century, often in an atmosphere of heightened socio-political tensions, this reformist consensus came under pressure from more radical socialists looking to press ahead with the revolution.

The early history of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) exemplifies this trend. Established in 1892 by the reformist lawyer Filippo Turati, the PSI initially fought much the same battles as the left-liberal Radical Party: for universal suffrage, for progressive taxation, and for the eight-hour working day. The PSI urged its supporters to vote for non-socialist, centre-left candidates in run-off second ballots and repeatedly entered into (parliamentary and non-parliamentary) alliances with centre-left bourgeois parties, although both Turati (in 1903) and his fellow reformist leader Leonida Bissolati (in 1911) stopped short of accepting an offered ministerial post.90

But the sharp deterioration of industrial relations in the aftermath of the 1907 economic crisis strengthened the hand of socialist ‘intransigents’ – the intra-party minority that had rejected the reformist policy of working within the system all along. The Italo-Turkish War over Libya of 1911-1912 brought matters to a head. The reformist majority split over the war, allowing the intransigents to take control at the October 1912 congress of the PSI. Those reformist leaders who supported the war (including Bissolati and the PSIUP’s later nemesis Ivanoе Bonomi) were expelled from the PSI and founded the Italian

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Reformist Socialist Party (the precursor of the PDL). The intransigents or ‘maximalists’ were now firmly in charge and would remain so for the duration of the First World War.91

If the political context was completely different in France, the internal dynamics within its socialist movement were very similar. France having known (male) universal suffrage since 1848 and having been a parliamentary Republic with the corresponding set of constitutional rights and freedoms since the 1870s, the struggles of its socialists in many ways differed from those of their counterparts in more authoritarian systems.

Yet, the question of participation in the ‘bourgeois’ political system divided the French socialists all the same. When, in 1899, leading socialist Alexandre Millerand took up a ministerial post in the centre-left ‘Government of Republican Defence’ that came to power at the height of the Dreyfus Affair, the socialist movement split in two separate parties.92 The French Socialist Party, led by Jean Jaurès, supported alliances with bourgeois Republicans and took part in the cross-party Left Bloc coalition that won the 1902 parliamentary elections. The Socialist Party of France, in contrast, rejected any form of cooperation with non-proletarian forces, its leader Jules Guesde claiming that the proletariat would ‘abandon its own struggle’ if it set about defending the ‘Republic of its masters’.93 It was only after the intervention of the Second International, which prohibited reformist alliances at its 1904 Amsterdam congress that the two parties merged into one. Established in 1905, the SFIO immediately withdrew its support from the Left Bloc government, erecting a barrier between socialism and bourgeois Republicanism that was to survive well into the interwar years.

In the Czech lands, the national question added a further dimension to the struggles between moderate and radical socialists. The founding of the Czech Social Democratic

91 Mattera, Storia del PSI, pp. 53-56.
Workers’ Party (ČSDSD) in 1887 was the result of a compromise between the reformist and revolutionary wings of the clandestine Czech socialist movement in the Habsburg Empire. Moderation certainly prevailed within the new party, though. Even if the ČSDSD, which was an autonomous organisation within the larger setting of the Austrian Social Democratic Workers Party at the time, did not renounce its ultimate revolutionary aims, its focus was firmly on achieving its objectives through legal means – with demands for universal suffrage once again taking centre stage. Sure enough, the ČSDSD did very well in the elections to the Habsburg Imperial Council, becoming the largest force in the Czech lands in both elections (in 1907 and 1911) that were fought on male universal suffrage.

Yet, parliamentary representation presented the party with a fresh dilemma: was the ČSDSD going to cooperate with its social democratic comrades from other Habsburg nations or with its national compatriots in bourgeois Czech parties? When the ČSDSD first entered the Imperial Council in 1897, its delegates had still denounced bourgeois demands for renewed Czech statehood as an effort ‘to dig up old privileges’. 94 Much like social democratic parties in other countries, however, the ČSDSD took up increasingly nationalist positions during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1910, it even defied a Second International ruling by taking the Czech trade unions out of the unitary Austrian trade union movement – effectively breaking all ties with its Austrian mother organisation.95

The national question was of even greater significance in pre-war Polish socialism. Their nation still carved up as a result of the Austrian, German, and Russian partitions, the question of whether the struggle for national independence or the struggle for a proletarian revolution was to be prioritised divided the Polish socialists. The first socialist party in the

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95 According to the ČSDSD, the German trade unionists dominating the Austrian trade union movement were ‘denationalizing’ Czech workers. C.A. Macartney, The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918, (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 803-804.
Polish territories – The Proletariat (founded in 1882) – was a revolutionary organisation with links to Russian anarchist groups, but it was quickly quashed by the Tsarist authorities. When the PPS was created in 1893, accordingly, a more nationalist line was adopted. Its leader, Józef Piłsudski, ruled that Polish socialists could only cooperate with Russian revolutionaries if they supported Polish claims for independence. The result was a split with revolutionary Polish socialists (including Rosa Luxemburg), who, viewing nationalism as a diversion from the proletariat’s real struggles, established the Social Democratic Party of the Polish and Lithuanian Kingdom (SDKPiL) in 1894.

The question of (non-)cooperation with Russian revolutionaries, however, was to remain the foremost bone of contention within the pre-war PPS. After the crushing of the 1905 rebellions in various Polish cities (part of the revolutionary wave that hit the Russian Empire during that year), the party split in two. The Piłsudski-led PPS – Revolutionary Fraction wanted to continue the struggle for Polish independence by terrorist and paramilitary means. Yet, the PPS – Left, led by a group of younger socialist leaders, was looking to build alliances for an empire-wide revolution against Tsarism.96

**Revolution and Schism**

The (consequences of the) First World War intervened in a decisive manner in these divisions within the pre-war socialist movement. On the one hand, the extension of democratic rights and freedoms in a series of (newly independent) states strengthened reformist beliefs about the need to work within the system. On the other, the existence of the Soviet Union provided the revolutionaries with a clear focal point and model to

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emulate. In these circumstances, a schism between the two wings of the socialist movement became all but inevitable.

The Italian case demonstrates this clearly. By all accounts, the PSI emerged from the war as a revolutionary party. Taking its lead from developments in the Soviet Union, the radical PSI leadership called for the immediate creation of a socialist Republic and the dictatorship of the proletariat.\(^{97}\) There certainly seemed to be ample appetite for radical social change: the PSI became the largest party by far in the November 1919 parliamentary elections with 32.4% of the vote and the *biennio rosso* (two red years) of 1919-20 saw widespread factory and land occupations.

As it turned out, however, the PSI’s revolutionary rhetoric was not matched by commensurate action. For one thing, there was a deep rift between the revolutionary slogans espoused by the PSI leadership and the reformist beliefs of many socialist parliamentarians and trade unionists. But even the more radical leaders, educated in the classical Marxist notion that a proletarian revolution would develop spontaneously, ‘had no idea how to lead a revolution’.\(^{98}\) At the January 1921 PSI congress in Livorno, therefore, the extreme left pressed for the PSI to become a vanguard communist party in the Leninist sense. Yet, a majority rejected Lenin’s Twenty-one Conditions of admission to the Communist International (Comintern), which demanded the expulsion of ‘proven reformists’ like Turati. The left wing broke away immediately to form the PCI. In October 1922, the reformists followed suit to found the Unitary Socialist Party (PSU). Just as fascism was in the ascendancy, then, the socialist movement split three ways.

The back story to the schism within the SFIO is completely different. Unlike their Italian counterparts, who had consistently voted against war credits, the French socialists had supported the French war effort all along – even participating in the government for

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\(^{97}\) Eley, *Forging Democracy*, p. 170.
\(^{98}\) Clark, *Modern Italy*, p. 212.
the first three war years. After the war ended, moreover, socialist leaders, far from embracing revolutionary rhetoric, tried to restrain strikes and focused fully on the upcoming parliamentary elections. Yet, the November 1919 elections, in which the SFIO gained votes but lost seats, were a bitter disappointment for the socialists. The resulting disillusionment with parliament contributed to the balance within French socialism swinging ‘sharply to the left’. At its December 1920 congress in Tours, accordingly, the SFIO became the only major European socialist party to vote for adhesion to the Comintern.

The (moderate) minority at Tours broke away and continued as the SFIO. Even if the party was now devoid of its most radical elements, it did not fundamentally change its attitude towards (peacetime) governmental participation. To be sure, the socialists entered into victorious electoral coalitions with the Radicals in 1924 and 1932, but these coalitions never saw the socialists taking ministerial responsibility. It would take a perceived fascist challenge to the Republic for the SFIO to abandon its ‘refusal of power’ in the mid-1930s.

The interwar ČSDSD, in contrast, very much became a party of government. Its nationalist wing having taken control over the party leadership during the war, the ČSDSD supported Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk – Czechoslovakia’s ‘founding father’ – in his quest for national independence and participated in the provisional Czechoslovakian government that came to power in November 1918. The first post-war ČSDSD congress formulated a set of reformist demands, including the nationalisation of large companies and the introduction of universal health care. Yet, the governmental coalition with bourgeois parties was denounced by the ČSDSD’s emerging Bolshevik wing. Unity was just about

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preserved until the April 1920 parliamentary elections,\textsuperscript{101} which saw the ČSDSD becoming the largest party by far with 25.7\% of the vote.

When the ČSDSD renewed its coalition with bourgeois parties after the elections, however, the Bolsheviks went into open opposition: refusing to vote for the programme of the incoming coalition government under the social democrat Vlastimil Tusar and pressing for the acceptance of Lenin’s Twenty-one Conditions. Moderate leaders now seriously feared they would lose control to the Bolsheviks at the September 1920 party congress. Eleven days before the congress was supposed to take place, therefore, the ČSDSD left the government and postponed its congress until December. The Bolsheviks then called their own congress, at which they founded the party that was to become the KSČ. The schism severely weakened the ČSDSD: the party lost a third of its parliamentarians, most of its working-class membership, and dropped to 8.9\% of the vote in the 1925 parliamentary elections.\textsuperscript{102} Yet, after returning to government in September 1921, the ČSDSD cemented its role as one of the five parties ruling interwar Czechoslovakia – but for a three-year spell between 1926 and 1929, the party was to remain in government until 1938.

Newly independent Poland saw rival communist and socialist parties emerge too. For at least two reasons, though, its communist-socialist struggles lacked the salience of those in the three other cases. Firstly, the Polish socialist movement had already split before the war. The PPS – Revolutionary Fraction changed its name back to PPS in 1913, while the PPS – Left and the SDKPiL merged to form the Polish Communist Party (KPP) in 1918. Secondly, the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-21, during which the Polish army under Jósef Piłsudski eventually fought off the Red Army, ‘确保了 that an overwhelming


majority of Poles rejected empathically the blandishments of Bolshevism for the remainder of the interwar period.\textsuperscript{103}

Unhampered by a bruising internecine fight, then, the interwar PPS practised moderation right from the outset. The socialists were fully committed to a democratic and parliamentary road to socialism and presented reformist demands: the nationalisation of some industrial and agricultural sectors, universal access to education, and state pensions.\textsuperscript{104} Even though Piłsudski cut all ties with the PPS in his effort to present himself as standing above the parties, the socialists initially supported his May 1926 military coup. It was only when Piłsudski subsequently installed a dictatorship that the PPS began to reconsider the reformist politics it had pursued up to that point.

### Facing Fascism

During the interwar years, parliamentary democracy came under right-wing pressure in each of the four countries. This pressure was uneven: whereas Italy and Poland succumbed to fascist or authoritarian dictatorships in the 1920s, parliamentary democracy survived in interwar Czechoslovakia and France. Yet, the (perceived) fascist challenge to democracy prompted all four parties to seek allies on the Left. This process received a strong boost when the Comintern adopted its popular front strategy in 1934, leading communist parties across the continent to abandon their earlier sectarianism and seek broad-based anti-fascist alliances with socialist and centre-left parties. The coalitions formed in the second half of the 1930s, then, foreshadowed the governments that would rise to power after the Second World War.

Fascism had its origins in Italy. If the radicalism of the *biennio rosso* had not ushered in a proletarian revolution, it had certainly frightened the Italian middle and upper classes. Amongst these groups, there was an increasing desire for a return to industrial and rural order. Exactly this was offered by Benito Mussolini’s fascist ‘squads’, the para-military groups, often led by ex-servicemen, that viciously broke strikes, intimidated landless rural labourers, and burnt down local socialist offices. The squads’ October 1922 ‘March on Rome’ propelled Mussolini to power. In the April 1924 parliamentary elections, which saw overt terrorisation and massive fraud, his National Fascist Party (PNF) won a smashing victory. After Giacomo Matteotti, the PSU’s leader, spoke out against the electoral abuses, he was murdered, probably at Mussolini’s behest. In the aftermath of the ‘Matteotti crisis’, which repulsed many of Mussolini’s erstwhile centre-right allies, Mussolini proceeded to set up a full dictatorship.\(^{105}\) By 1926, all opposition parties had been outlawed, their press organs banned, and many of their leaders were languishing in prison.

Those socialists who managed to escape reconstituted their parties in French exile. Convinced that the labour movement’s split had much weakened the Left vis-à-vis fascism,\(^ {106}\) PSI leader Pietro Nenni set about to reconcile its warring factions. In July 1930, the PSI and the PSU merged. This was followed in August 1934 by the Unity of Action Pact with the PCI, which was to remain in force until the liberation. Post-war Italian socialism’s ‘unitarian’ outlook received its final impulse by the PSI’s August 1943 merger with Lelio Basso’s clandestine Movement of Proletarian Unity (MUP) – resulting in the creation of the PSIUP.

The 1930s likewise saw the French Left pull together. The Radical-SFIO coalition that had won the May 1932 elections proved very unstable. With the two parties

\(^{105}\) Clark, *Modern Italy*, pp. 215-228.

advocating opposite policies in the face of the Great Depression, governments fell in rapid succession. Worse, several leading Radicals became embroiled in a corruption scandal, sparking a series of increasingly violent demonstrations by extra- and anti-parliamentary right-wing leagues. These culminated in ‘the February 1934 crisis’: a right-wing riot in Paris that left fifteen death and hundreds wounded. Widely interpreted by the French Left as a fascist coup attempt, the crisis prompted its three major parties to join forces. The anti-fascist ‘vigilance committees’ formed in the wake of the crisis had already brought together communist, socialist, and Radical intellectuals. In July 1934, the PCF and SFIO leaderships followed by entering into a Unity of Action Pact. The next year, communists, socialists, and Radicals agreed a common electoral programme. The resulting Popular Front won the May 1936 parliamentary elections. Having emerged as the largest party in both votes and seats, the SFIO entered a peacetime government for the first time – its leader Léon Blum becoming Prime Minister.

In spite of its impressive list of social reforms, the Popular Front government brought the socialists many ‘disillusions’. The communists, offering only parliamentary backing, refused to join the government and quickly began attacking Blum over a string of domestic and international policies. What was worse, facing a right-wing majority in the Senate, Blum was unable to address France’s economic problems. After the upper house had blocked his strongly interventionist investment programme, Blum resigned in April 1938. The Radicals subsequently formed a new government with right-wing backing, which reversed many of the Popular Front’s social reforms. Having long been a dead letter, moreover, the communist-socialist Unity of Action Pact came to a definite end upon the

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107 The historiographical consensus is that, whilst some fascist groups were active, it was probably not. See e.g.: Morgan Philip, *Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 102-109.


announcement of the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1939. In the ‘phony war’ after the subsequent German invasion of Poland, the SFIO played a much-diminished role in French politics. The depth of socialist despondency at their defeat and isolation became obvious after the fall of France, when the great majority of SFIO deputies present at the National Assembly’s session in Vichy on 10 July 1940 voted in favour of suspending the Third Republic’s democratic constitution and according General Philippe Pétain dictatorial powers to produce a new one – thereby contributing to the creation of the collaborationist Vichy France.

The threat of fascism did not lead to rapprochement between communists and social democrats in interwar Czechoslovakia. From 1935 onwards, the KSČ did make some overtures towards a united or popular front with the ČSDSD and the National Socialists of the ČSNS. Yet, compared to communist outreaches elsewhere, these overtures were half-hearted at best and dismissed as a ruse by the social democrats and National Socialists. In fact, the ČSDSD always viewed the ČSNS, with which it formed the left wing of the five-party coalition that governed Czechoslovakia for most of the interwar period, as its ‘natural ally in the effort to preserve the democratic character of Czechoslovakia’.¹¹⁰

As the 1930s progressed, Czechoslovakia’s democratic character came under pressure from both within and abroad. The Great Depression hit the Sudetenland particularly hard, fuelling nationalist resentments amongst its majority-German population. In the 1935 parliamentary elections, the radical nationalist Sudeten German Party (SdP), financially backed by Nazi Germany, became the second strongest party in Czechoslovakia. The following years witnessed the SdP and Hitler formulate an ever-increasing set of demands upon the Czechoslovakian government. This campaign culminated in the September 1938 Munich Conference, where British and French

¹¹⁰ Cabada, ‘Vztahy socialních demokratů a komunistů’, p. 23.
governments sought to appease Hitler by effectively signing over the Sudetenland to Germany. The loss of the Sudetenland, followed quickly by further territorial concessions to Hungary and Poland, spelt the end for the First Czechoslovakian Republic. In the short-lived Second Republic, the ČSDSD and the left wing of the ČSNS merged into the National Labour Party, conceived mainly as a bulwark against the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the appeasing right-wing government that had taken office after Munich. But it was to no avail. In March 1939, Hitler first forced Slovakia to declare independence and then ordered his troops to march into the Czech lands – thus creating the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

In interwar Poland, parliamentary democracy had collapsed long before the Nazis imposed their will upon the country. Presenting itself as a national revival against a dysfunctional and corrupt parliamentary system, Piłsudski’s 1926 coup was part of a broader European backlash against parliamentarism.111 The PPS initially welcomed the coup, expecting that its erstwhile leader would enact radical socio-economic reforms. But Piłsudski had no such intentions. In fact, his Sanacja (purification) regime quickly won the backing of landowners and industrialists by ruling out any further land reform and clamping down forcefully on strikes. In the face of the government’s rightward thrust and its increasingly repressive nature, the PPS joined forces with peasant and Christian democratic parties to form the Centrolew (centre-left) parliamentary opposition group in 1929. Yet, in the run-up to the November 1930 parliamentary elections, prominent Centrolew leaders, six of them socialists, were arrested on trumped-up conspiracy charges. In ‘an atmosphere of intimidation’, the Sanacja then won a majority in the elections, whilst the Centrolew leaders were convicted in a show trial.112

111 In this respect, Anita Prazmowska draws parallels between Piłsudski’s coup and Mussolini’s March on Rome and Primo de Rivera’s military coup in Spain (1923). See: Prazmowska, Poland, pp. 119-120.
112 Prazmowska, Poland, pp. 123-124
Their defeat at the hands of what had now become a fully fledged dictatorship prompted many PPS leaders to move away from their reformist convictions. Over the course of the 1930s, the socialists embraced a more leftist agenda. In economic terms, the PPS drew a sharp line between the ‘worker control’ enshrined in socialisations and the ‘state capitalism’ represented by nationalisations. Such ‘young Turks’ as Oskar Lange and Julian Hochfeld, who would be amongst the foremost socialist theorists during the post-war years, no longer viewed the parliamentary road to socialism as viable, moreover. Even if most socialists still rejected their viewpoints, the new PPS programme of 1937 did allow for a temporary dictatorship of the proletariat.113 This opened the way for an alliance with the communists and, from the mid-1930s, the PPS leadership set aside its objections to ‘limited cooperation’ with the KPP in a popular front.114

Conclusion

The four parties thus embarked upon ‘the national road to socialism’ with widely divergent back stories. In large part, these divergences went back to their very different experiences with ‘bourgeois’ parliamentary democracy during the interwar years. For the Italian and Polish socialists, on the one side, parliamentary democracy within the framework of bourgeois capitalism had proven itself to be very fragile indeed. The advent of fascism, explained PSIUP Directorate member Sandro Pertini at the party’s April 1946 congress, had ‘shown that freedom, if it does not have those social reforms associated with socialism at its core, can be obliterated in the space of an afternoon’.115 For the Czechoslovakian

113 Bäcker, Problematyka państwa, pp. 98-99.
114 Prazmowska, Poland, p. 127.
social democrats and the French socialists, on the other, parliamentary democracy had proven itself to be the best guarantee for personal rights and freedoms. The broader political consensus around these freedoms, which included non-proletarian centrist parties, convinced them that it was possible to work for socialist change from within the ‘bourgeois’ political system.

It was not merely these conflicting political ‘lessons’ from the interwar years guiding the four parties on their post-war trajectories, however. The socialists also drew wider implications from their countries’ longer-term socio-economic development. For each of the four parties, as we will discuss in far greater detail in the three chapters on political reconstruction, based their political views on historically informed perceptions of the societies they operated in. Before we move on to these questions, however, we will turn our attention to socio-economic reconstruction, starting with the immediate concerns amongst rank-and-file (socialist) workers. In their struggle for everyday survival, after all, such ‘political’ concepts as democracy took on a wholly different, and strongly subsistence-related, connotation.
Part 1: Socio-Economic Reconstruction
Chapter 2: Bread, Butter, and Egalitarianism

As the Second World War drew to a close, worker grumbles about their provisions began to sound louder. During a May 1944 meeting of the Comité Social – the body created to guarantee cordial worker-management relations in the corporatist society envisioned by the Vichy regime – at the Lever soap factories in Lille’s Haubourdin district, several workers filed a complaint about the meals being served in their factory canteen. They were unhappy about the insufficient rations of potatoes, as they did not like the split peas that had been used to complement the menu that day. But the committee chairman was quite clear that ‘the current circumstances no longer allow for such abundance as to satisfy all the tastes’, calling on workers to resign themselves ‘to eating whatever can be found’.¹

Indeed, such demands for appetising food would seem increasingly presumptuous once occupation made way for liberation. Contrary to a widespread popular belief that working-class living standards would improve dramatically after the cessation of hostilities, the material conditions actually grew worse for many workers during the first post-war years as various factors combined to their disadvantage. Firstly, the chaos surrounding the immediate aftermath of liberation brought industry to a standstill across continental Europe. Secondly, the destruction of infrastructure as well as the paucity of natural resources seriously affected supply lines even after industrial production had resumed. Thirdly, the devastation of machinery and the severe shortage of (skilled) labour wrought by war kept overall industrial output well below pre-war levels until the late 1940s. All of this was compounded still further by the two brutally cold winters of 1945/46 and 1946/47, which drove the working class to the edge both physically and mentally. In

these circumstances, workers were often completely preoccupied with the quest for such scarce commodities as food, coal, or clothing.

This chapter sets out to demonstrate that such immediate bread-and-butter concerns always outweighed longer-term political demands for (socialist) workers in post-war Lille, Łódź, Milano, and Plzeň. That is not to argue that the largely socio-economic agenda advanced by the European working class was somehow not ‘political’. Actually, this chapter analyses the endless list of complaints (socialist) workers levelled against their political leaders: their utter failure to improve worker living standards, their powerlessness in the face of rampant inflation, their complete inability to clamp down upon the flourishing black market, and their general disinterest in the everyday predicament of their own rank and file. Yet, this was all a far cry from the struggles for self-management so often associated with the post-war European working class. Instead, its more properly ‘political’ demands were always closely connected to its material grievances. The real programme of the working class, then, was definitely its egalitarianism. The ‘moral economy’ was strong in each of the four cities: if reconstruction was going to be a long and painstaking process, its hardships were to be shouldered collectively with the strongest backs bearing the heaviest burden.

The Supply Side

The extent to which lacking access to basic necessities trumped all other considerations amongst the post-war European working class is borne out by the concepts dominating their vocabulary. Worker discourses in post-war Lille, Łódź, and Milano were packed with demands for a better ravitaillement, aprowizacja, and alimentazione respectively – designating either ‘supply’ or simply ‘food’ in each case. In Plzeň, the material situation
was initially more tolerable,\textsuperscript{2} with the ČSSD daily claiming victory in the battle for bread by the autumn of 1945.\textsuperscript{3} But even with food more readily available, workers increasingly complained about excessive \textit{drahota} – the prohibitively high prices at which first necessities had to be bought. It was this combination of severe shortages and dwindling purchasing power that tormented, unnerved, and more and more outraged workers. For despite socialist leaders’ promises to the contrary, things were not getting better for their rank and file as the first post-war years went by.

It was not long before it dawned upon workers that the sufferings of occupation were to continue into liberation. If food and fuel were already hard to come by in the final months of the war, they were in even shorter supply after fighting was over. At first, this still seemed to be related to the direct exigencies of war and troop movements. In the North of France, liberation was reported to have been a ‘hard awakening’ for those people who had expected their problems to disappear and \textit{ravitaillement} to re-normalise. It had taken the German Ardennes counter-offensive for them to realise that the war was still ongoing and that equipping the frontline remained the number one priority.\textsuperscript{4} In Plzeň, meanwhile, there was widespread worker concern and discontent about the Americans (the city was liberated by General George Patton’s Third U.S. Army in May 1945) moving food out of the city to supply their forces.\textsuperscript{5} But as direct hostilities receded further into the background, it became clear that these difficulties were not of a momentary nature. By July 1945,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item This was due mostly to the fact that the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia came out of the Second World War in a better material situation than virtually all other formerly German-occupied areas. Firstly, the Nazis had initially sought to win over the Protectorate working class, their effort crucial to the German war industry, by making economic concessions – food and clothing rationing was even introduced later in the Protectorate than in the Reich itself. Secondly, its position right at the centre of the German empire shielded the Protectorate from Allied bombing until late 1944. See: Hugh Agnew, \textit{The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown}, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), p. 211, 214.
\item ‘Otázka chleba už je u nás vybojována’, \textit{Nový Den}, 30 September 1945.
\item Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reseignements Generaux [R{é}union du Parti Socialiste à Escaudin], 17 January 1945, Archives Departmentales du Nord, Lille [hereafter ADN], Commissariat R{é}gional de la R{é}publique [hereafter CRR], 19 W 37108 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Milanese workers were taking to the streets in a hunger march, carrying signs with such slogans as ‘reduction of the cost of living’, ‘bread and work’, ‘our children are hungry’, ‘price control’, ‘we want an immediate devaluation’, ‘protect our interests against those starving the people’, and ‘struggle with the black market’. Patience with those in power (including socialists) was already running thin, the local PSIUP press reported, as ‘all things human have a limit’.6

But it quickly emerged that the new rulers were unable to deliver upon even the most basic demands of the working class. In the Łódź region alone, there had been twenty strikes protesting the terrible state of *aprowizacja* by August 1945.7 At a meeting of socialist workers in the city’s public transport shops that month, one worker lamented that the reigning chaos demonstrated the government was not up to its task. After all, winter was approaching fast and still the working class had not been supplied with coal. Demanding compensatory payments to fill up the holes in his household budget, another worker illustrated his predicament graphically. Where his new-born should be a source of parental joy, he argued, it was quickly developing into ‘a tragedy’. As his entire income was swallowed up by buying baby food on the free market, ‘what should he and the rest of his family live on?’8 Similarly, local socialists in Roubaix were soon to voice their discontent about their own party’s Minister for Provisions in the first De Gaulle government – Paul Ramadier.9 So meagre were the rations handed out by his ministry that he was rapidly nicknamed ‘Ramadan’ or ‘Ramadiète’ across the region.10

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6 ‘Manifestazione di protesta di popolo e di lavoratori per la rivendicazione dei diritti dell’ora’, *Sesto Proletaria*, 7 July 1945.
7 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw [hereafter, AAN], Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/1-12, fo. 91.
9 Commissaire de Police to Commissaire Central Chef du Sous-District de Roubaix [Réunion de la Section de Roubaix du Parti Socialiste], 26 February 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
This pattern of rank-and-file workers reproaching their leaders for failing to provide for their everyday necessities would repeat itself over and over again during the months and years to follow. The common charge was that political and trade union leaders were so immersed in high politics and macro-economic management now that they were finally in (shared) power that they had lost sight of the real problems besetting the very people they were representing. And these problems were real enough. Not only did the lacking supply of food, coal, and clothing cause starvation and freezing, but the prices of those few goods that were available were spiralling dangerously out of control. In these circumstances, workers were often at a loss as to why their wages were held back or even dropping.

In fact, working-class living standards had been falling right from liberation. In each of the four cities, workers complained bitterly that wages and prices were completely out of balance and getting worse. In Lille, a popular saying went that ‘whereas salaries take the staircase, prices take the elevator’,\(^{11}\) as the cost of living had risen by 35% and wages only by 25%.\(^{12}\) In Plzeň, there was strong criticism of the Supreme Pricing Authority, which calculated the prices for a whole range of provisions. Based upon its estimates, the government had increased wages in December 1945, but reality had quickly caught up. With incessant price rises wiping out the entire increase within a matter of months, workers in the metal sector faulted the organ both for setting its projections too low and for failing to include the prices of water, electricity, and gas in its calculations.\(^{13}\) Whereas the combination of relentless price increases and static (or rising below-inflation) wages caused serious anxieties amongst the Milanese working class as well,\(^{14}\) the situation was arguably worst in Łódź. There were repeated testimonies of wages either coming down or

\(^{11}\) ‘Note des renseignements d’une importante réunion privée d’information (d’arrondissement) organisé par le Parti Socialiste SFIO, à Cambrai’ [3 February 1947], ADN, CRR, 30 W 38630 8.
\(^{12}\) L’Officier de Police Judiciaire to Commissaire Central Chef du Sous-District du Tourcoing [Compte rendu d’une réunion politique], 18 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2.
\(^{13}\) ‘Ceny a mzdy musí být v souladu’, Nový Den, 19 April 1946.
\(^{14}\) CI Alfa Romeo to Camera del Lavoro, 25 August 1946, Archivio del Lavoro, Milano [hereafter AdL], Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
being paid belatedly in the face of unbridled price hikes. In that situation, even vital necessities were often beyond the reach of workers, with coal and foodstuffs all but impossible to acquire on an average salary.

Small wonder, then, that workers were demanding something far-reaching to change this state of affairs. According to the internal commission at Milano’s tram manufacturing and repairing Teodosio, the continuous hikes in the cost of living had made the food situation so precarious that workers were no longer able to work productively. In these circumstances, a 10% salary increase would not do anymore – the trade unions should instead aim for a 40% raise. Such generous pay packages were, however, not forthcoming. Quite the contrary, in their efforts to break the vicious cycle of wage and price rises, governments in each of the four countries increasingly relied on wage restraint. There was much resentment over unfulfilled promises regarding pay increases and bonuses amongst such diverse groups as miners in Plzeň, tire makers in Milano, and functionaries in Łódź.

But the issue was most thorny in France, where salaries were blocked for a prolonged period in 1946 while the cost of living kept going up. At a regional meeting of the SFIO in Cambrai, emotions over the government’s price and incomes policy ran high. Where the delegate from Lille’s Santes commune was still polite describing the control of wages and not prices as ‘a mistake’ and calling for an attack on profit margins instead, his...

15 ‘Protokół z nadzwyczajnego zebrania Koła Miejscowego’ [2 June 1945], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Prawa, 10, fo. 3; ‘Protokół z zebrania Koła PPS przy PPT-EP Oddz. Łódź’ [4 March 1947], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Prawa, 10, fo. 43; ‘Protokół z zebrania Koła PPS przy PZPB Nr. 15 w Łodzi’ [22 May 1947], APL, DK PPS Górna, 7, fo. 20.
16 ‘Protokół spisany z zebrania członków P.P.S. przy Państwowych Zakładach Przemysłu Welnianego Nr. 40 w Łodzi’ [28 October 1947], APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fos 82-83; ‘Protokół z zebrania Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej na terenie przedzalni Ksieżę Młyn’ [3 March 1947], APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fo. 53.
17 CI Teodosio to Camera del Lavoro, 10 July 1946, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
18 ‘Horníci naléhají’, Nový Den, 1 August 1945.
19 CI Pirelli to Ministro del Lavoro, Camera del Lavoro Milano, and Confederazione Generale del Lavoro, 8 August 1945, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
A colleague from Pérenchies condemned the party for not living up to socialism whilst branding the salary policy ‘criminal’. The representative from Tourcoing summed up the general mood demanding that not the Franc, but the purchasing power of workers would be defended.  

In all four countries, the newly unified trade union movement had been imputed with the task of defending working-class interests in questions of living standards and wages. But, as workers in the four cities were soon to find out, trade union leaders toed the government line rather than vice-versa. Although the Central Council of Trade Unions (ÚRO) tried its best, an editorial in the Plzeň ČSSD press argued, ‘we would be lying if we were to say that its interventions with the president, the government, and the political parties have made much of a difference’.  

In the North of France, at the same time, a growing number of workers were refusing to pay their monthly membership dues to the CGT. It is clear, one of them lamented, ‘that the directives of the CGT leadership make it impossible for us to have a go at some of our demands’. Where trade union officials kept harping on about the need for sacrifices to rebuild the country, ‘it must not be the case that all sacrifices are made by workers’.  

Local socialists often used such worker grievances as a stick with which to beat communist trade union leaders. A brochure published by the SFIO sections in Denain and Bouchain criticised the communists for ‘their complete disinterest vis-à-vis the trade union movement at the sole benefit of a political party’. During the last strike at the Cail furnace works, ‘political arrivals’ had ordered strikers to make up for lost hours. Since when, the brochure asked, ‘were struck hours recovered? Where was the time that trade union leaders

21 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité du Parti Socialiste SFIO (réunion privée)], 16 September 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38453 2.
22 ‘Kdo za to odpovídá?’, Nový Den, 19 February 1946.
23 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Mécontentement d’une partie des ouvriers vis-à-vis de l’action des délégués ouvriers], 26 February 1946, ADN, CRR, 27 W 38337 1.
demanded the integral payment of lost hours as a pre-condition for a return to work?’. 24 Similarly, local social democrats in Plzeň accused their Provincial Trade Union Council (KOR) of only fighting the KSČ’s political struggles. Rather than staging factory walkouts on such partisan issues as the ‘lenient’ sentences handed to the collaborationist leaders of the wartime Protectorate government or the re-election of Plzeň’s communist mayor, 25 it should re-direct its energies towards the cost of living crisis. 26 For many workers were complaining that the KOR was doing all sorts of things that could easily be left to political parties, whilst forgetting what really dominated working-class concerns – the question of 

\textit{drahota}. 27

Not that socialist leaders were beyond grassroots reproach for their attitudes towards trade unionism. Reflecting upon the subordinate role of trade unions, local socialists from Sesto San Giovanni (Milano) pointed to their national leaders. Where they might have the best of intentions towards the trade union movement, ‘the road to hell is paved with good intentions’. Concrete support was needed, as trade unions had grown into the ‘Cinderella’ of present-day Italy. Never publishing any articles dealing with ‘trade unions, their function, and above all their indispensability’, the national PSIUP newspaper \textit{Avanti!} (run by the party leadership) was severely criticised. After all, workers would happily forsake all treatises on political processes to finally read something that related to their vital problems. Was ‘it impossible to clear out half a column’ for that? 28

Far from empowering the trade unions, however, socialist (and communist) leaders increasingly employed them as transmission belts for government policy. 29 Workers were quick to identify their unions with the authorities and worse. Claiming that everyone who

\begin{itemize}
\item[24] ‘Honte aux faux frères’, [September 1946], ADN, CRR, 28 W 38453 2.
\item[25] More on these two particular issues in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 respectively.
\item[29] On how trade unions were used to serve the productivist goals of the Italian and Polish governments: Neri Serneri, \textit{Resistenza e democrazia dei partiti}, p. 420; Kenney, \textit{Rebuilding Poland}, pp. 61-69.
\end{itemize}
spoke out against the fact that the collective agreements had only been to the benefit of the industrialists was censured, one Milanese socialist argued that it had been exactly these types of injustices that had created worker discontent with and distrust towards the fascist unions.\textsuperscript{30} The negotiating positions taken by trade union bodies were also a major source of dissatisfaction amongst Łódź socialists. Complaints focused on such diverse issues as the unfairness of collective agreements for simple workers,\textsuperscript{31} on union inability to reach collective agreements in the first place,\textsuperscript{32} and on union support for a prolongation of the working day.\textsuperscript{33} By mid-1946, socialist workers in Łódź’s textile industry were wondering where the trade unions were, asking who was fighting their corner, and petitioning trade unionists to show some interest in their lives.\textsuperscript{34} Less than a year later, their counterparts in the city centre concluded that trade unions were powerless in questions of pay drops.\textsuperscript{35}

Feeling abandoned by its traditional organizations, the working class increasingly took matters into its own hands. Agitations, (wildcat) strikes, and theft were the order of the day in industry, as workers were desperate to improve their standard of living. Out of the four cities, the situation was definitely least volatile in Plzeň,\textsuperscript{36} but even here there were several agitations demanding a pay increase to cope with unbearable drahota.\textsuperscript{37} Łódź, on the other hand, was the strike capital of Poland and possibly Europe, with over 500 strikes between 1945 and 1948. Not only were the overwhelming majority of these inspired by economic concerns, but even those strikes that historiography describes as ‘political’

\textsuperscript{31} ‘Protokół zebrania Koła PPS przy Łódzkich Zakładach Przemysłu Czesankowego’ [7 August 1945], APL, DK PPS Górná, 6, fo. 3.
\textsuperscript{32} ‘Protokół zebranie członków P.P.S. Dzielnica Tramwaje Miejskiej’ [25 July 1946], APL, DK PPS Tramwaje, 13, fos 28-29.
\textsuperscript{33} ‘Protokół’ [28 August 1947], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Lewa, 14, fo. 12.
\textsuperscript{35} ‘Protokół z zebrania Koła PPS przy PPT-EP Oddz. Łódź’ [4 March 1947], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Prawa, 10, fo. 43.
\textsuperscript{36} Though there were some strikes in Czechoslovakia during 1945 and 1946, the country only really saw widespread industrial unrest emerge after the economic downturn of 1947 – with 103 strikes in 1947 alone and a further 218 strikes between 1948 and 1953. See: Heumos, ‘Zum industriellen Konflikt’, p. 475, 478.
quickly developed a bread-and-butter character.\textsuperscript{38} Although the big strike wave that swept the city in September 1947 had its origins in a workplace conflict over the introduction of multi-machine work at the I.K. Poznański cotton mill, its rowdy meetings were marked by claims that life was harder now than it had been before the war or even during the occupation. And while officially an outcry against the alleged maltreatment of Poznański strikers by the authorities, the solidarity strikes that subsequently broke out across the city had strong subsistence overtones as well. Especially amongst Łódź’s large female workforce, many complained about low earnings, bread tasting like clay, children starving, and the threat of tuberculosis.\textsuperscript{39}

Theft from the workplace, which was ‘endemic’ in several post-war European industrial centres,\textsuperscript{40} was a further manifestation of worker despair. A worker at Milano’s tractor-producing Motomeccanica called upon the government to no longer hand orders to firms laying off workers, as in the current situation of mass unemployment even ‘honest people become black marketers, thieves, etc. to feed themselves and their families’.\textsuperscript{41} Similarly, one socialist employed in the Łódź public transport system remarked that the theft of coal by railway workers was a sign of their bitterness. The worker, he argued, demanded ‘that something was done for him’, for the ‘sad reality’ was that the worker was ‘treated like a beggar’ by ‘his own comrades in leading positions’.\textsuperscript{42}

Grassroots socialists in the North of France likewise berated their leaders for simply not comprehending the ordeal the working class went through. When, at the first

\textsuperscript{38} Out of the 1220 strikes that hit People’s Poland between 1945 and 1948, Łukasz Kaminski reckons that 84.43\% had an economic, 13.23\% a political, and 2.34\% a mixed basis. But this classification includes the strike at I.K. Poznański (see below) amongst the politically motivated strikes. Łukasz Kaminski, \textit{Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości, 1944-1948: formy pozainstytucjonalnego, żywiołowego oporu społecznego}, (Toruń: A. Marszałek, 2000), p. 115, 141.

\textsuperscript{39} Henryk Wachowicz to CKW PPS, 6 October 1947, AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Sekretariat Generalny, Wydz. Ekonomiczno-Przem. – Strajki, 1946-48, 2291, 235/XV-86, fo. 18, 22.

\textsuperscript{40} Pittaway, \textit{The Workers’ State}, p. 72. See also: Kenney, \textit{Rebuilding Poland}, pp. 91-93.

\textsuperscript{41} B. Filippo to Camera del Lavoro, 15 October 1946, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.

\textsuperscript{42} ‘Protokół zwyczajnego Koła P.P.S przy Zarzadzie Miejskim, Wydziale Technicznym, Oddziale Półmiarów’, [16 August 1945], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Prawa, 10, fos 5-6.
post-war congress of the SFIO’s Northern Federation, its leader and SFIO Executive member Augustin Laurent identified the constitutional question as the most urgent problem of the day, denounced the strike movement as ‘motiveless’, and admonished socialist workers to play a more positive role in the run-up to the next elections, a local delegate swiftly rebuked him. While he agreed with Laurent on the importance of drawing up a new constitution, there were ‘other problems’ to which SFIO ought to devote its attention. Above all, this concerned the problem of ravitaillement, which formed the central concern for the bulk of the electorate and to the amelioration of which the party should immediately commit itself.43

If the disregard socialist leaders seemed to show for the woes tormenting their rank and file initially met with such constructive criticism, the mood at the grassroots rapidly soured. Whilst still expressing understanding for the fact that their government was completely immersed in the business of post-war reconstruction, miners in Plzeň were already warning that it would be hard for them to make their peace with further delays to promised improvements in pay and food provision by mid-1945.44 In the North of France, meanwhile, local socialists were much bewildered at the SFIO’s acquiescence of the economic policies implemented by liberal minister René Pleven – at that time combining both the Finance and National Economy briefs in the first De Gaulle government. Fingered by grassroots socialists as a representative of those notorious ‘200 families’ that had dominated inter-war France,45 Roubaix’s socialist mayor Victor Provo condemned Pleven for ‘nothing but copying the measures that [Raymond] Poincaré [the conservative who served three terms as France’s Prime Minister in the 1920s] had adopted in 1925’. As this

44 ‘Horníci naléhají’, Nový Den, 1 August 1945.
45 Commissaire de Police to Directeur des Renseignements Generaux [Réunion de la section du Parti Socialiste SFIO à Helemmes], 19 January 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
could only lead to ‘public debt rising and living standards dropping every day’, it was about time that Pleven devised some new fiscal measures that would hit the rich.46

Socialists in Milano expressed a similar exasperation with same old laissez-faire economics. Franco Mariani, the foremost socialist trade unionist in the region, declared in 1946 that it had been a ‘fundamental mistake’ for the government to sacrifice every form of market discipline at the altar of free trade. In the face of severe problems with alimentazione, ministers had ‘preferred to do nothing’, expecting the issue ‘would solve itself’. The opposite had been the case and therefore it was imperative to arrive at ‘a controlled economy’.47

But even under more interventionist regimes, workers found ample cause for dissatisfaction. When the SFIO’s André Philip took over at Finance and National Economy in the Gouin government, his efforts to clean up the nation’s finances by exerting tight control over prices and wages created considerable turmoil in socialist ranks. If socialist workers were already disgruntled about the government-warranted price hikes of tobacco and coal,48 matters came to a head over the 25% wage increase suddenly demanded by the CGT in the run-up to the June 1946 parliamentary elections. Brushed aside by socialist leaders as no more than a communist election stunt, rank-and-file party members saw more merit in the proposal. At a meeting of the local SFIO section in Cambrai, grassroots socialists castigated the party leadership for its ‘passivity’ and ‘procrastination’ in questions of prices and wages.49 Had the socialist press organs really ‘considered it

46 Commissaire de Police to Commissaire Central, Chef du Sous-District [Réunion publique d’information de la section de Wattrelos du Parti Socialiste SFIO], 19 April 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
47 Interview Leonardi with Franco Mariani, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
49 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Congrès d’arrondissement du Parti Socialiste SFIO à Cambrai], 22 July 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1.
appropriate to interview workers and almost have them say that a 25% raise would be unwelcome’? 50

This form of patronising was all the harder to accept from parties and governments claiming to rule in the name of the working class. The last thing workers needed, an editorial in the Plzeň social democratic press read, was ‘prestige or flattery – that they are spoken about as if they have power and dominate the situation’. What the working class did require was an improvement of their living standards: cheap clothing and shoes for their children, new homes and furniture for their youngsters, all those things they ‘put off buying for six years’. The clothing reserves had reached rock bottom – ‘we need to return to the living standards of the last years of the First Republic as soon as possible’. 51

As the longed-for amelioration in the supply situation failed to materialise, grassroots socialists invoked the memory of the interwar years, for better or (more often) worse, with increasing frequency. Addressing the social ills of post-war Poland, one Łódź socialist compared current times to the period when the country was ruled by the Sanacja dictatorship. 52 The Sesto San Giovanni PSIUP expressed similar sentiments in an open letter to the national PSIUP leadership in August 1946. After giving an exposition of all the causes underlying the miserable living conditions of the working class, it concluded: ‘The worker is patient and has been waiting for a year-and-a-half for someone or something to change this state of affairs. Nothing! Like before, worse than before. We cannot continue like this’. In devoting all their energies to the peace negotiations, which were going to be decided by the imperialist powers anyway, political leaders had ignored ‘the harsh realities of our internal situation, the truth about the conditions of the working masses’. They should take an interest in the concerns of the working class and remember that there was ‘a

50 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité du Parti Socialiste SFIO (réunion privée de la section de Cambrai)], 6 July 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1.
51 ‘Myslíme to dobře’, Nový Den, 16 March 1946.
certain limit where people stop reasoning, close their eyes, and vent the anger that has been brewing in their hearts’.

**The Dark Side**

More than anything, this grassroots resentment concerned their leaders’ seeming diffidence in the face of those sinister forces seeking to profit from working-class misery. With so many shortages, the widespread opportunities to make a quick gain often proved irresistible for those people with access to scarce goods and services. The black market was not just about peasants selling off their surpluses at outrageous prices – it was a vast system encompassing entire businesses or sectors, frequently in connivance with either the authorities or the workforce, committing massive frauds. Nor was speculation the only wrongdoing that caught the worker’s eye. From the shameless incompetence, indifference, and wastefulness at the top to the nepotism that saw some workers getting more than their fair share at the bottom, there were all sorts of scandals that beggared working-class belief. One common theme clearly emerges, though: that of the honest and diligent worker suffering at the hands of those having only personal gain on their minds.

In order to guarantee an equitable division of first necessities, all four countries adopted a rationing regime. In reality, however, workers frequently complained that rations were neither even-handed nor sustainable. There were several protestations that workers or other vulnerable groups were short-changed in or even excluded from the distribution of various goods. Socialist workers in Łódź’s city centre argued that their provision of coupons did not suffice. Bread had been rationed, but the worker also needed cereals, peas, and other foodstuffs. Moreover, despite personal hygiene being crucial in the struggle

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against diseases, workers had been left out of the allotments of soap altogether. Similarly, socialist workers in Cambrai expressed their bemusement that already better-off peasants received additional supplements of butter, oil, and sugar. In Plzeň, finally, there were many complaints that, unlike workers, tradesmen, artisans, students, and housewives taking care of young children, the ill as well as pensioners had not been awarded with ‘P3’ coupons for bread, fats, and meat by the Ministry for Food. Josef Janouš – the ČSSD spokesman for supply in the city council – recommended intervening with Prague so that every household would at least have one of these coupons.

Even if coupons were forthcoming, however, workers had plenty of grievances about the abuses of rationing and distribution. First of all, these concerned the size of rations. Socialists in the North of France initially blamed their government’s passivity for small rations. Once Paris came to grips with ravitaillement and finally cracked down on the distributional organisms of Vichy, the rations could certainly be enlarged. But such improvements were often a long time in coming. By the summer of 1947, socialist city guards in Łódź were still arguing that their coal rations were insufficient. Winter was approaching again and ‘nobody cares whether guards have something to keep them warm after they return from service’.

Secondly, what little supplies workers received in return for their coupons were often of questionable and decreasing quality. The combination of severe ingredient shortages for and substantial profit margins on everyday essentials led to the widespread diluting of foodstuffs. Amongst Milanese workers, there was intense unease about the
dropping nutritional value of bread. Whilst workers understood that the paucity of flour made a return to higher sifting levels impossible, they demanded that the new 80% level would be observed. This was part of a more general indignation over the ‘rarefaction’ of several vital necessities, especially the sugars indispensable for babies. If the city authorities were not going to live up to their protective duties in this respect, it was imperative that ‘special surveillance squads’ were formed to exert a ‘capillary control’ over the distribution process ‘in the interest of the more healthy part of the Milanese population’.59

Thirdly, rations were sometimes entirely fictitious, as workers were unable to cash in their coupons. In Přešť, drahota had turned into such a problem by April 1946 that countless workers on low wages, pensioners, and families with many children could not afford to buy all the products they were entitled to according to the rationing system. As a consequence, workers earning below the average working-class income of 2000 Crowns a month often failed to meet the state-prescribed daily calorie intake.60 How then, the local ČSSD press asked, were these people supposed ‘to pay for clothing, shoes, and rent’?61 But even when the worst cost of living problems were in the past, some workers still felt cheated by rationing outcomes. Across the Přešť region, women workers complained bitterly about shops being empty by the time they had finished their shifts. The preferential permits that had awarded working women a ‘right to buy’ were no good, as shopkeepers had chosen to ignore these and allow their stocks to sell out. Instead, women trade union representatives called for no new satin coupons to be handed out until all women had spent theirs and subjecting those cueing up in front of stores to controls.62

59 Comitati direttivi di organismi dei massa della Motomeccanica to Prefetto della Provincia di Milano, 19 July 1946, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
60 Ladislav Cígler, ‘Ceny musí být snížení!’, Nový Den, 14 July 1946.
61 ‘Ceny musí dolů!’, Nový Den, 25 April 1946.
Finally, distribution centres were often hotspots for all sorts of tampering with rations and coupons. This was especially true for the rations provided by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) that was active in three of the four cities (Łódź, Milano, and Plzeň). As its aid packages were frequently dispersed to factories before being passed on to workers, those presiding over the issue of rations were in a position that was at the same time crucial and corruptible. In Plzeň, there were ČSSD misgivings about several factory council members, whom they accused of deliberately withholding UNRRA allotments in their personal interest.63 If the Plzeň social democrats wanted (part of) the factory council out of the UNRRA distribution process, the Łódź socialists wanted it in. Its cross-party nature, socialist textile workers argued, was the only guarantee that the raffles of UNRRA allocations would not be ‘won’ exclusively by PPR members.64 Such charges of party-political favouritism were likewise levelled at local communists in the North of France. In communes under communist direction, the allegation went, ‘T-coupons’ designated for blue-collar workers had been granted to white-collar workers and even to young girls.65

It is indicative of the considerable power wielded by those able to get their hands on products at some point in the distribution chain. Grassroots activists in each of the four cities much resented the countless middlemen taking a cut between the production and consumption of goods for driving up prices. During a meeting with Edward Osóbka-Morawski, a delegation of the Łódź provincial PPS pressed their Prime Minister on the question of trade control and returned with assurances that ‘abuses and speculation’ would

63 ‘Dodatky ke schůzi rady MNV’ [17 December 1945], AMP, Zápisy o schůzích Národního Výboru a rady Okresního Národního Výboru a Místního Národního Výboru statutárního města Plzeň 1945.
64 ‘Protokół z zebraniu Koła P.P.S. przy P.Z.P.B. Nr. 4 w Łodzi’ [19 July 1947], APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fòs 66-69.
65 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Congrès d’arrondissement du Parti Socialiste SFIO à Cambrai], 22 July 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1.
be exterminated. Similarly, workers in Milano demanded that ‘the illegal trafficking of goods, artificial price hikes, and the smokescreen around products’ would come to an end. Socialists in the North of France, for their part, identified ‘the disappearance of the intermediaries between producers and consumers’ as a pre-requisite for the 25% price drop championed by their national leaders.

But the adverse effects of distribution go-betweens were undoubtedly most keenly felt in Czechoslovakia. Petitioning ÚRO to intervene with the government against ‘all parasites in our economic life’, Plzeň railway workers claimed their living standards had been hit twice by these ‘distribution mooches’. Not only did their cut add further to the already excessive costs of living, but their lavish spending on luxury items also pushed up inflation still higher. In a similar vein, Ladislav Cígler, the foremost ČSSD trade unionist in the region, protested against the ‘absurdity’ of fruit needlessly going bad during its prolonged storage at ‘collection points’. If swift action was not taken, he concluded, Plzeň might well follow in the footsteps of Slovakia, where the ‘added value’ of official distribution intermediaries had gotten so out of control that beef and eggs were cheaper on the black market than at state-licensed shops.

Workers certainly never felt they were getting a bargain when taking recourse to the black market. As much as they resented having to deal with the ‘vampires’ operating on this shady scene, however, it was often the only way to add sufficiently to that being provided via official channels (both rations and the products sold on the free market) for their families to get by. The authorities’ inability to root out the countless abuses of the

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66 ‘Protokul z posiedzenia Egzekutywy WK. PPS’ [28 August 1945], AAN, Fonds Henryk Wachowicz, 5 WK PPS.
67 ‘L’operaio Valboretti nell’Esecutivo della Camera del Lavoro Milano. Cosa ha fatto e cosa farà l’organizzazione sindacale’ [15 August 1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
68 ‘Meeting du Parti Socialiste à Brunemont’ [21 July 1946], ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1.
69 ‘Železničáři protestují proti drahotě’, Nový Den, 23 October 1946.
70 Ladislav Cígler, ‘Ceny musí být sníženi!’, Nový Den, 14 July 1946.
71 ‘L’operaio Valboretti nell’Esecutivo della Camera del Lavoro Milano. Cosa ha fatto e cosa farà l’organizzazione sindacale’ [15 August 1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
black market, then, caused more widespread disillusionment amongst workers than shortages, prices, and wages ever did. For unlike the force majeure of war and reconstruction associated with the problems on the supply side, there was no excuse for failing to protect the working class against those growing rich at their expense.

At a base level, worker grievances about the black market constituted a backlash against peasant ascendancy across post-war Europe. Their direct access to food not only shielded peasants from the hunger so often suffered by the urban working class, but also gave them a powerful economic tool if they managed to keep their produce out of the official distribution channels. Indeed, the most common accusation workers brought against peasants was that of subverting or withholding food earmarked for the city, with a view to selling it at a much-inflated price on the black market. Whereas factory workers in Sesto San Giovanni held peasants responsible for their starvation, local socialists in Łódź noted how peasants ‘exploited the moment’ by not sending to the city those ‘first necessities for which the worker was languishing’. Accordingly, there were many calls for more thorough controls over the rural economy. As statistics clearly demonstrated that the production of milk had not fallen since liberation, a leader in the Plzeň ČSSD press suggested the city authorities implemented a broad range of measures to guarantee ‘that milk coupons could be abolished and that there will be sufficient quantities of butter for our children’. Socialists in the North of France went one further, favouring ‘exemplary sanctions’ against those peasants defaulting on their obligations to provide milk at the new state-regulated price.

73 ‘Protokół z ogólnego zebrania Koła PPS w Państwowej Fabryce Nr. 2, L.Z.P.W’ [7 May 1947], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Lewa, 14, fo. 40.
It was, however, not just such immediate subsistence concerns that underlay working-class hostility towards the peasantry. There was a distinct feeling that the balance between worker and peasant as well as urban and rural interests needed redressing badly. During the war, argued a ČSSD representative in the Plzeň city council, the collection of milk had still proceeded in an orderly fashion. But in the freedom that had accompanied liberation, many on the countryside had ‘spotted an opportunity to loosen discipline’. From various villages and communities, milk was either arriving in a miserable state or not reaching the city at all.76 Similarly, socialist textile workers in Łódź wondered why villages were still being equipped with limitless supplies of textiles. Had the assumption not been that providing the peasantry with indispensable industrial goods would be met with a commensurate price drop for agricultural products?77 If Łódź socialists were bemused that peasants received something for nothing, their counterparts in Cambrai were outraged when the French government proposed a ‘revalorisation’ of wheat and milk. Amid several claims that peasants were ‘exploiters’, who had emerged enriched from the war, one delegate illustrated the contrasts between worker ‘misery’ and peasant ‘opulence’ vividly. ‘Before the war’, he declared, ‘there were men and pigs. Now there are pigs and men: the former eat wheat, the latter bran’.78

The black market did not stop at peasants taking advantage of worker desperation, though, but quickly drew in wide sections of post-war society. By late 1945, Mariani lamented that ‘the most shameless speculation and profiteering has permeated all groups’.79 What is more, products often found their way to the black market via an intricate web involving several of these groups. If bakers in Monza closing their shops at

76 ‘Schůze Národního výboru’ [8 June 1945], AMP, Zápisy o schůzích Národního Výboru a rady Okresního Národního Výboru a Místního Národního Výboru statutárního města Plzeň 1945.
77 ‘Protokół zebrania informacyjnego koła P.P.S. przy Łodzkich Zakładach Przemysłu Czesankowego’ [24 July 1945], APL, DK PPS Górna, 6, fo. 2.
78 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Congrès d’arrondissement du Parti Socialiste SFIO à Cambrai], 22 July 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1.
79 Interview Robert Hadfield with Franco Mariani [1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
11am after selling all of their bread on the black market might still have been working on their own, the same could certainly not be said for those people subverting raw materials or finished products from industrial sites. The Plzeň ČSSD press repeatedly called upon workers to keep their eyes open for the defrauding of goods from their factories – workers, after all, ‘definitely did not work for some to grow rich easily off their labour’. But, as time went by, it became increasingly clear that pockets of the working class were embroiled neck-deep in the illicit trails of goods. Whether it were these truckers shipping 59m³ more coal than indicated on their bill of lading or that factory council allowing thousands of metres of textile to disappear to Slovakia, some workers certainly seemed to have a stake in keeping the black market up-and-running.

Things were exactly the other way around in Milano, where employers were accused of facilitating the speculative practices of their workforce. The internal commission at Pirelli castigated the ‘immorality’ of other local companies’ failure to observe new regulations restricting the working week to 40 hours. Overtime being paid in kind, this measure had been put in place to stem the flow of products to the black market. Yet, far from reducing hours, some firms had prolonged the working week to 60 or even 72 hours – giving their workers products with a street value of between 700 and 800 lire in return.

Where the black market might have enabled a segment of the working class to ‘squander not inconsiderable sums’ gambling in bars, it constituted a horrible aberration for the great majority of workers. ‘Illegal trade’, a socialist in the Łódź textile sector

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80 CI Breda to Prefetto di Milano, 11 December 1946, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
82 ‘Falknovské doly podporují šmelinu s uhlím. Směšné tresty ONV a ZNV šmelinářům. – Na Plzeňsku dvě tajné koželužny. – Sláva pánů z Prahy a práce Pizcňáků’, Nový Den, 10 January 1947.
84 CI Pirelli to Camera del Lavoro, 7 August 1946, AdL, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
85 ‘Constatazione’, Sesto Proletaria, 7 July 1945.
argued, should be forbidden for it allowed ‘elements who never work’ to ‘live well’. The contrasts between the sumptuous lifestyles afforded by speculators and the daily anguish of the working class were an affront to many workers. A conference of ČSSD factory organisations from Plzeň district demanded that the 2% living off the black market would be made to work. ‘Filling bars’ and ‘spending dizzying amounts’, after all, their behaviour ‘provokes others, i.e. those who strive for fulfilment of the government’s Two Year Plan’. More and more, this toxic combination of black market extortion and speculator extravagance drove workers to extremes. Calling for ‘a firm BASTA to the wild and greedy speculation that is running rampant and could lead us to wholly unintended actions’, a resolution adopted by socialist trade unionists at Milanese train manufacturer TIBB already seemed to hint at retributive action.

What rank-and-file activists really wanted, however, was for their leaders to finally make the full force of the law bear upon the black market. Observers noted a strong upswing in satisfaction amongst socialists in the North of France after François Tanguy-Prigent, the SFIO’s new Minister for Agriculture, launched a campaign wishing ‘death on the bloodsuckers of the black market’. But even with slogans like that, there was a distinct feeling that the party faithful wanted to ‘go further still than their representatives in terms of the reforms to enact’.

In fact, grassroots socialists frequently berated their national leaders for failing to follow through on their hawkish rhetoric regarding the black market. Despite official government propaganda being full of militaristic hyperbole of battles with high prices, speculators, and the like, socialists in Łódź found the Commission for Combating

86 ‘Protokół spisany z zebrania członków P.P.S. przy Państwowych Zakładach Przemysłu Welnianego Nr. 40 w Łodzi’ [28 October 1947], APŁ, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fos 82-83.
88 Gruppo sindacale socialista TIBB to Camera del Lavoro Milano, 18 April 1947, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 3. Emphasis in original.
Extortion left much to be desired. To add insult to injury, workers were unpleasantly ‘surprised’ by that same government raising train fares right in the middle of the campaign. Milanese socialists were likewise left disillusioned by anti-speculative measures that had looked promising on paper. When ‘our party […] had sensed the overriding need to squeeze prices, to sort out the flow of raw materials, and to take action against the black market’ in its economic programme, the local PSIUP in Sesto San Giovanni wrote, ‘workers had enjoyed a moment of confident satisfaction’. But once they realised that ‘the proposals did not have an adequate application in practice’, workers had ‘shaken their heads revealingly’.

Local socialists often attributed the ineffectiveness of such initiatives to the leniency that the authorities showed profiteers. According to Robert Coutant, who played a key role in the rebuilding of local SFIO sections in the North of France, many of the continuing ravitaillement problems were due to the fact that there had been no thorough crackdown on the distributive organisms of Vichy – notorious for their involvement in the black market during the war. ‘[S]ome examples’ should have been set at the moment of liberation, he told a meeting of socialists in Pecquencourt, by handing its high functionaries ‘criminal rather than administrative penalties’. While Milanese workers demanded a more ‘drastic’ approach towards the black market as well, the outrage over caught black marketeers getting away with a slap on the wrist was definitely greatest in Plzeň. Reports in the ČSSD press repeatedly decried the sentences pronounced by the

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91 ‘Protokół zebrania Fabrycznego Koła P.P.S. przy P.Z.P.B. nr II’ [27 June 1947], APL, DK PPS Górna, 7, fo. 27.
92 Esecutivo PSIUP Sesto San Giovanni to Direzione PSIUP, Vice Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri Nenni, and Gruppo Parlamentare PSIUP, Sesto Proletaria, 28 August 1946.
94 ‘L’operaio Valboretti nell’Esecutivo della Camera del Lavoro Milano. Cosa ha fatto e cosa farà l’organizzazione sindacale’ [15 August 1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
provincial authorities as a joke – receiving a 1000 Crown fine for making a 12000 Crown profit on the black market would ‘only make the profiteer crave further frauds’. The hunt for speculators, moreover, seemed to be systematically obstructed from above. Local social democrats were baffled as to why the police action to detect speculators and put them to work was going to be stopped, why arrested speculators were not named-and-shamed, and how factory managers sanctioned for fraud could be re-hired. When another factory manager got an already small fine halved, fingers were pointing towards the KSČ. ‘How many people [...] in Prague’ was he ‘cooperating with’?\(^97\)

Increasingly, then, workers were left with the impression of a ruling class primarily concerned with closing ranks on itself. This was borne out by the various scandals revealing those in responsible positions simply not to care about the plight of the working class. There were instances of shocking negligence: the burning of great quantities of wheat and shoes in Limoges, while ‘a part of the French population cannot feed and clothe itself properly’.\(^98\) There were cases of deliberate market manipulation: industrialists in Milano stockpiling their goods pending further inflation\(^99\) and employers’ organisations calling on those few businesses that had lowered prices to re-raise them in Czechoslovakia.\(^100\) And there was blatant cronyism: despite the housing situation being ‘tragic’ in Łódź,\(^101\) occupancy controls on the homes of industrial directors were being

\(^95\) ‘Zastavte neodpovědné zvyšování cen. Ve Falknově zahálejí prázdné vagony. – Manka zdrojem černých příjmů a zdražení. – Nedostatky trestání provinilých šmelinářů. – Šmelinaři se i s rozumem’, *Nový Den*, 5 December 1946.


\(^97\) ‘Ruce pryč od šmelinářů! Cvrkovina musí být potrestána, nesmí být kryta’, *Nový Den*, 16 February 1947.

\(^98\) ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion organisée par le Parti Socialiste à l’occasion du 40ème Anniversaire de fondation de la Fanfare Ouvrière de Saint-Amand], 25 August 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38451 2.


\(^100\) ‘Snížování cen nesmí být bráněno’, *Nový Den*, 6 August 1946.

blocked by the PPR.\textsuperscript{102} All things considered, those with ‘money as only motherland’
definitely seemed to be running the show yet again.\textsuperscript{103} Or, as workers at Škoda put it: ‘We
know very well that within certain groups in our country, thanks to the unscrupulous price
hikes, a new capitalist class is growing’.\textsuperscript{104}

The Other Side

To nip this burgeoning capitalism in the bud once and for all, the working class demanded
a levelling of the playing field first and foremost. There had been a widespread expectation
that income inequalities would decrease or wither away under democracy, a concept
workers associated with economic equality at least as much as with political freedom.
Where elections might have propelled the Left into (shared) political power with relative
ease, however, making good the economic imbalances between rich and poor proved a
much harder task. Increasingly restless about the static or even widening gap between the
haves and have-nots of post-war society, rank-and-file activists began questioning their
leaders. How could those enriched by war be let off lightly, whilst the working class was
bearing the brunt of post-war reconstruction? Why were the better-off able to profit from
government social schemes, whereas workers on the state’s payroll got a terrible deal? But
working-class egalitarianism went far beyond a mere resentment of business fat cats. For
even within the working class, there were all sorts of jealousies. Whether it was workers in
other factories, sectors, or regions bringing home more, the grass always seemed to be
greener on the other side.

\textsuperscript{102} Henryk Wachowicz to Sekretariatu Generalnego CKW PPS, 5 October 1946, AAN, Polska Partia
Socjalistyczna, Sekretariat Generalny, Wydz. Ekonomiczno-Przem. WK Łódź, 1946-48, 2291/6, 235/XV-44,
fos 38-39.
\textsuperscript{103} Interview Robert Hadfield with Franco Mariani [1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
\textsuperscript{104} ‘Škodováci proti vysokým cenám’, \textit{Nový Den}, 31 October 1946.
Right from liberation, local socialists made it quite clear where the funds for reconstruction ought to be found. The SFIO’s Deputy Federal Secretary for Pas-de-Calais, for example, told socialists in Avion that the 280 billion deficit in the government’s budget should be made up for by the confiscation of the great fortunes amassed during the war. If the government continued to refuse this, he went on under laud applause, ‘the working class would find itself forced to take to the streets’.105 ‘Taking the money there where it is’ quickly became a recurring theme in socialist rhetoric across the North of France, as the party was not about to make ‘the underlings’ pay.106 Similarly, a socialist worker in Sesto San Giovanni insisted the inevitable sacrifices that lay ahead for liberated Italy should be shouldered in a proportional manner. The working class would contribute its sweat to the reconstruction effort, but he who had amassed 10 million should give at least half of that to the state.107

In both countries, however, calls for a requisition of (war) profits were largely in vain. By late 1946, a worker at Motomeccanica was still demanding state controls over ‘excess profits’, for it could not be the case that the worker was paying for ‘a war wanted by capital [whilst] capitalists were making billions each month’.108 Socialists in the North of France, for their part, were soon to bemoan not only the fact that ‘the working masses have paid, are paying, and will be paying the costs of war’,109 but also the half-hearted nature of those expropriation measures the government did enact. They widely denounced the nationalisation of the mines as a ‘caricature’, falling well short of what workers had

105 Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reseignements Generaux [Réunion organisée par le Parti Socialiste à Avion] 20 February 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 1.
108 B. Filippo to Camera del Lavoro, 15 October 1946, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
expected. Allowed to keep receiving their dividends and to stay on as finance directors, former owners certainly appeared to be hanging on to ‘their share of the spoils’. Where confiscations and nationalisations at once cut deeper and took a broader scope in post-war Eastern Europe, relations between workers and management were hardly transformed overnight. In fact, concerns that nothing much had changed were already voiced during an August 1945 meeting of the Łódź provincial PPS. While one delegate questioned the gap between the 190 points (which could be traded for goods in the rationing system) earned by managers at the Horak textile factory and the 47 points their workforce received, another pointed out that railway directors addressed their workers in a language that reminded of the pre-war reaction.

Both in form and in substance, then, despised capitalist practices proved far more persistent than workers had anticipated in the wake of liberation. Workers in Plzeň repeatedly vented their frustration at managerial abuses past and present, which their trade unions seemingly condoned. Whereas workers at the Willy Geyer garment factory disputed KOR’s acquiescence in the return of an ‘asocial’ pre-war owner to management, their counterparts at Škoda called upon ÚRO and the government to go after those ‘without a conscience who had made millions off the labour of their employees’ since 1945. Even party leaders acknowledged that such unrepentant self-indulgence on the part of those in charge of now-nationalised industry had bred much bad blood. Speaking in the PPS Central Committee, party chairman Kasimierz Rusinek listed the reasons for working-class opposition to the government. In his view, little had changed since the war – the

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110 Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reсеignements Generaux [Rеunion de la section du Parti Socialiste SFIO а Mons en Baroeul], 29 January 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2; Congrès de la Fédération du Nord du Parti Socialiste SFIO’, [August 1945], ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
111 Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reсеignements Generaux [Rеunion du Parti Socialiste а Eсcaudin], 17 January 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
112 ‘Sprawozdanie z konferencji przewodniczących и sekretarzy Komitetów Powiatowych Miejskich P.P.S. Województwa Łódzkiego’ [20 August 1945], AAN, Fonds Henryk Wachowicz, 5 WK PPS w Łodzi.
administrative apparatus in industry was distrusted and whilst industrial managers had made no concessions regarding their living standards, workers got nothing.115

In each of the four cities, therefore, rank-and-file activists demanded the divide separating rich and poor was narrowed one way or another. Many at the grassroots favoured income levelling. Signalling how much bitterness the huge varieties in earnings generated amongst the working masses, one socialist representative in the Łódź area wondered what had happened to the PPS. Having always struggled for income equalisation, after all, the party seemed to have ‘ignored’ the question since liberation.116

In a similar vein, social democrats in Plzeň called on those standing at the helm of public institutions or nationalised companies to set the right example. As nobody could argue the working class was living in prosperity, those on ‘fairy-tale’ salaries should show some ‘sobriety’ too.117

Apart from such moral appeals upon parties or individuals, rank-and-file activists also urged their governments to use the levers at their disposal in a more progressive manner. Internal commissions across Milano united to prevent their city authorities from retrieving a new ‘family tax’ from workers on fixed wages. Branding it ‘immoral and anti-social’ that the burden of post-war reconstruction fell almost exclusively on the shoulders of the working class, they called for a tax on ‘every form of luxury and extravagance’ instead.118 Socialists in the North of France went even further, proposing income tax,

118 CI Sindacato Bancari, Banca Commerciale Italiana, Banca d’America e d’Italia, Banca Popolare, Banco di Napoli, Banca Commercia Serico, Piccolo Credito Bergamasci, Cassa di Risparmio della P.P.L.L., Rhodiacata, Elettrotoce, Edison, Innocenti, Falck, Bemberg, Telegrafo Centrale, Alfa Romeo, Officine Bossi, Motomeccanica, Brill, Credito di Francia, Feltrinelli, and Siemens to Camera del Lavoro, 28 March 1947, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 2.
‘which hits workers above all’, would be scrapped altogether and be replaced by a levy on
‘fortunes and enrichment’.119

If rank-and-file socialists would occasionally applaud their leaders’ initiatives to
soak the rich,120 however, they far more frequently derided government interventions for
coming up short in redistributive intent. The ČSSD in Plzeň joined its counterpart from
Brno in opposing the strong shift from direct to indirect taxation in the government’s 1947
budget. Making no difference between rich and poor, the government was reminded,
indirect taxes on daily necessities had always been contested ‘by socialists of all colours
when the bourgeoisie still held a majority before Munich’.121

What social policy was introduced by the state, moreover, activists often
condemned for favouring the rich at least as much as the poor. Socialists in Cambrai
remonstrated against the plan to provide all consumers with 300 grams of bread at a rate
fixed by income and a further amount of bread at a higher price. ‘It is workers’, one of
them exhorted, ‘who are the largest consumers of bread and who would, once again, be
bearing all the costs were the Council of Ministers to pass this measure’.122 Łódź workers
found the system stacked against them to an even greater extent. Denouncing the fact that
all sorts of allowances of bonuses were available to senior officials whilst ‘the lower
functionary was starving’, a worker in the city’s public transport shops pointed to ‘the
intelligentsia’. Having shed its blood for the freedom of the motherland, he argued, it

119 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion publique organisée par la section socialiste de Trith St-Léger], 18
October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2.
120 Amongst rank-and-file socialists in the North of France, there was much satisfaction about the special tax,
introduced by André Philip, on wartime enrichment. ‘Le Parti Socialiste: Département du Nord’, [reference
date: 28 February 1946], ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 1.
121 ‘Nesouhlasíme s ministrem financí’, Nový Den, 30 November 1946.
122 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité et position du Parti Socialiste S.F.I.O. – et réunion extraordinaire de
la section de Cambrai], 14 August 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38451 2.
should be the working class to receive such assistance. But the intelligentsia had exploited all the ‘old habits’, forcing the worker to ‘renounce everything’.  

More contentious still than the perks bestowed upon white-collar workers, though, was the preferential treatment (allegedly) meted out to segments of the working class. First of all, there was much rancour that some workers seemed to be better off by virtue solely of where they lived. These questions often revolved around rural dwellers coming into the city to work. On the one hand, the extras granted to workers already taking home an urban wage to a place where the costs of living were much lower needed explaining. It was perfectly understandable, the urban workforce at the Falck metal plant in Sesto San Giovanni argued, that workers commuting from the surrounding villages were favoured in the distribution of bicycle covers. But why had workers living in villages, where supply was ‘much easier and less costly’, not been excluded from the distribution of food packages? 

On the other, workers from outside the city frequently felt penalised just for residing on the countryside. Workers dwelling beyond the Łódź borders repeatedly questioned why they were left out of food or coal rations. In the North of France, meanwhile, there was much anger that the wartime distributive distinctions between rural and urban communities remained in force. The socialist section in rural Paillencourt passed a motion stressing the discontent caused by the smaller rations accorded to its workers. After all, many rural communities had not been blessed with potato seeds, whilst gardens

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124 This was actually used as an argument to remove the wartime distinctions between (higher) urban and (lower) rural wages in Plzeň. According to an article in the local ČSSD press, such wage levelling constituted the only way to stop the haemorrhaging of much-needed rural labourers to the city. Jirí Kíncl, ‘Jednotné mzdy’, Nový Den, 4 November 1945.
125 ‘Girotondo’, Sesto Proletaria, 7 July 1945.
were often larger in urban communities. It would even happen that ‘in the same factory [...] at the same table, urban workers do have potatoes for dinner whereas “rurals” do not’. 127

If such inequalities within one and the same factory generated much worker spite, colleagues did unite over the fringe benefits enjoyed by workers at other industrial sites. Miners’ representatives in the Plzeň region complained that, where miners at the Stříbro pits had been receiving food and tobacco supplements, their counterparts at Křimice had not. Such discriminating practices would certainly lead to discontent and discord, ‘for miners desire all to be measured by the same standards’. 128 Expressing their surprise at the raise awarded to the workforce at nationalised gas companies, socialists in Cambrai voiced similar objections. If there was ‘a subsistence minimum for them’, they insisted, ‘the same advantages’ should be extended ‘to all other categories’. 129

Such demands notwithstanding, workers at smaller plants remained particularly vulnerable to being overlooked in the distribution of advantages. Asking why they had not been provided with cheap shoes, workers at a 72-employee Łódź factory were told that scheme only applied to establishments employing at least 250. 130 Workers at Milano’s Amilcare Pizzi printing shop felt neglected at the favour of larger enterprises as well. Despite announcements regarding the distribution of food, clothing, or shoes in Avanti! or Unità (the PCI daily), the internal commission wrote, smaller factories were left in the dark about the specifics. It urged the trade union authorities to also inform companies without a canteen of pending hand-outs, in order not to disillusion ‘those who, plagued by need, believe to find help, [but] end up with a fistful of flies’. 131

127 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité du Parti Socialiste SFIO], 6 July 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1.
128 ‘Horníci naléhají’, Nový Den, 1 August 1945.
130 ‘Protokół zebrania ogólnego robotników i pracowników Państwowej Fabryki Nr. 22 z udzialem przedstawicieli P.P.S. i P.P.R.’, APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fos 56-57.
131 CI Amilcare Pizzi to Camera del Lavoro, 25 November 1946, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 1.
The single worst-off group in each of the four cities, however, did not work in industry, nationalised or otherwise. It was the blue-collar workers employed by the state, such as railway workers, road builders, or postmen, who got the worst deal by far. Public sector workers often pointed out how bad their pay and conditions were in comparison with their counterparts in factories. In a memorandum to the ČSSD and the ČSL, manual labourers for Plzeň province demanded their wages and contributions would be levelled with those of industrial workers. It was beyond belief, after all, that ‘the physically exhausting work of constructing and maintaining highways was valued disproportionally lower than far lighter work in warm factory halls’. Socialist city workers in Łódź likewise raised the question of ‘unequal pay for the same work in different institutions’. After one worker lamented that the family allowances received by city workers were up to five times lower as elsewhere, another castigated the practice of handing out different types of coupons to different workers for creating ‘two categories of citizens’. So dire was the material situation of public sector workers that even their opposite numbers in industry wanted something to be done. Calling attention to the ‘absolute remunerative inferiority’ of state employees, especially railroad and postal workers, socialists at TIBB insisted the entire working class should show solidarity with public sector workers in their negotiations with the Italian government.

Public sector workers certainly needed all the support they could get, for they often felt utterly deserted by their political and union leaders. State employees in the Milano area warned that the ‘inconceivable abandonment’ of and the ‘congenial disinterest’ in their cause on the part of regional trade union leaders was about to drive them ‘into open

132 ‘Zaměstnanec rada veřejné služby technické při ONV Plzeň-venkov usnesla se na Memorandu’ [28 February 1947], Státní Oblastní Archív v Plzni, Plzeň [hereafter SOA Plzeň], Fonds Krajský Výbor KSČ Plzeň [hereafter KV KSČ Plzeň], 534.

133 ‘Protokol z zebrania członków Koła P.P.S. przy Gazowni Miejskiej’ [15 October 1947], APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fos 79-80.

134 Gruppo sindacale socialista TIBB to Camera del Lavoro Milano, 18 April 1947, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.4., Fasc. 3.
struggle’ with the trade union authorities.\textsuperscript{135} Governments, too, were frequently accused of taking their own people for granted. There were reports of ‘a serious discontent’ amongst socialist public sector workers in the North of France, who claimed that ‘their spirit of discipline had been abused to make them bear heavy sacrifices’.\textsuperscript{136} Plzeň social democrats likewise underlined public employees’ dedication to the republic at liberation. Witnessing ‘the pomp’ of official cars, banquets, and foreign travel relished by the mushrooming civil service, however, they increasingly came to view the official reasons for holding back their wages as ‘mere excuses and evasions’\textsuperscript{137}. These disparities between the happy few at the top of the state apparatus and the needy many at its bottom, also deplored in the North of France,\textsuperscript{138} caused much bewilderment coming from governments boasting their democratic and egalitarian character. Whilst lambasting ÚRO for its lack of interest in their ordeal, a meeting of Plzeň region road builders noted how their beliefs that ‘the lowest categories of workers’ would be helped out first and foremost ‘in a democratic state under popular government’ had been disappointed.\textsuperscript{139}

In their protests against the remaining inequalities of post-war society, workers drew increasingly on such allusions to the state’s own rhetoric. A government ‘calling itself democratic’, public sector workers in Sesto San Giovanni argued, could not afford to disregard ‘one of our most sacred rights, the right to life’.\textsuperscript{140} But workers often understood democracy to mean much more than merely such elementary rights. A worker in Łódź asked how it could be justifiable ‘in a democratic system’ that a manager earned 120% of what his subordinates made.\textsuperscript{141} The claim that ‘Poland [was] now a democratic country’

\textsuperscript{135} Croce Anselmo, ‘Statali e parastatali chiedono giustizia’, \textit{Sesto Proletaria}, 24 July 1946.
\textsuperscript{136} ‘Le Parti Socialiste: Département du Nord’, [1946], ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 1.
\textsuperscript{138} ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité du Parti Socialiste SFIO (réunion privée)], 16 September 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38453 2.
\textsuperscript{139} ‘Silničním zaměstnancům se musí dostatí pomoci’, \textit{Nový Den}, 7 December 1946.
\textsuperscript{140} Croce Anselmo, ‘Statali e parastatali chiedono giustizia’, \textit{Sesto Proletaria}, 24 July 1946.
was used by workers elsewhere in the city to attack the ‘especially privileged’ position of Jews. Everyone being equal in a democracy, there could be no ‘superior citizens’, who, by virtue of the ‘special grants’ meted out by ‘the Jewish community’ and their strong representation in trade and industrial management, were able ‘to drive limousines and dine in the best restaurants’.

Such manifestations of luxury were particularly poignant in the ‘popular’ democracies of Czechoslovakia and Poland, as they flew directly in the face of government slogans. In view of the official propaganda that there was no longer a bourgeoisie in People’s Poland, one socialist worker wondered who it was ‘driving around in limousines at Piotrkowska [Łódź’s main shopping street] and buying all the luxurious products that a worker can only dream about’. Further West, however, workers faulted governments for not delivering upon their egalitarian premises all the same. Calling for an end to the ‘injustice’ of rural and urban communities, socialists in the North of France reminded their leaders ‘that, amongst the three words that symbolise the Republic, there is EGALITY!’.

For many rank-and-file activists, then, the post-war state had failed on its own terms. To be sure, the Left was in (shared) power, but many of the expectations of what that would entail, raised and cultivated during the interwar and war years, had been disappointed. As early as August 1945, one worker commented to the Milanese trade union authorities that the hopes of the liberation – including the levelling of the most evident income inequalities and providing state employees with a wage sufficient to avoid starvation – had not been realised. Seeing prices multiply relative to wages every day,

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142 ‘Protokół z zebranie komórki P.P.S.’ [25 October 1945], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Prawa, 10, fos 9-10. The resolution adopted at this meeting has strong anti-Semitic overtones throughout, including the bizarre claim that ‘the Jewish people did not suffer larger losses during the war than the Polish people’ and ‘therefore cannot be specifically protected’.
143 ‘Protokół spisany z zebrania członków P.P.S. przy Państwowych Zakładach Przemysłu Welnianego Nr. 40 w Łodzi’ [28 October 1947], APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fos 82-83.
144 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité du Parti Socialiste SFIO], 6 July 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38449 1. Emphasis in original.
moreover, it was an affront to the working class to witness countless people still living in luxury.\textsuperscript{145}

If these remarks, accompanied as they were by an appeal on the government to do more, might yet be read as constructive criticism, there was more resignation in a retrospective commentary carried by the Plzeň ČSSD press in October 1946. ‘When we wrote incendiary articles and rebelled against the economic order during the economic crisis’, it goes, ‘we imagined a time would come when the small man […] was to receive a proper and fair wage for his work’. Talking to workers today, the article continues, an altogether different reality revealed itself: ‘We have shortages, we live badly. We understand that we emerge from a horrible war and that everything cannot be changed overnight. We do not begrudge anyone, and we have suffered the necessary sacrifices, but we regret that these sacrifices have not been distributed evenly over everyone’.\textsuperscript{146}

\textbf{Conclusion}

We have seen in this chapter that conditions and concerns on the ground in the four cities were roughly similar. To be sure, the material situation in Plzeň was initially slightly better, meaning that worker protests there lacked the sense of utter desperation they often exhibited in Lille, Łódź, and Milano. But these were differences in degree rather than kind and, especially after the supply situation in Czechoslovakia took a turn for the worse in 1946, grassroots discourses in the four cities became almost indistinguishable in their denunciations of the shortages or unaffordability of everyday necessities, of the shameless

\textsuperscript{145} ‘L’operaio Valboretti nell’Esecutivo della Camera del Lavoro Milano. Cosa ha fatto e cosa farà l’organizzazione sindacale’ [15 August 1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.

\textsuperscript{146} ‘Škodováci proti vysokým cenám’, \textit{Nový Den}, 31 October 1946.
profiteering by so many with access to food, and of the complete lack of egalitarianism in post-war society.

If the main thrust of socio-economic reconstruction met with near-universal condemnation amongst rank-and-file (socialist) workers, however, their bread-and-butter grievances do not correspond to the politicised agenda that historiography has typically ascribed to the post-war European working class. In fact, workers themselves often presented their demands as non-political. That the communist-socialist organised workers’ meetings in the run-up to the first factory council elections in post-war Łódź were ‘extremely stormy’, then, had little to do with the issue of worker self-management. ‘A strong turmoil erupts when a worker takes to the stage and begins to shout that his children are hungry’, noted a PPR report of such meetings; ‘then a more general cry develops […] “we are fed up with political talk, we want to eat”’.147 Just how deep the rift between the political rhetoric of provincial and national socialist leaders and the attitudes taken at the party grassroots ran becomes very clear in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Discipline, Sacrifice, and Production

Upon a February 1946 visit to Plzeň, ČSSD Minister of Industry Bohumil Laušman championed the ‘new social order’ that was under construction in post-war Czechoslovakia. He argued that the state was moving ahead both socially and economically – the hunger still suffered by many across large parts of the country after liberation having been overcome and exports picking up. To be sure, there were complaints about prices and wages. Nobody was perfect and the government might have made mistakes, but its monetary reforms had secured the purchasing power of the currency, the Crown, and averted the dreadful inflation running rampant in other countries. However ‘terrible’ it might have been to slash departmental budgets by 35 billion Crowns, it had been the only way to prevent the nation from becoming ‘a beggar’. The nationalisation of banking and industry, moreover, had laid the groundwork for a flourishing economy. Now all that was needed was ‘work, work, and more work!’.

In a nutshell, this sums up how socialist leaders countered the grievances amongst their rank and file. Sure enough, times were hard and were going to remain so for the foreseeable future. But the austerity packages introduced by each of the four governments had been absolutely necessary to stave off the looming disasters of mounting debt and spiralling inflation. What made these rounds of cuts different from the ones implemented to such catastrophic effect before the war, furthermore, was that they were based upon a sustainable economic model. The short-term sacrifices demanded of the working class, then, would come to the rescue not of capitalists, but of the reconstruction effort, the nation, and ultimately workers themselves. In order for these sacrifices to be worth their while, however, it was imperative that workers would not engage in self-defeating

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agitations against the very institutions that were fighting their corner. Rather than constantly finding fault with their unions, parties, and governments, they were to abide by the labour movement’s discipline and produce to the full of their abilities.

This chapter endeavours to reveal just how strong this productivist ethos was within post-war European socialism’s leading circles. Party leaders often presented more production as the answer to all the bread-and-butter woes of the working class, whether it concerned shortages, price hikes, or wage restraint. But as working-class living standards kept dropping, party leaders’ promises that workers would soon reap the fruits of their discipline and sacrifice began sounding more and more hollow. It was not just exhaustion and exasperation, however, that pitted the working class against the production campaigns propagated with increasingly militaristic rhetoric by their leaders. The entire premise that seemed to lie behind the drive to raise industrial output – that the working-class contribution to reconstruction somehow fell short and that it was workers who had to walk the extra mile yet again – caused deep resentment at the grassroots. To make matters worse, the means by which governments sought to achieve their production targets often flew right in the face of worker egalitarianism, adding further weight to the perception of an elite utterly out of touch with the aspirations of its rank and file.

**Discipline and Sacrifice**

Historians have often suggested that the post-war European socialist parties were considerably softer on manifestations of worker discontent than their communist counterparts. They tend to contrast the extremely harsh view that communist leaders took
of the unrest at their grassroots – denouncing strikes as ‘a weapon of the [capitalist] trusts’\(^2\) and scolding workers for absenteeism, theft, and their unwillingness to work\(^3\) – with the supposedly more sympathetic attitudes socialist parties assumed towards the plight of their rank and file.\(^4\) Yet, as so many of the academic claims about the post-war socialist parties and the working class, such assertions tend to be based more on anecdotal evidence (e.g. socialist support for individual strikes and agitations) than grassroots research. A more systematic analysis of grassroots-elite relations within the four parties under review in this thesis reveals how socialist leaders frequently found themselves at loggerheads with their rank and file too.

To be sure, socialist leaders often showed a remarkable deal of understanding for manifestations of worker despair. A worker who has to spend double his income to survive, PPS Trade Union Secretary Lucjan Motyka declared, will arrive at the conclusion that he has to steal – ‘we put him on that road of demoralisation’.\(^5\) Far be it from party leaders, therefore, to take too harsh a view of the disenchantment amongst their rank and file. It was very easy, PSIUP Minister of Industry Rodolfo Morandi exhorted to a crowd in Milano, to tell the masses that their impatience was not going to change ‘the iron limits of reality’. Nor was it difficult for those not affected by ‘the mortifications’ of the working class to dispassionately calculate the costs and time of post-war reconstruction. But behind

\(^2\) This often-quoted remark was made by veteran communist CGT Secretary Gaston Monmousseau. Quoted in: Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 103.

\(^3\) For various examples of provincial and national communist leaders denouncing workers in this manner: Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*, pp. 85-99; Thomas Behan, “‘Riding the Tiger’: The Italian Communist Party and the Working Class of the Porta Romana Area of Milan, 1943-1948”, *The Italianist*, 10 (1990), pp. 111-150, 137-140.


such ‘accusations and criticisms’ all too often levelled against workers was ‘a mind without understanding, a heart without a pulse’.⁶

For all of their compassion for the predicament of their rank and file, however, socialist leaders frequently claimed there was precious little they could do to improve the lot of the working class. They often claimed that only time could heal the severe disruptions wrought by war. Speaking to local socialists in Valenciennes, Augustin Laurent acknowledged that people had expected better from liberation. But he was quick to dissociate any ‘inefficiencies’ or ‘ineptitudes’ on the part of the authorities from this ‘deception’ – the ‘fifth column’ of former Vichyists still perceived to dominate the state apparatus was ‘not as pernicious as some would have believe’. ‘The true evil’ was that ‘we are lacking wagons, locomotives, flatboats, lorries, that our ports are destroyed’. Natural resources, moreover, were ‘notoriously insufficient’, meaning that ‘even if collection was organised well, our rations would still not suffice’.⁷ Motyka also stressed that there were no quick fixes for governments to contrive their way out of their socio-economic woes. Whilst readily conceding that much of working-class opposition was the result of the government’s economic plan to return production to profitability ‘in a very short period’, he immediately underlined that even ‘the most wise, the most thought-through plan could not come to terms with the resistance of popular nerves’.⁸

The common response to such worker nervousness was that party leaders could not work miracles. Socialist leaders warned workers not to listen to those suggesting the new governments were at fault for the absence of material improvements. The local PSIUP weekly in Sesto San Giovanni drew socialists’ attention to the fact that many of the people

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⁷ Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reseignements Generaux [Exposé de M. Augustin Laurent, Ministre des P.T.T., devant la section socialiste de Valenciennes], 6 February 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
bemoaning how much worse things were now than under fascism had been collaborating with the Germans during the war. Politicians promising the earth were likewise to be distrusted. Contrary to what some politicians were pretending, socialists in the North of France were told, everything could not be ameliorated ‘by the wave of a magic wand’. Instead, the measures taken ‘without fear of unpopularity’ by André Philip represented the only way out of the ‘very critical situation’ in which the country found itself.

More and more, however, socialist leaders felt workers themselves needed a reality check. Working-class demands, local and national party leaders lamented with increasing frequency, showed no appreciation whatsoever of the daunting task facing those at the helm of the reconstruction effort. Ivan Hollman, the ČSSD’s Social Affairs and Repatriation spokesman in the Plzeň city council, derided how ‘many people’ reverted to ‘excessive simplifications’ in economic issues. Apparently convinced that ‘the flick of a magic wand’ could see ‘machines repaired and replaced, the flow of raw materials restored, and markets opening up to our products’, they ‘reduced the problems of managing enterprises to the question of wage adjustments’. A local chairman of the Łódź PPS likewise told off socialist workers complaining about the lack of coal and high prices. Urging workers not to ‘exaggerate about small matters’, he described such hardships as ‘a victory for the country’. In any case, the new government could hardly be blamed for working-class sorrows, as it had only been in office for a short period and had inherited a country in ruins.

The Milanese trade union authorities also invoked the ‘immense ruins we face’ to dispel worker illusions that ‘everything was possible’. It would be absurd, a declaration

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10 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion organisée par le Parti Socialiste à l’occasion du 40ème Anniversaire de fondation de la Fanfare Ouvrière de Saint-Amand], 25 August 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38451 2.
12 ‘Protokul z zebrania Koła PPS przy Łódzkich Zakładach Przemysłu Czesankowego’ [7 August 1945], APL, DK PPS Górna, 6, fo. 3.
underwritten by communist, socialist, and Christian democratic union representatives insisted, for those who had for years cheered on fascism’s criminal war politics to now think that trade union bodies could perform ‘the miracle of multiplying bread’. If labour representatives were going to ask employers to contribute more towards the economic recovery and to show more humanity towards the misery of the masses, it continued, ‘we also have to be able to say no to workers when we think that is necessary’.13

It was definitely in questions of wages that socialist leaders turned down their workers most often. Even if party leaders agreed that some groups were hit disproportionately hard in the post-war state’s social settlement, they were still reticent to countenance wage increases for fears of a domino effect. This was very much the case for the demands put forward by the more bereaved public sector workers. Although he admitted that some, if not all, railway workers were worse off than others in the state’s employment, Jules Moch cautioned against giving in to their biddings. Should the government award railway workers a raise, after all, ‘we will be bombarded with demands of the same order by mine, gas, and electricity workers, and after that the private sector’.14

In a similar vein, ČSSD Chairman Zdeněk Fierlinger expressed his delight that the Czechoslovakian government had been able to close ranks against fresh wage demands made by public sector workers. If these had become the subject of ‘a new party fight’, he argued, there would have been a real danger of ‘restlessness’ amongst factory workers feeling they were entitled to a pay rise as well. That would ‘mean a further increase of all economic indices, a considerable hindrance for our export, and we would have been in a chaotic situation’.15

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13 ‘Disciplina Sindacale’ [1 August 1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.9., Fasc. 1. Emphasis in original.
Pietro Nenni also sketched a descent into chaos when he discussed ‘the terrible problem of salaries’ in the PSIUP Central Committee. Under the threat of a general strike, he informed his fellow party leaders, the government was negotiating a wage increase for state workers. An agreement binding the government to spending an extra 36 billion lire on those in its employment seemed within reach, but Nenni remained far from convinced. Not only did he fear that this was no more than a makeshift solution to be ‘eaten up’ by price hikes within a matter of weeks, but he also worried about the wider repercussions. What if private sector workers would be encouraged to go on strike too? That could set off a ‘chain reaction’, in which ‘we lose control over money and risk moving towards an inflation of the German type’.16

Socialist leaders constantly raised the sceptre of inflation to defend their socio-economic records. A SFIO propaganda brochure, published at the time of the salary blockade, described inflation as ‘a mortal danger for the country’. The document went on to list the ‘calculation-defying’ price situation in early 1920s Germany, where bread had been sold for 95 billion Reichsmark one day, only for its price to rise still further to 120 billion the next. The sole groups that stood to gain in such a situation were ‘merchants and traders who retain goods, industrialists who possess equipment and raw materials, and speculators who have gold’. For workers and small rentiers, on the other hand, inflation signified ‘the disappearance, pure and simple, into total misery’.17

Much more than low wages or living standards, then, party leaders cited inflation as the true enemy of the working class. The PSIUP leadership repeatedly associated inflationary economics with right-wing politics. During the cross-party negotiations on the composition of the second De Gasperi government, the socialist delegation made it quite

16 ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome [hereafter ACS], Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189.
clear that it was opposed to the reinstatement of the ‘definitely inflationist’ liberal Epicarmo Corbino as Treasury Minister. But labour representatives were in the firing line for acquiescing to inflation-boosting measures all the same. Ludovico d’Aragona, for example, soon to be named the PSIUP’s Minister of Labour and Social Security in the same government, questioned the general 10% raise agreed by industrialists and unions for interfering with the deflationary politics of the government.

Such across-the-board pay increases, especially those mechanically connected to the price level, were almost universally counselled against by socialist leaders. A ‘mechanical’ wage rise would not see working-class well-being improving, socialist workers in Łódź were told, for it would be accompanied by just as ‘automatic’ a price hike. And for the ‘misfortunes’ inflation caused the worker, one only had to look at the development of working-class wages and living standards after the First World War.

That did not stop workers from demanding that their salaries would be linked to the prices of daily necessities, though. Speaking in the SFIO Executive, Under-Secretary of State for the National Economy Albert Gazier identified the need to ‘detoxify’ those ‘comrades who are not making our task easier’. The party should not commit itself to the ‘sliding scale’ of wages and prices, he continued, for wage increases were the number one reason for the inflation that had hit France since the liberation. By the same token, ČSSD leaders credited their rejection of a premature price-matching wage raise with seeing off the threat of inflation in post-war Czechoslovakia. If the government had heeded calls to link wages to prices in the immediate aftermath of the liberation, Laušman explained to a ČSSD provincial congress in Olomouc, inflation would certainly have followed suit. But

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18 ‘Riunione della Direzione’ [10 July 1946], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 20.
20 ‘Protokół z zebrania Koła P.P.S. przy Wiedza’ [13 December 1947], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Lewa, 14, fo. 71.
because the government had chosen to ‘swim against the tide’ and ‘settle the monetary question’ first, wages could now be brought into line with prices.22

Safeguarding the value of the national currency by balancing the books was indeed part and parcel of socialist leaders’ efforts to keep inflation down. For if spiralling prices on the domestic level were bad already, worse still was the progressive incapacitation to procure vital raw materials, machinery, and consumer goods from abroad on account of a weak exchange rate.

SFIO leaders were particularly adamant that achieving budget equilibrium and stabilising the currency provided the only way out of the working class’ woes. According to Moch, at that time Minister of Transport of Public Works in the Ramadier government, the rescue of the Franc was a pre-condition ‘for the amelioration of ravitaillement’.23 Speaking at a socialist rally in Lille, SFIO Secretary General Guy Mollet likewise identified fiscal consolidation with working-class interests. Calling on rank-and-file activists ‘to restore the truth’ about the unpopular measures taken by the government, he argued that ‘only a return to budget equilibrium and the rescue of the Franc’ could ‘prevent a bankruptcy from which the working classes would be the first to suffer’.24 At the height of the strike wave that would bring an end to tripartisme, Philip set out what that would mean in practice. After lamenting the ‘complete rift’ between ‘public opinion’ and ‘the reality of the situation’, he described the huge balance of payments deficit as ‘the supreme reality’ in France. With two-thirds of the country’s gold reserves already projected to be in foreign hands by the end of the year, a wage rise would destroy any hope of getting a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development – which would leave France ‘forced to accept the political and economic conditions of the Americans’. The

24 ‘Fête populaire socialiste à Lille’ [30 December 1946], ADN, CRR, 28 W 38457 2.
accompanying inflation, moreover, would amount to ‘the total suicide of the working class’. For the situation may have been ‘tragic’ in France, it was ‘catastrophic’ there ‘where they have let things go’ in inflation-ridden Hungary and Italy. ‘We have to prevent our comrades’, Philip concluded, from embarking upon that ‘dangerous road’.  

That Italy was ‘heading for a catastrophe’ was something that Morandi fully acknowledged. Addressing the PSIUP Directorate in March 1947, he painted an extremely grim picture of the country’s economic outlook. There were ‘neither hopes nor illusions about the possibilities of curbing the costs of living, of reducing unemployment, [and] of improving the conditions of workers’. But giving in to the sweeping pay rises demanded by workers offered no solution, as these would spark a ‘severe inflation’ for which workers would end up ‘also paying the price’. Quite the contrary, if the PSIUP were to carry ‘the full responsibility of government’ it would ‘have to draw up a plan that subjected the working classes to a rigorous discipline’.  

The problem for each of the four parties, of course, was that they did not run single-party governments. And as the hardships of post-war life certainly did not meet working-class expectations of socialism, socialist leaders felt a distinct need to reassure workers that their coalitions were still on course to a brighter tomorrow. ‘We need to give the worker some perspectives’, Motyka declared, by talking about ‘those achievements that are in the nearest future’. Lelio Basso, at that time Deputy PSIUP Secretary, was more elaborate. The masses, he argued, wanted to know ‘for what and for whom they were working and suffering’. If there was going to be yet ‘another winter of misery, of cold, and of hunger’, the working class should be made plain what would follow after that. ‘It is for a general

directive that the country is waiting, [...], it is a political motto that could cause the psychological shock required for the masses to overcome the deadlock of the situation’.28

The changed political context was one such incentive for the working class to endure hardships. That it would not be possible for workers to enjoy ‘a full bowl at home’ and that their ‘sitting rooms were going to be cold’, a ČSSD leader of the Plzeň KOR wrote, represented ‘a test’ of their ‘mental maturity’. It would be ‘very harmful for our democracy’, which was now built upon ‘healthy foundations’, if the working class failed to appreciate that such ‘renunciations’ still lay ahead and disturbed ‘the normal functioning of companies for trivial reasons’.29 Whilst asking their rank and file for patience in socio-economic questions, PSIUP leaders in Sesto San Giovanni likewise alluded to newfound democracy. Being both the ‘inheritors’ and ‘insolvency practitioners’ of ‘the bankrupt fascists’, after all, the popular parties could not ‘perform miracles’. A ‘single miracle’ ‘could and should be hoped for’, though: ‘the Constituent Assembly, from which alone working people can expect the resolution of their most urgent problems’.30

More frequently, however, socialist leaders justified the sacrifices they demanded of the working class with reference to the transformed socio-economic relations. The state having assumed a far greater role in economic life, they often claimed, the proceeds of worker sufferings would henceforth fall to the working class itself. Insisting that the case against wage increases was temporal rather than absolute, Mollet called for SFIO party propaganda ‘to accentuate the planned economy to make workers accept sacrifices’.31 With the economy not only planned but also largely in the state’s hands in post-war Eastern Europe, socialist leaders there went further in their affirmations that the adversity the

working class was currently living through served an altogether different purpose than their pre-war hardships. Speaking at the first post-war PPS congress, Under-Secretary for Labour and Social Security Eugenia Pragierowa declared that ‘the knowledge’ that ‘he is working for himself and not for someone else’s private gain’ certainly constituted ‘a moral boost’ for the worker.\(^{32}\) Laušman likewise insisted that both ‘the function’ and the ‘moral purpose’ of work had changed fundamentally from the liberal-capitalist period. ‘If we therefore have to talk about what we have done for the working man’, he told a conference of ČSSD factory organisations, ‘we actually have to explain what the working man has done for himself’.\(^{33}\)

The nation itself constituted a final cause to which party leaders urged workers to sacrifice their immediate needs. Milanese trade union leaders, according to Franco Mariani, were doing all in their power to instil ‘a spirit of sacrifice for the salvation of Italy’ amongst their working-class constituents.\(^{34}\) Calling on miners to raise production and refrain from strikes, SFIO Minister of Industrial Production Robert Lacoste likewise pointed to the national interest. The lack of coal represented ‘a veritable national danger’, he argued, meaning miners’ diligence was crucial ‘for France to live’.\(^{35}\)

As we have seen, though, such appeals on workers were largely unsuccessful as agitations and wildcat strikes continued to hit industrial centres. Socialist leaders were quick to bemoan the pointless and ultimately self-defeating character of these worker protests. Laurent complained that workers, by not allowing their national leaders ‘a day of respite’, were repeating their pre-war mistakes – when Léon Blum’s incoming Popular

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\(^{32}\) XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/I-12, fo. 121.

\(^{33}\) ‘Projev na konferencí závodních politických oragnisácí’ [15 September 1946], Narodní Archiv, Prague [hereafter NA], Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Pismo a souvislí s ústřední, veřejnou a politickou činností B. Laušmana, Karton 26, Projev B. Laušmana 1940-1947.

\(^{34}\) Interview Robert Hadfield with Franco Mariani [1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.

Front government had struggled with an unremitting strike movement.36 Such internal discord within the labour movement, after all, could only benefit its right-wing and capitalist enemies. In this respect, Frantisek Macháček, the ČSSD’s Education, Health Care, and Hospitals spokesman in the Plzeň city council, warned workers of those ‘collaborators of the deceased plutocracy’ now taking ‘tremendously radical’ attitudes. Deliberately inciting the working class to ‘struggles [...] for perpetual wage increases, for the reduction of working hours, for all possible perks’ they knew full well nationalised companies could not grant, these elements were seeking to bring the nationalised sector in such dire straits that it would ‘collapse’ and ‘former capitalists would be called in as saviours’.37

Despite such occasional references to the sinister forces at play in worker protests, however, both the ČSSD and the SFIO by and large interpreted spontaneous agitations and strikes as a socio-economic problem. It was only when the communists started backing and fomenting strikes over the course of 1947 that the two parties began viewing worker unrest as a political challenge to their governments and democracy itself.38

For PPS and PSIUP leaders, on the other hand, there had been political connotations to manifestations of worker discontent all along. PPS leaders felt particularly strongly about strikes. Jan Štefan Haneman, one of the socialist architects of the Lublin government, lashed out at a congress delegate from Poznań who had claimed that ‘there was no other choice’ for workers but to strike. The working class, Haneman admonished,

38 The ČSSD leadership already condemned the communist ‘abuse’ of strikes in March 1947. The direct cause was the violent, overtly anti-Semitic, and communist-instigated strike in Varnsdorf (on the German border) of that month, which prompted Laušman to offer his resignation as Minister of Industry (he retracted under pressure of the ČSSD Presidium). Communist-backed strikes continued unabated into the summer and autumn of 1947, however, and formed an integral part of the ‘atmosphere of fear’ that ČSSD leaders accused the communists of trying to create. For the French socialists, the turning point came with the ‘insurrectionary’ strikes of the autumn of 1947, which the national SFIO newspaper described as a communist mobilisation ‘against the Republican regime’. See: Kaplan, Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis, p. 93, 117-121; Mechoulan, ‘Le SFIO et les grèves’, p. 217.
should understand that they were now ‘producing for themselves, for the country, for the motherland, [and] for democracy’. In these circumstances, it was ‘a crime’ for workers to strike, just like it was ‘a crime for party members not to oppose’ strikes.39

Making no sense from the perspective of the working class, therefore, PPS leaders often interpreted strikes as an attempt at undermining popular democracy by the remnants of the pre-war ‘reaction’. Its ‘access to the democratic press’, argued Edward Osóbka-Morawski at a joint meeting of the PPS and PPR leaderships, allowed ‘the reaction’ to stir resentments over all sorts of alleged inequities in industrial life.40 Henryk Wachowicz – the leader of the Łódź PPS – subsequently pointed out just how successful these efforts had been. Caused by ‘reactionary forces’ active in the area, he informed the meeting, the recent strikes in Pabianice (near Łódź) had assumed a political character and were ‘targeted at the government’. That the Scheibler and Grohmann textile factory, ‘the pride of the Łódź PPR’, had even been hit by strikes offered further ‘evidence’ of ‘the political substrate of strikes’.41

The PSIUP leadership was likewise obsessed with the political fallout of agitations at its grassroots. Though the majority of party leaders rejected suggestions that wildcat strikes had somehow been concocted by adherents of the neo-fascist Front of the Common Man,42 they were constantly at pains to remind the working class that ‘uncoordinated’ agitations would seriously compromise the political struggles being fought out in their name. Socialist leaders often invoked the lessons of 1919, when the radicalism enshrined in strikes and factory occupations had split the labour movement and driven the horrified

40 ‘Protokół z wspólnego posiedzenia CKW PPS i KC PPR’ [28 September 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/6, fo. 4.
41 Ibid, fo. 17. Despite a ‘widespread belief’ to the contrary, Łukasz Kamiński found no fundamental differences between PPS and PPR attitudes to strikes in his extensive research on industrial action in post-war Poland. Middle- and higher-level PPS activists, he explains, were just as active in ‘liquidating protests’ as their communist counterparts and ‘also accused reactionary forces of stirring them’. See: Kamiński, *Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości*, pp. 129-130.
middle class straight into the open arms of fascists, in this context. ‘Rash blows, uncontrolled and unadvised actions, [and] isolated and sporadic agitations’, warned an article urging Sesto San Giovanni socialists to show ‘trade union discipline’, carried a double risk. Whilst offering ‘the bourgeoisie vast possibilities at reinforcement’ and ‘counter-manoeuvring’, the concomitant ‘dysfunctional disagreement’ within the working class could ‘lead to tragic situations like in 1919’.43 Addressing a rally in Torino, Nenni likewise imparted on workers that they should have ‘the courage’ not to strike. For even if the motives for workers to stage a walkout were ‘profoundly felt to be in defence of their own interests’, strikes still constituted a ‘distraction’ from the ‘battle for power’ in which the working class was involved. The recent strike at Fiat’s Mirafiori plant had been ‘wrong’, accordingly, because it had ‘threatened to exacerbate our relations with other classes, which are already difficult enough by themselves’.44

Behind the closed doors of the PSIUP Central Committee, Nenni explained just how crucial it was that relations with the party’s non-proletarian coalition partners would not be pushed past the tipping point. ‘If we go and talk to workers at Fiat in the capacity of men of government and tell them that they must not abuse strikes, that they have to wait for certain situations, because that constitutes the only way to preserve their parties the possibility to arrive at the Constituent Assembly and give the country a democratic solution’, he insisted, ‘we are listened to today’. But should the Left be forced to leave government and change its rhetoric, he continued, ‘we would be heading for a situation reminiscent of 1919, with strikes [...] multiplying from week to week [...] creating an infernal situation’. That was a prospect ‘to despair of’, he concluded, to be accepted ‘only once every other solution has been ruled out’.45

44 ‘Seduta pomeridiana’ [18 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189.
45 ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189.
So all-overwhelming was its fright of losing control over the situation yet again that the PSIUP leadership remained extremely wary of strikes and agitations even after the party had been removed from government. As the political temperature rose during the autumn of 1947, several leaders began sounding alarm over grassroots agitations ‘discredit[ing] the labour movement’. Basso lamented that there were ‘communists and socialists who behave like there will be a revolution within fifteen days’. In reality, they had allowed themselves to be ‘manoeuvred by [Mario] Scelba [the DC’s Minister of the Interior in charge of dealing with the agitations] onto a terrain that he prefers’. According to Vannuccio Faralli, who had been the PSIUP’s Under-Secretary for Industry in the third De Gasperi government, the situation in industry was ‘grave’ too. Workers were ‘not being paid’, causing ‘violent strikes’ to erupt. If this was ‘not remedied’, he declared, ‘we will be faced with more serious cases’. In such circumstances, former Minister for the Postal Service Luigi Cacciatore noted, it was unfortunate that neither the socialists nor the communists had a clear ‘objective’. Rather than getting ‘carried away by the situation’, he concluded, ‘we need to dominate it and impose discipline upon the socialist masses’.46

It was this purported lack of discipline that accounted for socialist leaders’ growing disillusionment with their own rank and file. During the massive rally celebrating the decrees for the nationalisation of Czechoslovakian industry in October 1945, Fierlinger already pointed out that popular democracy had accorded workers ‘important duties’ alongside ‘important rights’. Amongst those duties were the need to ‘maintain working discipline everywhere’ and the improvement of ‘working morale’.47 As the months and years went by, however, party leaders increasingly found working-class discipline and morale to be on the wane rather than on the rise. By November 1946, Laurent was

deploring ‘the absence of political maturity and moral awareness’ within the working class, who were showing ‘neither a sense of effort nor trade union spirit’. In the aftermath of the big Łódź strike wave of September 1947, Wachowicz came to an even harsher verdict on the working class. ‘Over the last two weeks’, he looked back, ‘the whole party had to be mobilised to convince the worker that he is not allowed to strike, because strikes always have a political character and are directed against the government and the system’. Even though the strikes had ended, however, there was no escaping the fact that workers’ ‘attitude to work was often dismissive’. In view of ‘these weaknesses within the working class’, he lamented, ‘we cannot say that the majority […] wants to work honestly’.

The Battle for Production

Party leaders condemned low morale and poor discipline with such exasperation because of their detrimental effects on the productivist campaigns that socialist parties co-launched and co-championed in three of the four countries. Socialist leaders in Czechoslovakia, France, and Poland constantly stressed that working harder, longer, and in a more targeted manner represented the only way to improve the lot of the working class. In case workers themselves were unable to muster the resolve to achieve that, they were to be encouraged by all sorts of monetary bonuses and other inducements. But the disparities these created, both between skilled and unskilled labour and between well-supplied and poorly supplied industries, were the cause of much resentment amongst workers. The ‘battle for production’, consequently, quickly developed into a clash between two conceptions of

49 ‘Protokół z plenarnego posiedzenia Rady Wojewódzkiej Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w Łodzi’ [27 September 1947], APL, Wojewódzki Komitet PPS w Łodzi, 2, fo. 30.
socialism: an egalitarian conception held at the grassroots and a more performance-based conception held by party leaders.

The leaders of the PSIUP, conversely, rarely talked about production. This was due in part to the altogether different set of socio-economic problems facing post-war Italy. Instead of being so short of manpower that its government had to overburden the workforce with demands, it was desperately seeking to prevent mass unemployment amongst ex-servicemen and those formerly earning their living in the war industry. But the PSIUP’s disinterest in productivism was also inspired by reasons more peculiar to Italian socialism. After all, the basic productivist argument – that more production would greatly assist economic recovery – held for post-war Italy too. Both communist and Christian democratic (trade union) leaders, accordingly, repeatedly banged the drum for productivism.\footnote{Luigi Ganapini, \textit{Una città, la guerra: Lotte di classe ideologie e forze politiche a Milano, 1939-1951}, (Milano: F. Agnelli, 1988), pp. 238-239.} For socialist leaders, however, economic problems always played second fiddle to political problems.\footnote{This found its reflection in the attitudes of some of the foremost PSIUP leaders. Nenni was notoriously disinterested in economic problems, repeatedly affirming his maxim of \textit{politique d’abord} (‘politics above all else’) and insisting that such political issues as the institutional question trumped all other considerations. Basso, for his part, was more concerned with abstract schemes of working-class unity than with day-to-day economics. See: Degl’Innocenti, \textit{Storia del PSI}, p. 50.} Much like its efforts to restrain strikes, then, the PSIUP’s endeavours to mobilise workers to go and work where the state needed them most were motivated more by concerns over the political stability than over the economic prosperity of the nation.

For the other three parties, though, political and economic concerns often converged in productivism, as production itself was increasingly politicised. The Plzeň ČSSD, as well as the other parties forming the local coalition, called upon its supporters to herald the launch of the Two Year Plan by sacrificing a free Sunday to come and assist in the harvest of potatoes and sugar beets in October 1946.\footnote{Krajský Sekretariát ČSSD Plzeň to Ústřední Sekretariát ČSSD, 16 September 1946, Archiv České Strany Sociálně Demokratické, Prague, [hereafter Archiv ČSSD], Fond č. 71, Část II Československá sociální}
workers at Łódź’s Poznański factory, PPS Central Committee member Stanisław Rybicka similarly defined the socialist ‘role in the reconstruction of the motherland’ by work. The ‘difficult economic circumstances’, he declared, ‘force us to intensive labour, to giving the maximum, and to be an example for others’. But it was the French socialists who came closest to formulating a full-fledged ideology of production. ‘The production effort’, an official organ of the SFIO’s Northern Federation wrote, ‘takes an authentically revolutionary value in these decisive days’. As it was not possible ‘to build socialism until the forces of production will be in full swing’, it was crucial ‘for socialism [...] to reconstitute these forces as soon as possible’.

Accordingly, party leaders frequently propagated increased production as a panacea for the problems of both the working class and their governments. The ‘basic source’ of high prices, a leader in the Plzeň ČSSD press read, ‘is the imbalance between national income and national production’. That meant that all manpower that was ‘expendable elsewhere’ had to be directed towards productive work. Whereas it had been ‘a good thing’ under the occupation for people to avoid deportation to the Reich by taking refuge in office work, things were ‘different today’. What was needed at present was for all available hands ‘to go there where new goods, new objects, new products, [and] new commodities are actually being created, because that is the only way for the nation to grow richer’.

In emphasising ‘the imperious necessity to produce’, the SFIO also identified the everyday concerns of workers with national interests. ‘If we want to regain a high standard of living and effectively place ourselves in international competition’, a party brochure on

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production argued, ‘we have to [...] produce, and produce more’. Both the ‘problem of ravitaillement’ and the ‘financial problem’ were linked to the ‘problem of production’, after all, and ‘as long as the latter has not been resolved, the two others cannot be resolved either’. ‘The state has to secure the working class a decent standard of living’, the brochure concluded, ‘but, in return and to allow France to recover and re-take its place amongst the great nations, the working class has the duty to put all of its productive forces at the service of the nation’.57

More and more, however, socialist leaders felt that workers were failing to keep up their end of the bargain. According to Stanisław Szwalbe, the vice-president of the PPS Central Committee, efficiency was lacking from Poland’s productive apparatus. Whilst he acknowledged that this was due in part to the ills of popular supply, he also lambasted labour discipline. In the Łódź industry, for example, the number of workers not showing up for work had reached 20%. The ‘unprofessional attitude’ many workers displayed towards both the work floor and raw materials, moreover, had turned into an ‘epidemic’. In order to prevent production in nationalised and cooperative factories from worsening and becoming more expensive, he admonished, factory management, factory councils, and trade unions should make sure of three things. Firstly, they had to ascertain ‘that there was no excess of manpower within their factories’, as the desolate ‘Recovered Territories’ in Western Poland were crying out for workers, and that labour was more properly organised. Secondly, they had to ‘control labour efficiency, i.e. to rule on the work floor’. Thirdly,

57 ‘La nécessité de produire’, Arguments et Ripostes, Bulletin Intérieur du Parti Socialiste (S.F.I.O.), 1 May 1946, OURS. Emphasis in original. Serge Berstein points out that the ‘conviction that economic recovery was the prerequisite for any return to “power” was “widely shared” amongst political parties in post-war France. On the SFIO in particular, he argues that it was its “obsessive preoccupation with economic reconstruction” that prompted the party to demand a reduction of the military budget – ushering in the political row that was to lead to General De Gaulle’s resignation in January 1946. See: Serge Berstein, ‘French Power as seen by the Political Parties after World War II’, in: Josef Becker & Franz Knipping (eds.), Power in Europe: Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany in a Postwar World, 1945-1950, (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1986), pp. 163-184, 171-172.
they had to use piece rates ‘so extensively that initiative and productivity on the part of the individual worker are genuinely and seriously rewarded and the lack thereof punished’.58

It was these three guiding principles – that labour had to be deployed in accordance with the nation’s socio-economic requirements, that workers had to be chastened into giving the reconstruction effort their utmost, and that performance counted for more than anything – that shaped party leaders’ attitudes towards the working class during the battle for production.

Socialist leaders frequently defended those measures directly related to the reconstruction effort as a necessary but temporal evil. This was the case for the extra hours they ordered workers to put in. The ČSSD struggled to honour its long-standing pledge to reduce the Saturday shift in the mines to six hours. By December 1946, its parliamentary party put forward a proposal to cut back the miner’s working week to 46 hours on average over a four-week period. The ‘exceptional economic circumstances’ in which the country found itself, though, warranted that this would entail three eight-hour Saturdays followed by one free Saturday for the foreseeable future.59 Where the French socialists had delivered substantial improvements in labour conditions during the interwar period, the demands of the reconstruction effort forced them to backtrack too. Nowhere was this more painful than with the suspension of that flagship social policy of the Popular Front government – the law guaranteeing the 40-hour working week. But ‘the ruins, the lack of food, [and] the shortage of clothing and various provisions’ wrought by war, Laurent told socialists in Cambrai, had left the government with no other choice. ‘We have to produce above all’, he argued, and that was why ‘we find ourselves under the obligation, for the sake of rebuilding the country, to demand 48 hours of labour from workers’. The ‘law of 40 hours’

58 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/I-12, fo. 52.
remained ‘an immutable principle’, however, that would ‘enter into force again as soon as
the circumstances allow it’.60

Party leaders tended to describe the piece rates and other performance-related
bonuses that made up an increasing part of the working-class wage package as being of a
purely transitory nature too. For socialist leaders, though, there were also more properly
ideologically motivated considerations at play in this context. Stakhanovism, the Soviet-
born movement of challenging workers to and rewarding them for outperforming their
norms in ‘competitions of labour’, was always a delicate issue for socialists, because of its
obvious communist connotations. But party leaders were certainly never proponents of the
blanket egalitarianism, which understood socialism to mean no income differences
whatsoever, that many at their grassroots demanded. Even leading Italian socialists
appeared to agree here, as PSIUP trade union secretary Fernando Santi attested to upon his
return from a visit to the Soviet Union. Noting how the basic wage of the Soviet worker
could be supplemented with a whole range of bonuses if production targets were met, he
concluded that income levelling in the Soviet Union had definitely not taken the
proportions that ‘many fear and some naively hope’.61

Out of the three parties that were engaged in the battle for production, the PPS was
certainly most enthusiastic about Stakhanovism. The government was ‘on its way to a
better future’, Rybicka told socialist textile workers in Łódź, and ‘to that end’ it was
organising ‘labour competitions and a whole series of other noble rivalries’.62 Several
speakers at the second post-war PPS congress stressed that it was imperative for socialist

60 ‘Note des renseignements d’une importante réunion privée d’information (d’arrondissement) organisée par
le Parti Socialiste SFIO, à Cambrai’ [3 February 1947], ADN, CRR, 30 W 38630 8.
61 ‘Prime impressioni sull’Unione Sovietica’, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4. And indeed,
the Italian Left did increasingly accept the introduction of piece work from late 1945 onwards, although Tom
Behan argues that this ‘was due more to the urgent need to raise wage levels to compensate for high
inflation’ than to ‘complete agreement with the system of piece work itself’. See: Behan, The Long Awaited
Moment, p. 181.
62 ‘Protokół z zebrania koła P.P.S. przy P.Z.P.B. Nr. 2’ [25 October 1947], APŁ, DK PPS Śródmieście Lewa,
14, fo. 59.
workers to partake in labour competitions. As a revolutionary vanguard party, Central Committee Secretary Włodzimierz Reczek declared, the PPS ‘should participate prominently in labour competitions’. That ‘movement’, after all, ‘will decide not only over our living standards, but also over the direction of our politics’. Justice Minister Henryk Świątkowski likewise underlined just how much was at stake in labour competitions. The party wanted its members to ‘prevail’ in labour competitions, he argued, ‘to execute the Three Year Plan [...], increase the strength and democratic sovereignty of our Polish state, and thereby also raise the living standards of the working class’. ‘The labour race for Poland’, then, represented ‘the only way’ for party members ‘to increase the prestige of the PPS, [and] reinforce its historic role in the construction of People’s Poland, a free and fair Poland’.

The ČSSD took a more ambiguous attitude towards the exclusively target-based production methods so common to Stakhanovism. Evaluating the first five months of the Two Year Plan at a conference of ČSSD managers of nationalised companies, Laušman deplored that targets were too often being fulfilled at the expense of the standard and marketability of the produce. ‘It makes no sense’, he declared, ‘to stockpile one’s warehouses with goods [whilst] having no idea whether and where these will be sold’ or ‘to strive to execute the plan in terms of quantity and at the same time compounding quality’. Yet, Laušman quickly qualified this statement for those industrial sectors vital to the reconstruction effort. In the production of coal, energy, and iron, he argued, ‘we must today still execute the plan in terms of quantity and forgive shortcomings in quality’.

It was in such heavy industries that social democrats did seem to favour Stakhanovite production. Ladislav Cígler revelled in the ‘amazing performance’ of

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63 XXVII Kongres [December 1947], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/1-25, fo. 146.
64 *Ibid*, fo. 231.
65 ‘Projev s. ministra průmyslu B. Laušmana na konferencí soc. demokratických ředitelů a námezstů nár. podniků’ [29 June 1947], NA, Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Písemnosti související s ústřední, veřejnou a politickou činností B. Laušmana, Karton 26, Projevy B. Laušmana 1940-1947.
individual miners in Ostrava, who had managed to fill up to 24 wagons of coal a shift.66 An article in the Plzeň ČSSD press sang the praises of Stakhanovism more explicitly. The significance of Stakhanovite production in mining and manufacturing, it insisted, went well beyond the increased output generated by workers actually outperforming their norms. Not only had their example often ‘encouraged others to higher performances’, but the experiences of the Soviet Union also taught that ‘Stakhanovists often came up with new techniques of labour, with new ideas, with minor or major improvements in the workflow’. The ‘key issue in our production’, it continued, ‘lies in increasing the average performance’. And ‘one of the means’ to that end was ‘performance competition, a race, [to decide] who produces more, produces more than the others, produces more than another company’.67

The SFIO, on the other hand, was officially opposed to Stakhanovism. According to Robert Coutant, the performance bonuses that the MRP and the PCF wanted to include in the wage package of public sector workers were ‘wrong’. The SFIO had ‘always fought against this principle’, he argued, which was ‘likely to cause dissensions amongst functionaries’. To adopt this method, would amount to embarking on ‘a road paved by Lenin: Stakhanovism’.68 Touring the North of France in October 1946, SFIO Executive member Suzanne Charpy repeatedly condemned Stakhanovism too. Her criticisms were directed at the communists and ‘their great slogan of production’ above all.69 Unlike the PCF, she professed, the SFIO was opposed to ‘production at any price’. ‘We socialists’, after all, ‘are against piecework, which requires a continuous human effort that risks to wear down health; we are, furthermore, adversaries of the system of individual

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68 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Meeting organisé à Cambrai par le Parti Socialiste SFIO, avec le concours de Mr Daniel Mayer], 7 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2.
69 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion organisée par le Parti Socialiste SFIO, à Anzin], 25 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2.
performance bonuses, which inevitably constitute a divisive factor and create a toxic climate amongst workers’. It was important for party members ‘to shed light on these practices inspired by Russian methods’. 70

But it is worth noting that these and other attacks on the Stakhanovite dispositions of the SFIO’s political rivals were all made during the campaign for the November 1946 parliamentary elections. 71 As we will see, moreover, Charpy was far from a typical socialist leader. Other party leaders, operating in different contexts, took a more positive view of performance bonuses. Philip, having returned as Minister of the National Economy after the elections, explained how living standards could not rise until production picked up and concluded that ‘there remains only one solution: increasing production by all means, especially by collective performance bonuses’. 72 The about-face would be complete after the PCF had been removed from government, with socialist leaders seeking to make a greater part of working-class wages performance-dependent in the face of communist opposition. By September 1947, the then Minister of Labour Daniel Mayer informed the SFIO Executive that, ‘under the pressure of the CGT’, the government had been forced to drop planned performance bonuses. A general 11% salary increase had come in the place of ‘two provisions of a revolutionary character’. 73

Whatever the theoretical exactitudes of their parties’ attitudes towards Stakhanovism, though, the bulk of the socialist rank and file resented the practical consequences of the introduction of more performance-based production methods. Firstly, this concerned the human costs of the incessant demands placed upon the working class. There was much anxiety over working conditions. SFIO groups in the mines wanted

71 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion publique organisée par la section socialiste de Trith St-Leger], 18 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2; ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion électorale tenue par le Parti Socialiste SFIO à Feignies], 29 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2.
security to be improved, as deadly accidents were ‘frequent’. The chairman of Škoda’s factory council expressed similar worries upon welcoming communist Minister of Labour and Social Welfare Jozef Šoltesz to the plant. While there had been thirty accidents per million worked hours at the height of the occupation, he pointed out, the commensurate number, even though nobody was being chased to work anymore, had now risen to forty-six. He concluded that nationalised companies desired ‘that attention would be devoted to maximum protection at work’.75

Workers often associated the absence of such proper safeguards with Stakhanovite or other productivist campaigns. It could not be the case, a PPS factory circle leader in Łódź declared, that the labour race led to ‘the murderous destruction of machine and man’.76 Writing in the propaganda leaflet of the SFIO group in the Ledoux mines (near Valenciennes), a socialist miner’s delegate was more elaborate. In an article entitled ‘From Production ... to the Cemetery’, he railed against ‘scientific’ production methods ‘that pay very little attention to the health of our miner comrades’. The ‘longwall’ mining method, enabling miners to excavate much longer faces of coal by means of a conveyor belt, resulted in ‘poor ventilation, the heating of the site so harmful to health, bad gasses and the accumulation of dust, which can cause explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning’. The ‘Bedeau[x] system’ of meticulously calculated individual performance bonuses had to be replaced by collective pay, moreover, which was ‘more humane for allowing the weak to eat like the strong’.77

The disparities that piece rates generated between workers were the second main protest levelled against performance-based production. Workers often complained that

75 ‘Ministr Šoltesz mezi škodováky v Plzni’, Nový Den, 4 April 1946.
76 ‘Protokół spisany z zebrania członków P.P.S. przy Państwowych Zakładach Przemysłu Welnianego Nr. 40 w Łodzi’ [28 October 1947], APL, DK PPS Fabryczna, 8, fos 82-83.

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whether or not they were able to meet their targets depended on a whole range of factors beyond their reach. The workforce in Plzeň area sugar refineries turned down ÚRO’s offer of wage supplements to be paid upon ‘outperformance’, arguing that there was ‘no question of outperformance in their sector because of the shortage of materials’. This was also ‘the terrible objection’ against the collective performance bonuses frequently championed by the SFIO leadership, as Moch readily acknowledged. As production increases were linked to the supply of raw materials, he noted, it was ‘not possible to favour one industrial sector without that being to the detriment of another’.

Still more grievous, though, were discrepancies in the equipment and supply amongst colleagues. There was particular anger over the preferential treatment of the first Stakhanovists in Łódź. Textile workers in the city’s Ruda Pabianicka district went on strike when factory management started sequestering power from their spinning machines in order to facilitate two Stakhanovite ‘volunteers’ who had accepted multi-machine work. These measures, the district PPS wrote, had come at the ‘wrong moment’ completely, as the lacking electricity supply already had 70% of spinners sitting idly by. Nevertheless, the arriving trade union officials threw their full weight behind factory management.

The state prioritising performance over working-class well-being and living standards at least as much as the capitalist, then, workers rapidly lost the will to make sacrifices towards the new economic order. Though condemning strikes and strikers, Mollet called upon his fellow party leaders to take heed of ‘the profound dissatisfaction’ in worker communities, where ‘misery, difficulties, and a sentiment of injustice’ reigned. Worse still was that ‘workers have the impression that the directed economy requires all

78 ‘Zápis ze schůze tajemníků Krajské odborové rady’ [15 March 1946], VA, Organizační oddělení ÚRO, Karton 11, Inv. j. 78, 2 Zápisy z schůzí KOR 1946, fo. 3.
80 Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*, pp. 122-123.
efforts on their part without the government having the possibility to demand the same efforts of other segments of the population’. 82 An editorial in the Plzeň ČSSD press likewise voiced misgivings over what had come in the place of ‘the capitalist production anarchy’. ‘We have to be watchful’, it admonished, ‘that the system [capitalism] that caused unemployment and the waste of forces and values could not return under the pretext that other experiments have not worked, that it is the only possible production system’. Thus far, after all, ‘the worker profits little from the invocation of his power’. 83

In such circumstances, workers would find it harder and harder to summon the productivist enthusiasm demanded by their party leaders. A report on the maltreatment of electric welders at the railways in Plzeň flagged this up. Having seen promised improvements in labour conditions come to nothing and their hourly wage supplements cut, they had complained to their factory council. But not only did the factory council give them no explanation whatsoever and hint at even further supplement reductions, a welder pointing out that no-one would be willing to undertake heavy labour against such conditions was thrown out of the meeting and fired within a matter of days. ‘Electric welders’, the report insisted, ‘are fully aware of their duties and their desired performance, and want to work for the reconstruction of the republic, sometimes even harder than lies within their power’. In order for them to fulfil their duties, however, welders were entitled both to ‘a just salary’ and to being treated ‘like colleagues’. ‘If we ask workers to increase performance’, after all, it was a ‘necessary precondition’ that they were ‘at peace and satisfied at work’. 84

In very similar terms, a delegate from Łódź expressed his disgust at claims that workers did not want to work at the first post-war PPS congress. As a worker’s party, he

83 H. ‘Myslíme to dobře’, Nový Den, 16 March 1946.
84 ‘Neutěsené poměry elektrických sváreců v dílnách státních drah v Plzni’, Nový Den, 18 April 1946.
argued, ‘we know our workers, we know that they are patriotic [...], that the Polish worker
does everything to raise labour productivity, [and] gives the state his all’. Yet, ‘the other
side of the medal’ was that nationalised factories were ‘very frequently’ still being led by
those pre-war owners who did ‘not understand the new reality’. ‘How is it possible to
demand enthusiasm of the worker’, he wondered, ‘if the attitude the manager takes towards
the worker has not changed one jot’? More than that, those in charge of the state sector
locally also seemed to have retained their friends in high places. ‘One mr. Géra’, the
delegate lamented, had been removed from high office for embezzlement by the local
authorities, only for him to ‘return two days later with an even greater mandate from the
Ministry [of Industry]’.85

The constant allegations of wanting labour morale also left rank-and-file workers
feeling frustrated. The ‘persistent talk of the lack of labour morale’ should stop, a
resolution adopted by the Assembly of the West Bohemian ČSSD avowed, as it had been
‘established that the vast majority of workers work diligently and completely dependably’.
The shortcomings in certain industrial sectors, hence, had not been caused by aversion
upon the part of the working class, ‘but rather by the unwillingness to remove those
ailments that burden performance’.86 Amongst those ailments were such technical
problems as the excess of people involved in non-productive work and the deficient
organisation of economic life,87 but crucially also the state’s failure to stand up for
workers. The fact that some roads remained untraveled in the struggle to lower prices,
Cigler pointed out to the Czechoslovakian National Assembly, ‘does not create an
atmosphere conducive to a rise in labour morale’. People found it ‘incomprehensible’, for
example, that the government appeared unable ‘to crack down upon the black market’.

85 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/I-12, fos 196-198.
86 ‘Hlas západočeské sociální demokracie: Resoluce, přijatá konferencí krajského zastupitelstva
československé sociální demokracie v Plzni ’, Nový Den, 5 November 1946.
87 Ladislav Cígler, ‘Ceny musí být sníženi!’., Nový Den, 14 July 1946.
There would be ‘much more enthusiasm and dedication towards work’, he declared, if the
government acted ‘hard and relentless against all hampering the economic construction of
our republic’. 88

Coutant likewise affirmed that the state had to come through for the working class
first and foremost, rather than the other way around. ‘Miners are often criticised for the
lack of coal’, he told socialists in the North of France, ‘but we do not take into account that
they are malnourished’. The ‘efforts demanded of the working class’, he maintained,
should be matched by ‘a struggle against the financial and economic oligarchies’ thus far
‘insufficient’. 89

For many at the grassroots, then, the battle for production only served to highlight
everything that was unfair about the post-war state: where governments constantly
squeezed workers to do more for less in deteriorating conditions, they seemingly left the
better-off in peace. What was worse, their national leaders gave the impression not to be
bothered by inequality. The disagreement over ÚRO’s and the Czechoslovakian
government’s unanimous decision to pay out a flat Christmas bonus to all workers in the
public, nationalised, and private sectors illustrated the rupture between local and national
perspectives. While the government indicated it considered income levelling
‘undesirable’, 90 Cígler, on behalf of the Plzeň KOR, faulted the decision for ‘ignor[ing] the
weakest in society’. 91 Such income differences within the working class were indeed often
the hardest to swallow. The wage increases meted out to workers in some companies,
admonished Josef Janouš to the Plzeň city council, risked repeating the ‘wage terms’ of the
occupation. These had generated ‘different categories’ of workers, with some being

89 ‘Réunion d’information socialiste à Pecquencourt’ [23 July 1945], ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
90 ‘Národní fronta doporučila vánoční výpomoc’, Nový Den, 30 November 1946.
91 ‘Zápis z plenární schůze Krajské odborové rady v Plzni’ [17 November 1946], VA, Organizační oddělení
ÚRO, Karton 11, Inv. j. 78, 2 Zápisy z schůzi KOR 1946, fo. 7.
‘supplemented’ and others ‘marginalised’. There had been, he remembered, ‘a wilful
promotion of dissension’.92

Yet, party leaders proved quite prepared to put labour movement harmony on the
line to reward workers willing or able to be mobilised for the reconstruction effort.
Socialist leaders were often at pains to stress that far too many man hours were wasted on
non-productive or non-essential work. Whereas Osóbka-Morawski called for the ‘de-
bureaucratisation’ of the Polish state apparatus by directing superfluous public servants to
productive work,93 Moch bemoaned the difficulties in relocating French workers ‘from
dormant industries to more active industries’.94

But the shortage of productive and skilled labour was definitely greatest in
Czechoslovakia, and the lengths to which its political and economic elites went to address
this shortage certainly bred most bad blood amongst the working class too. Firstly, this
concerned the outrageous remunerations for those contributing their scarce skills to the
reconstruction effort. The Plzeň ČSSD press ran an angry article about ‘the not isolated
case’ of bricklayers. Already earning 2000 Crowns per week, the same as the average
worker brought home each month, bricklayers had often been lured away from Plzeň with
promises they could get double that amount in the deserted regions on the Hungarian
border. No longer welcome at their former firms when such promises fell through,
however, they did not take another, lower-paid job. Instead, ‘they form the so-called
“reserve of scarce crafts” and wait until they find a Maecenas, […] who provides them with
a royal wage’. The article called upon the Office for Labour Protection to have a look not
only at the ‘black wage’ thus earned by bricklayers, but also at the employers able to pay

92 ‘Zápis schůze Národního Výboru dne 28. května 1945 v Plzni’, AMP, Zápisy o schůzích Národního
Výboru a rady Okresního Národního Výboru a Místního Národního Výboru statutárního města Plzeň 1945,
42.
93 ‘Protokół z wspólnego posiedzenia CKW PPS i KC PPR’ [28 September 1945], AAN, Polska Partia
Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/6, fo. 4.
94 ‘Comité Directeur’ [2 May 1947], OURS, ‘Réunions du Comité Directeur du 4 septembre 1946 à 30 juillet
such wages.\footnote{‘Odstraňte černé mzdy zedníků’, Nový Den, 4 October 1946.} If the authorities were sent for in this instance, though, they were the driving force behind some of the other grievances over the preferential treatment given to those lending themselves to the government’s productivist campaigns. This was the case for the ‘brigades’, made up of workers from various sectors, that were sent to the mines to assist in the production of coal. Miners complained bitterly that they required permanent rather than temporal reinforcement and that brigadiers’ labour morale left much to be desired. What seemed to frustrate miners most, though, was that brigadiers had immediately gained access to their generous and hard-fought social security system. More than anything, this left them with the impression that brigadiers ‘did not come to help, but to devour their bread’.\footnote{‘Zápis č. 3 ze schůze krajské odborové rady’ [9 March 1947], VA, Organizační oddělení ÚRO, Karton 32, Inv. j. 144.}

If the Czechoslovakian programmes to circulate labour still presupposed voluntarism, the Italian socialists allowed their workers no such luxury. Mariani, for example, was adamant that ‘all bricklayers, carpenters, navvies, [and] peasants owning land’ were obliged ‘to leave plants to go and work there where manpower is in demand’. ‘All those having the possibility to survive otherwise (merchants, small proprietors, artisans, etc.),’ moreover, had to vacate factory jobs or lose every state subsidy. Mariani’s main concern, however, was not so much raising output as to offset the worst effects of looming mass unemployment. With the sceptre of joblessness rearing its ugly head now that the post-liberation ‘blockade of layoffs’ was drawing to an end, he noted, it was imperative to ‘make all those workers absorbed by the war industry in exceptional times return to their original crafts’.\footnote{Interview Robert Hadfield with Franco Mariani [1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.} The jobs opening up as a result would go some way towards not only shielding the established workforce from redundancy but also reintegrating those proletarians having left industry altogether during the war. It was this
latter group, consisting of ex-servicemen, former resisters, and returning prisoners of war, that PSIUP leaders feared most. Mindful as always of the lessons of the interwar years, Nenni agonised over what lie ahead for those several millions of partisans and veterans experiencing so many difficulties accommodating to post-war life. ‘Here unfortunately’, he warned the PSIUP Central Committee, ‘is a human repository that could lend itself to new adventures of a squadrist [referring to the para-military squads that had conducted a campaign of intimidation against the socialist movement in the early 1920s] character’.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that the attitudes socialist leaders took towards the working class were very similar across the four countries. To be sure, the PSIUP did not glorify production in the same manner that the ČSSD, the SFIO, and the PPS did, but this had more to do with the specific Italian socio-economic situation and the political preoccupations of its leaders than with any greater receptiveness towards the concerns amongst its rank and file. In fact, whether it concerned performance-related pay or labour mobilisation, the Italian socialists placed much the same demands on workers as their Czechoslovakian, French, and Polish counterparts.

Behind the many parallels between the four parties that this chapter has exposed, however, the contours of some of the divergences that will become far more pronounced in the following chapters already emerge. These divergences manifest themselves primarily in the four parties’ contradictory interpretations of strikes, agitations, and other examples of worker indiscipline. ČSSD and SFIO leaders viewed such expressions of industrial discontent, however untimely or self-defeating, as socio-economic problems first and

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98 ‘Relazione Nenni al Comitato Centrale’ [7 January 1946], Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2190.
foremost. The PPS and PSIUP leaderships, on the other hand, tended to explain uncontrolled worker ferments as a direct political challenge to newfound democracy.

None of this, though, supports the claim that the post-war European socialist parties were in any way ‘soft’ on the working class. Much like their communist counterparts, socialist leaders in the four countries took a very dismissive attitude towards the grievances at their grassroots – castigating workers for failing to understand what was in their own interest, for their shocking indifference towards the reconstruction effort, and for being very unruly. There was a profound mismatch, then, between local and national perspectives. In the run-up to the first post-war PPS congress, Osóbka-Morawski warned local socialist representatives that their ‘small problems’ should not blind them to the bigger picture. Especially amongst those new to the party, he argued, many did ‘not appreciate the current situation [and] think that the most important problems are the small problems of the local area’. That was not what the party congress was supposed to be about. ‘The point is that we consider the general problem that besets us, the problem of reconstruction’. 99

99 ‘Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z obrad Rady Naczelnej P.P.S.’ [28 June 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Rada Naczelna, 2032/1, 235/II/4, fo. 35.
Chapter 4: The Morale of the Story

In his keynote address to the first post-war PPS congress, Edward Osóbka-Morawski discussed what ‘the abomination’ of fascism had left behind in post-war Poland. Even though ‘we have survived the great disease, one might say epidemic, of fascism’, he declared, it had taken ‘the horribly bloody sacrifices’ of the Second World War for ‘people to understand the criminal goals and methods of fascism’. That people were now turning away from fascism, moreover, did not mean ‘that we have cured this cursed disease completely’. For Hitlerism and fascism might ‘lie in ruins, […] still much fascist venom remains in the hearts and minds of the people’. This venom needed to be ‘destroy[ed] and exterminate[d]’, as ‘it might spread again like an epidemic to the detriment of humanity’. ‘The full moral reconstruction of society’, therefore, ‘just like the [material] reconstruction of the devastated country, constitutes one of the most important issues of the peacetime era’.¹

Historians do not typically associate the struggle for the ‘moral reconstruction’ of post-war society with socialist parties. Insofar as historiography has dealt with the theme at all, it nearly always portrays moral reconstruction as something that Christian individuals and organisations, either in the Allied countries or on the ground in continental Europe, obsessed over.² Yet, post-war reconstruction certainly carried a strong moral dimension for many socialist leaders too. According to both local and national socialist leaders in each of

¹ XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/1-12, fos 34-35.
the four countries, the experience of dictatorship, war, and occupation had brought to light and generated a profound moral crisis. This moral crisis had come in many different shapes and forms. Firstly, it had motivated many to throw in their lot with the fascists. Secondly, it had disoriented those social constituencies, such as women or youngsters, with no experience of democratic politics. Thirdly, it had bred a spirit of selfishness amongst large swathes of the masses.

This chapter addresses these three aspects of the purported post-war moral crisis to demonstrate that moral reconstruction was a key concern for each of the four parties. For all of their essentially analogous rhetoric of moral decay, however, there were actually considerable differences in what socialist leaders considered to be the mainstay of the moral revival that they so heartily desired. For the Italian and Polish socialists, the question of moral reconstruction was of acute political significance. In order to prevent their countries from succumbing to dictatorship once again, they insisted, it was imperative that the purge of fascists and collaborators would be ruthless and the moral re-education of society comprehensive. If the French socialists and Czechoslovakian social democrats were more relaxed about the political morality of their populations, they were certainly not about what they perceived as the unsavoury socio-economic habits that the occupation had left within the body public. Now that the war was over, they argued, it was about time that the working class started putting the collective good before their personal gain. At the crossroads of political and socio-economic reconstruction, then, the question of moral reconstruction begins to reveal what really divided the four parties.
The Reckoning

For socialist leaders, the starting point for the moral reconstruction effort was the purge of those people they held responsible for the lapse of morals to begin with. Amongst the parties represented within the post-war coalition governments, the socialists were frequently the most strenuous advocates of a full-fledged purge of all those associated with interwar fascism or the occupational regimes. This purge had to take place on three levels. Firstly, it was to affect the socialist movement itself, with the past behaviour of those seeking to (re-)join the post-war socialist parties having to be beyond any conceivable reproach. Secondly, it was to bring to justice those fascist and collaborationist underlings who committed atrocities with impunity before and during the war. Thirdly, it was to usher in a sweeping clean-up of the state apparatus, where those who had sustained the authoritarian, fascist, or occupational regimes had to be removed. All departing from a similar set of principles, though, differences between the four parties quickly emerged as the purge did not always proceed as desired.

These differences were due in part to the fact that the shake-up at the top of public life was at the same time more severe and more widespread in post-war Eastern Europe. Many of the region’s foremost collaborators decided not to await the arrival of the Red Army and to leave for the West in the final days of the war. Millions more ethnic Germans or Hungarians, whose ancestors had often lived in this part of Europe for centuries, were caught up in the forced population movements out of Czechoslovakia and Poland. And a significant number of those with nowhere to go fell prey to the ‘wild retribution’ that the new rulers did so little to stop during the first weeks and months of freedom.³ On the face

of it, therefore, the purge was swift as well as comprehensive in post-liberation Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The same could certainly not be said of the retributive action in France and Italy. It did not take long for socialists in both countries to start expressing their perplexity at the sluggish pace and narrow scope of the purge. Little more than two months into the liberation of Milano, a letter to the local socialist press wondered ‘which are the obscure forces that hinder the purge and justice’. Some of the ‘prime culprits, instigators, and agents’ of fascism, after all, had been able to ‘escape scrutiny’ and ‘save their face’ solely by virtue of having disowned Mussolini after the Allied landings of 1943.4

The redemption of those having only turned their back on fascism at the eleventh hour likewise caused profound commotion within the post-war SFIO. To ‘repeated applause’, SFIO Executive member Louis Noguères railed against those ‘bastards who have voted for the Vichy Government [but] presently call themselves resisters’ at a party meeting in Avion. The appointment as Minister of State in the first De Gaulle government of Jules Jeanneney, the Radical who had been the speaker of parliament during the early stages of the occupation, attracted his particular condemnation. He criticised De Gaulle for claiming that all that counted was what people thought today, not what they had thought on 10 July 1940 – when a parliamentary majority had granted Phillipe Pétain full powers. ‘I will never tolerate them [erstwhile Vichy supporters]’, Noguères concluded, ‘because they have committed treason and should be removed from French political life’. That was ‘a point on which we cannot compromise’.5

This intransigence on the urgency to eliminate all those tainted by fascism from political office was one question on which socialists leaders and their rank and file did see eye to eye. The ‘problem of the purge’, Daniel Mayer explained to the first post-war

4 Jaurey Capiluppi, ‘Chi sono?’, Sesto Proletaria, 12 July 1945.
5 Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reseignements Generaux [Réunion organisée par le Parti Socialiste à Avion], 20 February 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 1.
congress of the SFIO, ‘is a problem that distresses us all’. Socialist leaders, therefore, 
warned the government that there was ‘a barrier between the government and the people of 
this country, and that barrier has been there for too long: it concerns this entire Vichy 
administration which still remains in its place within certain ministerial departments’.6

Having refused to join the second Bonomi government, the Italian socialists went 
further in their denunciations of the purge. Bonomi himself already ‘compromised by 
fascism [when he was Prime Minister in 1921-22, Bonomi had given the fascist squads 
free rein]’, Lelio Basso pointed out, he was hardly ‘the man most suitable’ for making ‘a 
clean break with the fascist past’. Worse, ‘the reactionary clique of [Raffaele] De Courten 
[one of the foremost Navy Commanders under Mussolini, who went on to serve as post-
fascist Italy’s Navy Minister between 1943 and 1946] and [Giovanni] Messe [who had 
been Mussolini’s Field Marshall during the Second World War, and was appointed Chief 
of Staff of the Allied ‘Co-Belligerent’ Army shortly after the 1943 Italian armistice]’ had 
made abundantly clear its ‘intentions not to take a single step towards democracy, not to 
take seriously the purge, [and] to still tolerate fascism in many of its aspects’. This 
tolerance had not only allowed many former fascist leaders to ‘continue to live 
undisturbed’, but had also resulted in the ‘very slow’ and ‘negligible’ renewal of the 
diplomatic corps and the maintenance of ‘a large part of the bureaucratic-police apparatus 
of fascism’.7

That the purge had to stretch well beyond the fascist elites and affect all foot 
soldiers who had placed themselves at their service was a principle that all four parties 
could agree on in theory. Yet, they quickly parted company when it came to the practical

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URL: http://flipbook.archives-socialistes.fr/index.html?docid=49328&language=fra&userid=0 
(last consulted: 22 March 2015).
URL: http://www.leliobasso.it/documento.aspx?id=0b0bd04f656ede422e35133bb6b38305 (last consulted: 
22 March 2015).
implementation of this principle. For the PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, only a thorough cleansing of political life and the state apparatus would do, even if that meant violating due constitutional process in the short term. The ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other, increasingly came to view the purge itself as the problem, abused as it was by the communists to fight personal and political vendettas.

This divergence between the two sets of parties already manifested itself in the attitudes they took towards their own organisations. To be sure, socialist leaders in each of the four countries were frequently adamant that there was no way back for members who had in any way collaborated with fascists. The SFIO threw out all 90 socialist parliamentarians who had voted for Pétain in 1940, even those who built up an impeccable Resistance record later on, whilst also showing no mercy on popular local leaders having initially thrown in their lots with Vichy. The argument for excluding numerous pre-war socialist leaders, united in the WRN Resistance organisation, from the post-war PPS went back even further. Their crimes originated in the interwar years, when they had failed to mobilise the masses against the 1926 Piłsudski coup d’état and acquiesced in the authoritarian 1935 Constitution. The ‘fundamental criterion’ by which the post-war PPS ought to condemn WRN leaders, insisted Henryk Wachowicz therefore, was that they had ‘collaborated with Polish fascism’.

But if socialist leaderships were united in their desire to take resolute action against (former) party representatives blemished by collaboration, however short-lived or atoned

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9 During a reunion of the SFIO in Lille’s Mons-en-Baroeul district, a ‘rumour’ developed after the declaration that one Mr. De Goedt had been excluded from the party. The meetings’s president was implacable, however, reading out a March 1941 letter in which De Goedt had praised Pétain. Commissaire du Police Godec to Commissaire Regional de la République à Lille, 26 January 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.

for, the political purge quickly took on a different meaning for the four parties. PPS and PSIUP leaders remained essentially inward-looking, obsessed with keeping anyone who they considered a former fascist or collaborator from their parties. The PSIUP initially barred all erstwhile members of Mussolini’s PNF from joining – a truly ‘draconian’ measure given that membership in that organisation had almost become a pre-requisite for finding a job in the later days of fascism.11 PPS leaders likewise made it quite clear that ‘we do not want to see people who have placed themselves at the service of Hitlerism in our ranks’,12 as repeated campaigns to ‘verify’ the past allegiance of party members attested to.13

The Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists had far fewer qualms about the political righteousness of their own rank and file, but rapidly started worrying about the kind of people their communist rivals took in. As early as June 1945, Vincent Auriol – SFIO Executive member and speaker of the National Assembly – noted how the PCF was recruiting ‘intensively’ and ‘indiscriminately’, quoting examples of former pétainistes or miliciens [members of the para-military militias upon which the Vichy regime had relied to fight the Resistance] bribing their way into the shelter of PCF membership.14 The ČSSD leadership received similar reports. In rural Bořetice (near the Austrian border), for example, between ten and fifteen disillusioned communists were seeking access to the ČSSD out of discontent over the KSČ’s protection of and support for ‘some bad people’ locally.15

11 Paolo Mattera, Storia del PSI, pp. 133-134.
12 ‘Zebrania Kola P.P.S. przy f-mie Scheibler i Grochman’ [27 April 1947], APL, DK PPS Śródmieście Lewa, 13, fo. 35.
13 See the reports of the party’s ‘Commission for Verification’ at both the 1945 and 1947 congresses of the PPS: XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/1-12; XXVII Kongres [December 1947], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/1-25.
15 Župní Sekretariát ČSSD Brno to Blažej Vilím, 1 September 1946, Archiv ČSSD, Fond č. 71, Část II Československá sociální demokracie (1945-1948), VIII Ústřední Sekretariát, 200 Korespondence Generalního Sekretariátu 1946, fo. 456. This seems not to have been an isolated case. For even in parliament,
Nowhere were such bad people more prominent, according to the ČSSD and the SFIO at least, than in the communist-controlled security forces doing the dirty work of purging. The French socialists were particularly apprehensive of the so-called ‘patriotic militias’, armed resistance bodies that had outlived the war, attracted many ‘belated “resisters”’, and carried out searches, arrests, and even executions. At the first post-war SFIO congress, several speakers complained bitterly about the patriotic militias. Having seen their ranks swell exponentially by the post-liberation entry of ‘fifth columnists’, of former members of the fascist French Popular Party, and of erstwhile Gestapo informants, the militias had in many places grown into, in the words of the congress delegate for the Ardèche, ‘no more than a bunch of gangsters’. What was more, the communist command of these gangs often rendered them ‘an instrument in the hands of a political party’. Before long, therefore, the SFIO sided with its non-communist coalition partners in demanding that the militias were disbanded and gave way to a regular police force under state control.

Although the security services were firmly under state direction in Czechoslovakia, the ČSSD considered itself facing the same problems in many ways. Much like the SFIO, after all, the party became increasingly wary of those communist-dominated forces, consisting of all sorts of unreliable elements, in charge of the purge. Defending his record at the November 1947 ČSSD congress, Zdeněk Fierlinger conceded that the National Security Corps (SNB) had initially been made up of a motley crew of employees of the pre-war and Protectorate security services, former partisans and ex-servicemen, as well as a variety of ‘adventurers’. Despite his protestations that the SNB had now been purged of

ČSL deputy Alois Rozehnal accused the Czechoslovakian communists, much like their French counterparts, of sheltering former collaborators. See: Frommer, National Cleansing, p. 320.


See the speeches of Daniel Mayer (p. 30), Gaston Defferre (pp. 53-54), Fournier (p. 80), Espinasse (p. 101), and Broudet (p. 103), at the November 1944 extraordinary congress of the SFIO: ‘Parti Socialiste – SFIO: Congrès national extraordinaire des 9, 10, 11 et 12 novembre 1944’, FJJ.

‘unwanted elements who had frequently entered it with the help of their party cards’,\(^\text{18}\) however, complaints of communist wrongdoings continued to pour in. Accordingly, the ČSSD year report for 1947, published after the party congress had ousted Fierlinger as Secretary General, had to conclude that the ‘continuously accumulating complaints’ about ‘excessive political manipulation’ and ‘the abuse of the security apparatus’ were ‘unfortunately justified’.\(^\text{19}\)

With violence reaching near- or actual civil war levels in post-war Italy and Poland,\(^\text{20}\) the PPS and the PSIUP were even more alarmed by the atmosphere of lawlessness reigning in their countries after liberation. Yet, the two parties attributed this state of affairs to extremism on the Right rather than on the Left. As early as July 1944, Pietro Nenni was expressing his ‘restlessness’ at ‘reactionary’ efforts to put the police and the army at the service of the monarchical camp. Attempts to violently intimidate the people ahead of the elections, he warned, could only result in civil war.\(^\text{21}\)

This fear of the armed or security forces becoming a weapon in the hands of the Right was to stay with the PSIUP right through the post-war period. Even with the Italian Left at the height of its power under the Parri government, Nenni had to acknowledge that it remained ‘very difficult to completely eliminate certain forces that have survived the fascist disaster: the army, policemen, etc.’.\(^\text{22}\) Once the Left was out of government again, accordingly, socialists quickly came to see the police as an arm of the DC. In the run-up to the April 1948 elections, Sandro Pertini accused the police of bias after it had not

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\(^{21}\) Pietro Nenni, ‘Motivi di inquietudine all’interno’, Avanti!, 15 August 1944.

\(^{22}\) ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, p. 18.
intervened when he was heckled by a DC member during a rally in Brindisi. ‘[E]xtremely serious’, moreover, was recent police behaviour in Puglia province. Following up ‘in an absolutely disproportionate manner’ on arrest warrants issued back in October and November 1947, ‘hundreds and hundreds of policemen’ had been ‘forcing doors with the butt of their rifles’ without having as much as a search warrant. The city of Gravina, one of the Left’s strongholds in the region, was ‘in a state of siege’. But ‘terror’ was reigning throughout the province, with people having ‘the impression of being confronted with punitive fascist expeditions’.23

PPS leaders were horrified too by the ‘intimidating situation’ created by those ‘terrorist gangs’ roaming the forests and countryside of post-war Poland.24 This often denoted the anti-communist offshoots of the wartime Polish underground, most notably the Freedom and Independence (WiN) and the National Armed Forces (NSZ), that were engaged in guerrilla warfare with Polish and Soviet security forces. Much like the PSIUP, the PPS was soon to identify these organisations with its right-wing political rivals. ‘[R]eactionary-fascist elements’, a March 1946 resolution of the party’s Central Executive Committee read, were striving ‘to anarchise economic life and political relations and thereby undermine the foundations of the democratic system in Poland’. Some of such ‘illegal reactionary-fascist organisations’, it continued, were now throwing their weight behind the PSL. The NSZ and the WiN, for example, had declared ‘their backing and support for the PSL in the elections, instructing their members in that spirit, [and] organising special terrorist gangs to that end’.25

23 ‘Comitato Centrale d’Intesa per la libertà elletorale’ [10 March 1948], Fondazione Nenni, Rome [hereafter FN], Carteggio Nenni, Busta 47, Fasc. 2034.
Unlike their Italian counterparts, though, PPS leaders did view the state security services as an ally in the struggle against this fascist danger. That these services indulged in abuses far greater than in Czechoslovakia or Italy, including mass round-ups, torture, and summary executions, was something they were willing to accept. To be sure, there was criticism that the security forces were dominated by communists, were frightening the population by chasing non-existent conspiracies, and were creating discontent by arresting workers.\(^{26}\) On the whole, however, the PPS leadership defended the violent and repressive methods used by the security services as a necessary evil. In a congress speech that won the special acclaim of Henryk Świątkowski, PPS Supreme Council member Kazimierz Dębnicki attacked the ‘oppositional relics’ still determining the socialist masses’ attitudes towards the security services. ‘We know that there are transgressions [and] crimes, that there are improper [and] irresponsible people [within the security services]’, he argued, ‘but we must not lose sight of the most important issue, that there is not only the reaction in Poland, that there are not only malcontents, but that the counter-revolution is around us’. Instead of complaining about the security services, therefore, provincial and local party branches ‘should send activists, capable people’ to reinforce its ranks. For the security apparatus constituted ‘a critical protection of our young people’s democracy’.\(^{27}\)

The Polish socialists wanted their people to get involved not just in the struggle with but also in the prosecution of counter-revolutionaries. During a meeting with representatives of the Łódź provincial PPS, Osóbka-Morawski responded positively to a request for popular tribunals to be convened, indicating that he had already instructed the Ministry of Justice to draw up the relevant decrees.\(^{28}\) The PSIUP shared this preference for popular tribunals. In late 1944, Nenni wrote that the popular masses desired ‘justice more

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\(^{26}\) ‘Protokół z wspólnego posiedzenia CKW PPS i KC PPR’ [28 September 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/6, fo. 28.

\(^{27}\) XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fos 233-234.

\(^{28}\) ‘Protokół z posiedzenia Egzekutywy WK. PPS’ [28 August 1945], AAN, Fonds Henryk Wachowicz, 5 WK PPS.

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than bread’.29 Thus far, however, the ‘bureaucratic organisation’ of the purge had allowed King Victor Emmanuel to ‘spend his days in peace’ and Pietro Badoglio to ‘play bocce ball in Rome’. Italy, insisted Nenni, would do better to follow the example of France in this respect, where post-war retribution lay in the hands of ‘people’s courts’. Even if that might result in the occasional innocent man spending a couple of days or weeks in prison, he conceded, that was still better than ‘a Nazi-fascist criminal’ being at large.30

If the Italian and Polish socialists relished the prospect of popular tribunals, though, the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists rapidly grew disenchanted with the reality of popular involvement in the purge. As early as April 1945, Robert Coutant was pointing towards ‘defects’ in the newly-created Courts of Justice. Juries ‘know nothing of the case before them’, he lamented, ‘and they are overly influenced by the testimonies of “resisters”, which [...] have often been bought, and by the arguments of counsel’. After citing local examples of juries adopting ‘a wrong opinion’ on cases, he called for the establishment of Martial Courts ‘to mitigate this shortcoming’.31

It did not take very long either before the ČSSD began seeking to limit the ambit of the Czechoslovakian Extraordinary People’s Courts – charged with the prosecution of ‘Nazi criminals, traitors, and their accomplices’ in June 1945. By late 1946, the social democrats were intimating that these popular tribunals, which were the subject of repeated meddling by such communist-dominated organisations as factory councils and local committees,32 had run their course. The ČSSD, accordingly, agreed to renew the mandate of the Extraordinary People’s Courts until May 1947 ‘only under the condition that this

31 Commissaire de Police to Directeur des Reseignements Generaux [Réunion socialiste à Marly], 6 April 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
would definitely be their final term and that all unfinished cases would be referred to ordinary courts’.33

This desire to return to judicial normality as soon as possible must be seen in the light of communist endeavours to politicise the legal settlement of the purge. The ČSSD expressed its misgivings over the communist-inspired agitations and strikes after the National Court, created at the same time as the Extraordinary People’s Courts to deal with the most prominent Czech collaborators, handed lenient sentences to five former Protectorate ministers in July 1946. Though the social democrats had ‘made no secret’ of their feelings that the sentences were ‘disproportionally low’, they could ‘not agree’ to attempts ‘to overturn a verdict of the National Court by means of demonstrations’. The National Court, after all, was ‘a popular tribunal’ too ‘in which six lay judges, all victims of Nazi persecutions, were represented alongside one professional judge’. Its verdict, moreover, was in line with the Great Retributive Decree that the government had adopted in the revolutionary period immediately after liberation. To ‘tread upon revolutionary laws we have enforced ourselves’, the ČSSD warned, ‘could jeopardise the further effectuation of the purge as no one would dare to become member of a tribunal [...] when its decisions are not respected’.34

In very similar terms, the SFIO denounced the PCF’s response to not getting its way in the trial of several Vichy admirals during the summer of 1946. After the charges against one of the accused were dropped on account of his poor health, the communist delegates to the High Court of Justice, established in November 1944 to prosecute the heavyweights of the Vichy regime, refused to show up for jury selection. As the law that

had instituted the High Court of Justice stipulated that all of its juries were to reflect the parliamentary balance of power in a proportional manner, this rendered jury selection impossible altogether, leaving its socialist president, Louis Noguères, with no choice but to release all defendants under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the August 1946 SFIO congress, Noguères hit back at the anti-socialist press campaign that the PCF unleashed over this affair. ‘The party and me’, he argued, ‘consider it wrong not to respect a law one has voted for’. What was to ‘become of the regime in France and of democracy’, after all, ‘when a party does not respect a law it has accepted’? The ‘truth’ was that the communist attitude was ‘purely fascist’. For ‘it is fascist to not want to respect a law, to not want to apply the law, and to want to impose another’.35

Noguères’ point in fact goes right to the heart of the distinction between the two sets of parties when it came to the purge. According to the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the one side, the remnants of fascism were to be found chiefly within the communist parties. Both in the people they attracted and in the attitudes they adopted, after all, the communists were reminding them of the violence and unconstitutionalism that had characterised fascism. For the Italian and Polish socialists, on the other, fascist leftovers were to be found everywhere but on the Left. In their view, the deep wounds that two decades of right-wing dictatorship had wrought within the body public could only begin to be healed by a root-and-branch purge of all those associated with fascism.

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The purge constituted but one dimension, though, of the moral reconstruction effort undertaken by the post-war European socialist parties. A second, and perhaps still more important, task the four parties set themselves was to take by the hand those social groups that had been left disoriented by the fascist experience. In this respect, socialist leaders worried about moral decay amongst two groups in particular. Firstly, they often lectured women for having their priorities all wrong. Secondly, they continuously scolded youngsters for their depraved behaviour. Behind these essentially similar grumbles, however, went entirely different motivations for wanting to re-orient women and youngsters. The PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, were driven primarily by broader political concerns – they hoped to buttress democracy by bolstering these vulnerable and malleable groups against the temptations of the anti-democratic Right. The ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other, were driven largely by more narrow electoral concerns – they were not so much striving to win women and youngsters for democracy as to make them vote for their parties. What really accounts for the divergence between the four parties, then, were deeper-seated beliefs about the societal foundations upon which fascism had built.

Women presented (overwhelmingly male) socialist leaders with a challenge in more than one way. First and foremost, the social consequences of war had handed women the key to election outcomes. The much higher death toll amongst men as well as the predominantly male dislocation caused by military conscription and forced labour in the Reich, after all, meant that women significantly outnumbered men across post-liberation Europe. This constituted a major cause for concern for socialist leaders, who, all their historical struggles for (male) universal suffrage notwithstanding, had frequently been ambivalent at best about female suffrage. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,
many leading socialists had still dismissed female suffrage on the ground that women were irrational creatures, who stood under the influence of clerics, and would be an easy prey for Catholic and conservative parties at election time. Although socialist parties did embrace the cause of female suffrage during the first decades of the twentieth century, it remained far from a priority and even France, with its proud Republican traditions, only gave women the vote in 1945. In fact, with women now fully enfranchised, lingering anti-women prejudices resurfaced amongst post-war socialist leaders. Counselling against calling elections at the shortest possible notice in November 1944, André Le Troquer – later to become the SFIO’s Minister of the Interior within the Gouin government – gave a good example of this. ‘Without the counterweight of male prisoners [of war] and deportees’, he warned, ‘the female vote […] might provide us with the greatest of surprises’.38

Secondly, women made up an ever-increasing segment of the industrial workforce. The war had already seen many women entering factories to take the jobs vacated by men and the post-war battle for production witnessed further attempts to pull women towards productive work. The ČSSD leadership, for example, lamented the difficulties in quickly getting available manpower to work there where it was needed. ‘This also applies to

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37 Italy likewise only introduced female universal suffrage after the Second World War. In Czechoslovakia and Poland, by contrast, women had already gained the vote after the First World War.

38 ‘Comité Directeur’ [22 November 1944], OURS, ‘Procès-Verbaux des Réunions du Comité Directeur du Congrès de Paris, 19-12 novembre 1944 au 37e Congrès National, 11-15 août 1945’, p. 17. Similarly, for post-war Italy, Anna Rossi-Doria argues that ‘Communist and Socialist activists feared the influence of the Church on women – a fear based partly in reality but partly resulting from nineteenth-century stereotyping’. Those same activists ‘continued to attribute the Christian Democrats’ victory in the 1946 and 1948 elections to women’s votes’. Though she claims that socialist and communist party leaders had ‘committed themselves to women’s suffrage’, we will see below that there were certainly remnants of ‘nineteenth-century stereotyping’ in the reasoning of post-war PSIUP leaders. See: Anna Rossi-Doria, ‘Italian Women Enter Politics’, in: Claire Duchen & Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann (eds.), *When the War Was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940-1956*, (London/New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 89-102, 95.
women’, it declared, who were to be ‘guaranteed the possibility of finding a job’ in new legislation.39 If socialist leaders were all in favour of women enrolling in industrial life, however, they often grappled with the attitudes and demands female workers brought to factories. Łódź PPS leaders more than once found women, together with youngsters, to be the driving force behind wildcat strikes, with their ‘cries directed against low wages, various technical shortcomings, generally poor living standards, etc.’ dominating turbulent strike meetings.40

For socialist party and trade union leaders, as a result, the female voter or worker often represented the epitome of the misguided constituent, whose single-minded obsession with bread-and-butter issues had rendered her oblivious to the bigger political picture. In explaining the yes-camp’s defeat in the May 1946 constitutional referendum, for example, Mayer drew a sharp distinction between male and female no-voters. Whereas ‘many men in rural areas’ had voted no because they believed the political falsehoods that the no-camp had spread about the Constitution, he told a SFIO meeting in Cambrai, women who had rejected the Constitution did so frequently because they were ‘dissatisfied about ravitaillement’.41

The PPS leadership likewise maintained that ‘not all arguments that convince men strike a chord with the woman’s psyche’, whilst listing education, care for mother and

39 ‘Ceny životních potřeb musí být lépe propočítány: Čs. socialní demokracie po pořádek ve státním hospodaření a pro zvýšení životní úrovňě mešta i venkova’, Nový Den, 5 February 1947.
41 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Meeting organisé à Cambrai par le Parti Socialiste SFIO, avec le concours de Mr Daniel Mayer], 7 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2. In the absence of detailed opinion polling during the first post-war years, it is impossible to verify this particular claim. What scholarship has established, though, is that women in post-war France were far more likely than men to vote for centre-right and conservative parties – making up approximately 53% of the RPF electorate and between 58% and 62% of the MRP electorate (whereas the respective numbers for the SFIO and the PCF were 47% and 40%). See: Duchen, Women’s Rights, p. 39; Richard Vinen, Bourgeois Politics in France, 1945-1951, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 46-55.
child, welfare, and labour protection for women amongst the ‘issues which interest them above all’. Yet, socialist leaders had precious little to offer on such socio-economic issues until the reconstruction effort was completed. For that reason, it was imperative that they made women aware of the political achievements making up for low living standards. ‘If the woman has to decide over the fate of the state with her ballot paper’, as a report of the ČSSD’s Women’s Commission put it, ‘she must be politically conscious, freed of all pettiness, then she will choose for democracy and the path of socialist progress’.43

If all four parties agreed that women had to be educated politically, though, they had very different motivations for wanting to do so. For the ČSSD and the SFIO, it was all about broadening the appeal of their own parties. They were after the woman vote first and foremost and tailored their efforts to that end. After its second election defeat in 1946, the SFIO committed to stepping up its propaganda amongst women through women’s groups and local party sections.44 The ČSSD even wanted a woman party representative to be present in ‘all associations, corporations, companies, offices, etc.’, with the express goal of translating ‘this well-organised extra-party work [...] into party work’.45

The target of such party work amongst women was to present the party as the unrivalled champion of the woman’s cause. Speaking to local party members in Escaudain, Rachel Lempereur, the leader of the Socialist Women in the North of France, argued that women should choose the SFIO because of its ‘proven’ track record on social affairs. ‘It is thanks to the action of socialism that workers have gained certain ameliorations’, she declared, quoting the law of 40 hours, collective contracts, and paid holidays as

The ČSSD, for its part, was keen to point out that it was the great protagonist of a progressive and women-friendly tax system. After having proposals first to triple the tax-free allowance and thereafter to double the tax deduction for married couples and their children refused by all of its coalition partners, the party published a poster calling out the communists specifically for sustaining a tax regime that hit the weakest groups unduly hard.

For the PPS and the PSIUP, the outreach to women was to serve altogether different than party-political purposes. Their prime aim was to free women from political isolation. According to Basso, for example, the socialist factory cell constituted a ‘school of politics and socialism’ for women who did not dare to join their local PSIUP section ‘for fear of the priest’s reprisal’. Far from instructing the rank-and-file activists in charge of this educative effort to dwell upon the party’s achievements, however, he urged them to take a ‘non-sectarian’ approach. For ‘like we cannot expect to immediately make an illiterate appreciate Divine Comedy [Dante’s most famous poem]’, it could not be expected that hitherto ‘apolitical’ women would ‘immediately convert to socialism’.

The PPS also noted how ‘work amongst women’ encountered ‘a series of obstacles, both technical [the difficulties in drawing women, as homemakers, into party meetings outside of working hours – JG] and those stemming from the centuries of women’s exclusion from political and social life’. Alongside the more traditional objectives to organise women within the party and to press women’s most urgent social needs, therefore,

46 Commissaire du Police to Directeur des Reseignements Generaux [Réunion du Parti Socialiste à Escaudain], 17 January 1945, ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
49 Lelio Basso, ‘Per una coscienza democratica’, Avanti!, 29 August 1945.
the PPS Women’s Council also set itself the goal of ensuring ‘the most active participation of women in the build-up of a socialist system’. This involved not only ‘the political and organisational education of women by means of discussion clubs’, but also ‘the promotion through women of the education of the youth in a socialist spirit’.

The post-war morality of youngsters often caused socialist leaders still more profound misgivings than that of women. For if the fascist and collaborationist regimes had merely prolonged the political disorientation of women they actively targeted the youth for indoctrination. Local party activists and leaders in particular sounded alarm over how dictatorship, war, and occupation had contaminated youngsters. Fascism ‘has polluted the conscience of youngsters’, a Sesto San Giovanni socialist wrote to the local PSIUP weekly, by ‘diverting the minds of young people from the path of good sense and of humility’. This lack of customs found its reflection in the long list of perversions local socialists in each of the four countries identified with the youth, including alcohol abuse, marauding, prostitution, and an attitude of easy gain. For that reason, party leaders should ‘look after our youth’, as one Łódź socialist put it, ‘which is demoralised after the war’.

All concurring that fascism had brought on a serious moral crisis amongst youngsters, though, the four parties were very much at variance over the depth of the political imprint fascism had made on young minds. For the ČSSD and the SFIO, the political dependability of the youth was never really in question. To be sure, the French socialists bewailed their losses amongst youngsters in the November 1946 elections, but were quick to accept responsibility for them. The SFIO, several of its leaders agreed, had

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50 ‘Sprawozdanie na XXVII Kongres we Wrocławiu, 14 – 17 grudnia 1947 roku’, AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, XXVII Kongres, 2029/3, 235/1-27, fo. 44, p. 84.
52 Kz, ‘Není lehké být kacířem!’, Nový Den, 3 April 1946.
53 ‘La section du Parti Socialiste de Marville et son action dans le domaine de la moralité publique’ [2 August 1945], ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
54 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion organisée par le Parti Socialiste à l’occasion du 40ème Anniversaire de fondation de la Fanfare Ouvrière de Saint-Amand], 25 August 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38451 2.
not had a youth policy whilst ‘the mystique’ of working-class unity, which had still been a strong socialist attribute in the 1936 elections, had driven many young voters to the communists this time around.\textsuperscript{56}

For the Czechoslovakian social democrats, Fierlinger also affirmed that the youth was of sound political convictions. ‘The occupier’, he wrote, ‘has tried to subvert [the youth’s] spiritual foundations at the roots [...] to eradicate from Czech culture and history everything that binds us to the national tradition, to poison our youth with fascist venom, and to make of it a characteristic minion of the regime’. But this plan ‘to Nazify the Czech youth’, he insisted, had failed. For ‘[o]ur youth has proven by its actions’, both by spontaneously joining the (anti-German) Prague uprising of May 1945 and by its willingness to contribute to the battle for production, ‘that it has retained its healthy core’.\textsuperscript{57}

Nothing fundamentally wrong with the young, accordingly, the two parties set about to attract as many youngsters as possible to their parties. In both countries, this involved strong competition with the communists, who dominated much of youth politics through such (officially non- or cross-party) transmission belt organisations as the Czechoslovakian Youth Union (ČSM) and the Union of the Republican Youth of France (UJRF). The ČSSD’s Youth Commission complained that the guidelines of the ČSM, declaring a whole range of activities to be the special realm of that organisation, constituted an impediment to the creation of a proper social democratic youth movement and petitioned the ČSSD congress to address this question.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56} ‘Comité Directeur’ [13 November 1946], OURS, ‘Réunions du Comité Directeur du 4 septembre 1946 à 30 juillet 1947’, p. 80, 82, 83.
\textsuperscript{57} ‘My 46’ [19 March 1946], ANM, Fonds Zdeněk Fierlinger, Karton 20, Projevy 1946.
\textsuperscript{58} ‘Zpráva o činnosti Československé Socialní Demokracie k XXI. řádnému sjezdu v Brně 14.-16. XI. 1947’, Archiv ČSSD, Fond č. 71, Čast II Československá sociální demokracie (1945-1948), I. Sjezdy čs. socialní demokracie, 112 XXI. Sjezd konany 14.-16. listopadu v Brně, p. 151. Indeed, a survey from the Czechoslovakian Institute for Public Opinion Research, that the ČSSD commissioned following its abysmal performance in the May 1946 parliamentary elections, flagged up that the social democrats suffered from a particularly ‘weak position’ amongst peasants and youngsters. ‘Čs. ústav pro výzkum veřejného mínění:
Not bound by membership in any cross-party youth organisation, the SFIO had more latitude to pursue its own agenda amongst youngsters. As so often, its propaganda to this end took a distinctly anti-communist shape. Though attacking both the MRP youth organisations for serving the ‘politics [...] of the clergy’ and the ‘essentially communist’ UJRF for placing ‘the designs of a party ahead of the interests of the youth’, a speaker of the Young Socialists only elaborated on the communist wrongdoings during an election rally in Feignies (on the Belgian border). Education should be free until the age of 18, he argued, and include a period of professional apprenticeship. The communists, however, were opposed to apprenticeships because they wanted ‘to throw youngsters into the battle for production as quickly as possible without caring for their health and their faculties’. ‘[R]easonable people’, he concluded, ‘agree with the socialists in condemning Stakhanovism’.59

For the PPS and the PSIUP, on the other hand, the moral crisis afflicting youngsters was but a symptom of their political unsteadiness. Basso repeatedly mentioned the youth in the same breath with women as a politically disoriented group.60 Even amongst youngsters flocking to the PSIUP, he lamented, there was ‘a high percentage that certainly does not have an adequate class consciousness’. This included youngsters ‘still paying involuntary tribute’ to their fascist formation ‘in the form of anti-communism’, youngsters who had arrived at anti-fascism ‘through sentimental impulses or vague humanitarian aspirations’, as well as youngsters blind to the class antagonisms underlying political struggles.61 In a

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59 Note de Renseignements’ [Réunion électorale tenue par le Parti Socialiste SFIO à Feignies], 29 October 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38454 2.
60 Lelio Basso, ‘Per una coscienza democratica’, Avantì!, 29 August 1945.
similar vein, Nenni warned young workers in particular that the war-induced bankruptcy of fascism did not mean that the capitalist interests it had served had also been defeated. ‘We have to foil’, he declared, attempts to have people believe that ‘fascism, from 1922 to 1939, represented a genuine effort of reconstruction [...] and an endeavour to solve the problems of our country on the national and international level’.  

PPS leaders were extremely worried too by the Polish youth’s apparent susceptibility to what they considered to be fascism. ‘The bitter experience of [the last] five years has taught us’, an outgoing secretary of one of the PPS youth organisations told the August 1945 party congress, ‘that the youth can be a wing and a bulwark of fascism’. What was worse, the youth’s exposure to inimical influences appeared to have continued into liberation. After the student demonstrations of 3 May 1946, on what had been the Constitution Day national holiday in pre-war Poland and was to become the focal point of anti-regime protests in People’s Poland, Józef Cyrankiewicz expressed alarm at ‘the mass base’ that ‘reactionary groups of students’ had formed within ‘schools, the scouts, etc.’. In its current state, he warned ‘the academic youth could provide us with a cadre of judges and prosecutors of the pre-war type’. It was necessary, therefore, to intervene vigorously in higher education: all academics that had participated in the demonstrations were to be expelled from universities and new professors should henceforth be appointed by the Senate only. Such measures notwithstanding, the PPS leadership remained deeply anxious about youngsters’ political mindset. Poland’s social revolution, Lucjan Motyka still had to concede at the December 1947 congress of the PPS, often met ‘with much larger opposition amongst the youth than the older generation’. This was due, he argued, to

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63 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2090, 235/I-12, fo. 149.
‘the influence of nationalist-reactionary education in the pre-war and war years and a
significant emotional deference to pseudo-patriotic platitudes’.65

The key to the four parties’ widely divergent attitudes towards women and
youngsters, then, lies in the severity of their countries’ dictatorial experience. For the
Italian and Polish socialists, on the one side, the moral and political re-education of women
and youngsters, having never or hardly known anything but dictatorship, was going to be a
lengthy process. Already in the 1930s, Basso had written that ‘we must accomplish a long
and slow penetration of ideas and of moral re-education, especially amongst the young’.66

The PPS leadership, for its part, explained how the ‘serious havoc’ the occupation had
wrought to ‘the morality and mental robustness of Polish society’ was all the deeper as the
Nazis had been thriving in the ‘fertile ground prepared by the long years [...] of the
depraved methods of the Sanacja clique’.67 For the Czechoslovakian social democrats and
the French socialists, on the other, the moral disorientation amongst women and youngsters
was merely an unfortunate and temporary by-product of the occupation. There was no
reason, therefore, to start from scratch in re-educating these groups. Whereas the SFIO
insisted that ‘the Third Republic has accomplished an admirable work as regards
schools’,68 after all, Bohumil Laušman even argued that ‘the Czechoslovakian school has
always been our pride’.69

URL: http://www.leliobasso.it/documento.aspx?id=c24f46ce9c7327085f4845df72727e26 (last consulted: 22
March 2015).
67 ’Projekt Uchwała Programowa XXVI Kongresu’, AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, XXVI Kongres,
2029/1, 295/1-7, fo. 16.
69 ‘Protokol XX. Manifestačního Sjezdu Československé Socialní Demokracie ’, Archiv ČSSD, Fond č. 71,
Část I Československá socialní demokracie (1945-1948), l. Sjezdy čs. socialní demokracie, 111 XX. sjezd
The Morals of Labour

There was thus a clear fault line between the four parties’ appraisals of the political leftovers of dictatorship, war, and occupation, with the PPS and the PSIUP obsessing over the vestiges of fascist and authoritarian regimes in the hearts and minds of their people and the ČSSD and the SFIO far more confident that their countries’ social fabrics had been able to withstand the fascist challenge. Things were often the other way around, however, when it came to the socio-economic morals that fascism had left behind amongst the workforce. Though all four parties agreed that the spirit of self-preservation engendered by the wanton oppression and exploitation of the war years had to be replaced by a national solidarity as soon as possible, they were much at odds over how badly this socio-economic demoralisation had affected the industrial working class. The Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists increasingly came to reproach their workers for standing in the way of an economic revival by pursuing a narrow and self-interested agenda. For the Italian and Polish socialists, inversely, the moral crisis, even if defined in socio-economic terms, remained a middle-class phenomenon above all. This was part of a wider debate about the social constituencies upon which democracy and socialism could draw, which will continue into the second part of this thesis.

Socialist leaders were very quick to identify the need for a thorough ‘moral cleansing’ of the national community in terms of ethics. ‘Eight days since my return to France’, wrote Léon Blum in his first article after being liberated from foreign internment, ‘I confess that I am full of disappointment and concern in this respect’. He was under the impression of finding himself in a ‘corrupted’ atmosphere. ‘I get the feeling of a sort of tired convalescence, nonchalance, [and] laziness’, he lamented, ‘which constitutes an
environment conducive to the development of all infections’. The origins of these moral shortcomings, according to the SFIO leadership, lay in the divisive effects of the occupation. Not only had it dispersed the French population over a vast geographical area, after all, it had also seen both ‘virile’ and ‘reprehensible’ habits leave their ‘footprint on individuals’. If ‘liberation has bit by bit brought together separated brethren’, then, ‘the moral unity between them has not yet been re-created’.

One of the worst manifestations of this lacking moral unity was what party leaders often described as ‘regional selfishness’. With national steering all but non-existent during the final months of war and the first months of liberation, local and regional administrations had become the focal point of many vital provisions and services. Crucial as their activities may have been in keeping the population fed and production going, however, party leaders quickly came to resent the engrained localism or regionalism of such administrations as they struggled to enforce a national distribution system. Speaking about ravitaillement to socialists in the North of France, Coutant deplored ‘the impervious walls’ that prefects had erected between departments and called for sanctions against those ‘not acting for the good of the collective’. For the Plzeň ČSSD, meanwhile, Ivan Hollman complained that ‘the required solidarity’ was ‘lacking altogether’ amongst some local administrations. With ‘narrow selfishness, indiscipline, [and] a view to [strengthen their] appeal’, he argued, these administrations sought ‘to improve supply in the area under their jurisdiction at the expense of other regions’.

71 ‘Le bilan de la situation à la libération’, Arguments et Ripostes, Bulletin Intérieur du Parti Socialiste (S.F.I.O.), 1 May 1946. OURS.
72 ‘Réunion d’information socialiste à Pecquencourt’ [23 July 1945], ADN, CRR, 19 W 37108 2.
But the problems of regional selfishness definitely made their most lasting impact in post-war Italy. Still by mid-1946, Franco Mariani was insisting on the need ‘to combat regional and provincial egoism’. In the provision of milk, for example, some provinces did not have to ration at all, whereas a city like Genoa was so desperately short of supply that, for three days every week, it could ‘only give milk to the old and to babies, and many times [in the form of] half milk and half water’. Such regional selfishness, moreover, was hardly confined to the unpurged provincial authorities. At the first congress of Milano area liberation committees, Rodolfo Morandi attacked local liberation committees and factory councils, otherwise cherished by the Italian socialists, as we will see, for acting as if their ‘community and factories are separate entities’. Circumstances ‘momentarily benefitting’ the inhabitants of a commune or the workforce at a factory, he admonished, ‘can worsen the living standards of the collective if they annul the efforts aimed at restoring a common standard within society’. At present, Morandi lamented, the list of liberation committee and factory council infractions upon these efforts was ‘endless’: ‘allowing breaches in rationing discipline within communes because there are stocks, selling workers factory products under their price, and [...] a large company producing chemical fertilisers bartering in grain that should be delivered to the masses’. Liberation committees and factory councils, he concluded his criticism, ‘have to consider themselves factors in the national reconstruction, elements of a unitary system in the interest of the people, not aggregates that isolate themselves from the collective’.

But that was about as far as the PSIUP was willing to go in condemning the morals of the working class. The PPS, though sometimes disparaging of the effort workers put in during the battle for production as we have seen, likewise only seldom accused workers of lacking solidarity. For the ČSSD, on the other hand, regional selfishness was but one of

74 Interview Leonardi with Franco Mariani, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
75 ‘1º congresso dei CLN Prov. di Milano’ [1945], INSMLI, Fondo CLN Regionale Lombardia, Busta 17, Fasc. 94, p. 51.
multiple socio-economic indiscretions on the part of the working class and their local, frequently communist, representatives.

In an angry article in the party’s national daily, Laušman listed many more. He started by insisting that factory councils had to draw a line between the pre-war capitalist company and the post-war nationalised company, for workers in the nationalised sector had to understand that their fate was linked to the prosperity of their firm. ‘We have to approach’, he continued, ‘the new social order as pristine, more sincere, and more virtuous people’, certainly not as ‘liars, cowards, jerks, [or] pushovers’. Of late, however, there had been ‘phenomena in our [public] life that give at least cause for concern’. Laušman went on to enumerate five examples of factory management and workers placing their sectional interests ahead of the collective good, including management at an unprofitable factory inciting its workforce to go on strike against the government’s decision to close the plant, bosses placed under government surveillance for mismanagement urging their personnel to start a protest action, and anti-fraud inspectors being banished from a factory on the command of a ‘political’ [often used as code for communist – JG] official. ‘The new social order’, he concluded, ‘necessitates respect for the law right from the Minister of Industry through any managing director up to the last worker’.76

The SFIO leadership often berated workers for losing sight of the commonweal too. What party leaders described as ‘corporatism’, groups of workers seeking sectional gain at the expense of the collective, became an increasing problem as the communist-dominated trade unions abandoned their erstwhile moderation over the course of 1947. Worse, employers often seemed willing to make common cause with their workforce’s corporatism, especially if it might serve their longer-term interests.77

76 Bohumil Laušman, ‘Slovo do pranice, ale…’, Právo Lidu, 17 February 1946.
77 This is what Victor Provo, member of the SFIO Executive and mayor of Roubaix, seemed to suggest when, after complaining about corporatism and noting how employers and trade unions were in agreement that performance bonuses should be increased, he argued that there was now ‘a set of circumstances to defeat [the
All of these factors played a role when Parisian press operators went on strike in February 1947 demanding that their salaries would be linked to inflation. Already before the strike broke out, SFIO Executive member André Ferrat counselled forcefully against giving in to the demands of the press operators. ‘We cannot allow’, he insisted, ‘that a tiny part of the working class, whose wages are high, is concerned with its personal corporative interest more than with that of the working masses’. He warned his fellow party leaders, moreover, ‘that big business encourages the demands of press operators to take control of the press, particularly of the socialist press which is in danger [as it was experiencing severe financial difficulties]’. When the strike did occur, accordingly, the SFIO leadership was unanimous in denouncing it as ‘unjustified’. Mayer was especially scornful of the rank-and-file socialists who had partaken in the strike. ‘Because they are members of the Socialist Party’, he argued, ‘they have additional duties’. But rather than seeking the counsel of the SFIO Executive before going on strike, they had undermined ‘worker’s action and the worker’s movement [by] impeding the [anti-inflationary] politics of the Government’. (Socialist) press operators, Mayer summed up, had demonstrated ‘their inability to rise to the level of the Nation. They are not practising syndicalism, but corporatism’. If ČSSD and SFIO leaders regularly decried their workers for their self-centredness, the PPS and the PSIUP identified this trait chiefly with the lower middle classes. These groups, argued the PPS leadership, exhibited ‘a particularly low level of social awareness’ by failing to understand that their own ‘objective’ interests united them with other groups ‘opposed to the capitalist system’. Their ‘aversion to productive work’,

their ‘search of an easy income through secret trade or scalp’, and their ‘pointless, malignant, and thereby detrimental criticism of the social efforts to re-build the state apparatus’, were all ‘characteristic phenomena of the current moral crisis’.80

The PSIUP was very much alive to the political implications of such artificial socio-economic barriers between the classes. For fascism might have been the ‘the political superstructure of the interests of monopolistic capitalism’, Nenni wrote, ‘the typical fascist [...] is the educated supervisor horrified at the idea of being a white-collar proletarian who firmly believes in the paternalistic function of the middle classes’.81 With such people continuing to resist their inevitable proletarianisation, he approvingly quoted Action Party theorist Guido Dorso, the dictatorship of the proletariat had now become a necessity from a Marxist point of view.82

The ČSSD, conversely, was soon to grow wary of the dictatorial action that the proletariat was undertaking against middle management. Six weeks into the liberation, Laušman called for ‘peace’ to ‘finally’ return to factory life. The purge, he insisted, ‘must come to an end in order for labour, which has to turn the Republic into a happy home for all working people, to become a joy’.83 What seems to have underlain this desire to halt the industrial purge so abruptly was the party’s growing belief that it was being abused by workers and their communist enablers. In Plzeň, for example, the ČSSD objected to the KOR’s proposal to remove one engineer Josef Šmolík from the management at the city’s waterworks. The complaints against him, as KOR readily acknowledged, were ‘not of a political nature’, but concerned his ‘aggression and morbid ambition’. Josef Janouš refused to accept these as sufficient grounds for dismissal, however. ‘The current purge of traitors

80 ‘Projekt Uchwała Programowa XXVI Kongresu’, AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, XXVI Kongres, 2029/1, 295/1-7, fo. 16.
and occupiers from all companies does not mean’, he remonstrated, ‘that those people who
are not guilty of anything, but have been appointed as director and are forced to execute
various commands, should also go’. Instead of ‘benefiting it’, after all, that would ‘only
hurt the public economy’.84

Although the SFIO did call for a more strenuous cleansing of the industrial
apparatus, its main focus, as per usual, was to attack the communists for undermining these
efforts. ‘The purge of the mines has been compromised by the communists’, Augustin
Laurent told a party meeting in Cambrai, ‘who have given important posts to formerly
collaborationist engineers’.85 During the October 1946 election campaign, this row went
public, as Laurent exchanged open letters with Léon Delfosse, the communist leader of the
CGT in the mines of the North. After Delfosse had accused Laurent’s ‘very close friend’
Francis-Louis Closon – appointed by De Gaulle as Regional Commissioner of the Republic
for the North of France after the liberation – of saving several ‘less marked’ collaborators
from the purge, Laurent hit back at the communist role in the inadequate purge of the
mines. ‘[M]ore than Closon’, he argued, ‘Marcel Paul [the PCF’s Minister of Industrial
Production], [Auguste] Lecoeur [the PCF’s Under-Secretary of State for the Mines], [and]
Delfosse [alongside his trade union role also the Vice-President of the nationalised mines
in the Nord-Pas de Calais region] [...] are the masters of the situation’. But ‘not only do
they not purge’, they wanted to place ‘culprits [...] at the highest posts in the hierarchy of
the most important nationalised sector’.86

For the Italian socialists, though, the industrial purge had to cut far deeper than that.
Writing to Nenni, PSIUP parliamentary deputy Giovanni Tonetti recounted the indignation
amongst workers in his Veneto constituency over the leniency meted out to 32 of their

84 ‘Schůze Národního výboru’ [19 July 1945], AMP, Zápisy o schůzích Národního Výboru a rady Okresního
Národního Výboru a Místního Národního Výboru statutárního města Plzeň 1945.
85 ‘Note de Renseignements’ [Activité du Parti Socialiste SFIO (réunion privée)], 16 September 1946, ADN, CRR, 28 W 38453 2.
collaborationist colleagues. This group, which included former squad members, had first been suspended with pay and now, under new dispositions, had to return to the workforce. ‘Workers say’, Tonetti wrote, ‘at [the Ministry of] Justice there is Togliatti, at [the Commission for] the Purge we have Nenni, [and Mauro] Scoccimarro [the PCI’s Finance Minister in the Parri and first two De Gasperi governments] is there for the confiscation of the profits of the [fascist] regime, and yet nothing concrete and satisfactory has been done thus far’. It ‘is all fine to tell [workers] that our comrades in Government do what they can, not what they would want, that the presence of representatives of the bourgeois reaction in Government [and] the obstructionist action of the intact bureaucratic apparatus creates a situation in which the socialist and communist presence in Government does not allow for the positive work of repressing fascism, but is limited to preventing the installation of a reactionary capitalist-militaristic regime’, he continued, ‘but they remain perplexed’. 87

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that post-war reconstruction had strong moral connotations for each of the four parties. Yet, the parties had a fundamentally different understanding of what moral reconstruction was supposed to be about. For the PPS and the PSIUP, on the one side, moral reconstruction was crucial from a political point of view. The purge had to be severe and the re-education of disoriented groups thorough, accordingly, to fully cleanse post-war society of everything they associated with fascism. The working class, though, except for those workers who had actively collaborated with fascists, could be forgiven some socio-economic digressions, as the proletariat constituted the only social group to come out of the fascist experience politically unscathed. For the ČSSD and the SFIO, on

the other, moral reconstruction was mainly of socio-economic significance. They were by and large confident that their societies, after an initial purge of the foremost collaborators, could pick up where they had left off before the occupation. For this to happen, though, the socio-economic vices that had outlived the war and that were being fostered by the increasingly unruly communists had to be uprooted as soon as possible.

What set the four parties apart in questions of socio-economic reconstruction, hence, were neither the bread-and-butter demands formulated at their grassroots nor the productivist discipline and sacrifice commanded by their elites. It was socialist leaders’ opposite perceptions of the moral well-being of the societies they operated in that account for the divergences that have come to the fore thus far. For the Italian and Polish socialists, fascist vestiges were still omnipresent in post-war society. Osóbka-Morawski’s remarks at the start of this chapter already showed that. And at the first post-war PSIUP congress, Nino Gaeta – the foremost socialist in post-war Napoli – hit back in similar terms at grassroots complaints that the shortcomings of the purge and the rise of the neo-fascist Front of the Common Man meant that the party had failed to liquidate fascism. He asked the congress whether ‘we really have to believe that the process of liquidating fascism can be realised from one day to the next? We have overthrown fascism, but we have not yet eradicated it from the country and we cannot yet eradicate it from the country’.88

If we contrast such statements with the proclamations the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists made about their societies, the depth of the divide between the two sets of parties becomes fully palpable. Already in November 1944, André Philip heaped praise on the French people for its orderly transition from the spiritual ruins of Vichy to restored Republican order. It was ‘a true miracle’, he declared, ‘that, in that total anarchy in which we found ourselves [at the moment of liberation – JG], the French

people, after everything they have had suffered, have managed to traverse that period with so little turmoil and so few mistakes’. 89 Speaking at the November 1947 ČSSD congress, Laušman went even further than that. ‘The Second World War has clearly shown’, he exhorted, ‘that no European nation was as a whole as immune to the fascist venom as ours and that no nation emerged from the wartime moral and political crisis so orderly and effortlessly as ours.’ 90 The origins of these profound differences between the two sets of parties lie in their widely divergent appraisals of the political legacy of the interwar years, to which we will turn our attention in the first chapter of the second part of this thesis.

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Part Conclusion: Socio-Economic Reconstruction

In questions of grassroots-elites relations, the socialist parties are the great unknown amongst the three political families that dominated the post-war coalition governments. Whereas historians have devoted a great deal of attention to the internal dynamics within communist and Christian democratic parties,¹ there are no comparable studies on interactions between leaders and rank-and-file workers within the post-war European socialist parties. It is perhaps because of this unknown status that historians, especially those bemoaning communist leaders for their failure to capitalise upon a revolutionary ‘window of opportunity’, tend to suggest that the post-war socialist parties were more in tune with the sentiments at their grassroots than their communist counterparts.² Softer on the working class yet sterner on the purge, the socialist parties were in their view the embodiment of the radical spirit that purportedly engulfed Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War.

As we have seen in the three previous chapters, however, such claims are based largely on anecdotal evidence and come undone under closer scrutiny. In fact, the analysis of grassroots-elites relations in the four socialist parties under review in this thesis has revealed many parallels with the internal dynamics within communist and Christian democratic parties. Much like their communist, Catholic, or non-party colleagues, rank-and-file socialist workers were concerned far more with bread-and-butter issues than with any question of high politics. Much like their communist counterparts, socialist leaders

¹ On the communist parties see e.g.: Pittaway, The Workers’ State; Behan, The Long Awaited Moment; Kenney, Rebuilding Poland. On the Christian democratic parties see e.g. the essays in: Gerd-Rainer Horn & Emmanuel Gerard (eds.), Left Catholicism, 1943-1955: Catholics and Society in Western Europe at the Point of Liberation, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001).
² Tom Behan, for example, notes that, in the final stages of the war and the early days of liberation, the Italian socialists took a ‘more intransigent’ attitude towards industrial management and the capitalist order than the communists. And even the Kolko’s, though less critical of the communists, argue that the impetus for radical change often came from socialist and peasant parties rather than the communists. See: Behan, The Long Awaited Moment, p. 127ff; Kolko & Kolko, The Limits of Power.
demanded discipline, sacrifice, and a productivist ethos of the working class. And much like their Christian coalition partners, socialist parties were deeply concerned about the moral crisis brought on by the experience of dictatorship, war, and occupation.

If there were so many similarities between the three party families in questions of socio-economic reconstruction, our analysis of the internal dynamics within the four socialist parties under review in this thesis allows us to make some broader generalisations about relations between grassroots and elites in post-war Europe as a whole. First and foremost, these concern the issue of class struggle. Many left-leaning historians have depicted the first post-war years as a radical ‘window of opportunity’, during which a strongly politicised working class sought to wrest workplace and ultimately political control from the bourgeoisie. If these efforts came to nothing, as we have seen in the Introduction, such historians attribute in no small part to the hesitant and contradictory attitudes adopted by post-war labour elites. In this respect, the ‘window of opportunity’ narrative strongly resembles the ‘unfinished revolution’ narrative that features prominently in the left-leaning historiography of the turbulent years following the First World War – with the difference that Stalinist communists replaced reformist socialists as the main villains of the tale.

In our analysis thus far, however, there has been very little to substantiate this ‘window of opportunity’ narrative. In fact, (socialist) workers often made it clear that politics was the furthest thing on their mind in the struggle for day-to-day survival. This was reflected in their attitudes towards the question of worker self-management – that chief darling of the left-leaning historians of the first post-war years. Whereas they portray

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worker outrage over the ‘persistence of managerial hierarchies’ as one of the main reasons for the wildcat strikes that swept post-war Europe,\(^5\) nothing of the kind is borne out by the views (socialist) workers in the four cities took. PPS Chairman Kasimierz Rusinek indeed seemed much closer to the mark when he concluded that at the root of strikes lay the lacking supply of basic necessities ‘almost everywhere’, in some cases the ‘vagueness’ of pay constructions, and only in the last place the ‘inadequate demarcation between management and factory council competencies’.

That bread-and-butter issues always topped more ‘political’ concerns on the agenda of the post-war working class finds further confirmation in worker attitudes towards the purge. In line with Pietro Nenni’s claim that the masses desired ‘justice more than bread’,\(^7\) historians have concluded that a ruthless purge was a top priority for the working class.\(^8\) In reality, however, the question of the purge did not nearly arouse the same sentiments amongst workers as subsistence concerns. In post-war Milano, for example, workers repeatedly petitioned the authorities to re-instate purged (for collaboration) factory owners. In the face of looming unemployment, their promises to bring in vital orders through their connections in the old boys’ network of industrialists or their good relations with the Allies counted for more than any qualms about their political reliability.\(^9\)

The only item on the agenda of the post-war working class that qualifies as ‘political’, as understood by historians in the ‘window of opportunity’ tradition, was undoubtedly its egalitarianism. Indeed, some of the best work in this school of thought describes how egalitarian conceptions kept informing worker resistance to Stakhanovism

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\(^7\) Pietro Nenni, ‘La volontà del paese’, *Avanti!*, 26 October 1944.


\(^9\) Ganapini, *Una città, la guerra*, pp. 203-204.
into the 1950s. Both in their basic egalitarianism and their internal jealousies, the four labour communities we have dealt with bear many characteristics of ‘moral economies’ – labour communities guided at least as much by moral norms of what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate economic behaviour as by absolute levels of deprivation. It was the repeated violation of the egalitarian norms of the post-war working class that sparked the spontaneous outbursts of worker protests and strikes that each of the four cities witnessed with increasing frequency. Yet, it would be a mistake to view in these outbursts a developing proto-revolutionary situation. For, in moral economies, collective action is usually defensive: directed at restoring previous living standards rather than overturning the existing order.

If there is so little evidence for a post-war revolutionary ‘window of opportunity’, then, how did it become part of conventional wisdom on post-war Europe? In part, this must be attributed to the political orientation of its main proponents. Many labour historians are well to the left of mainstream social democracy and want to believe there was an alternative to (state) capitalist restoration in post-war Europe. Yet, wittingly or unwittingly, these historians have confounded the hardened local activists of the post-war labour movement, the sort of people that would be enthusiastic about self-management or intransigent over the purge, with the post-war working class as a whole. More than anything, it is this distortion that accounts for the widespread view, which is by no means

10 Peter Heumos, for example, has pointed out how industrial workers in communist Czechoslovakia denounced Stakhanovism as 'a cult of personality' and tried to circumvent the divisive effects of labour competitions by arranging that workers and even entire factories took turns ‘winning’ these competitions. See: Peter Heumos, “‘Der Himmel ist hoch, und Prag ist weit!’ Sekundäre Machtverhältnisse und organisatorische Entdifferenzierung in tschechoslowakischen Industriebetrieben (1945-1968)’, in: Annette Schuhmann (ed.), Vernetzte Interpretationen: Gesellschaftliche Subsysteme in Ostmitteleuropa und in der DDR, (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlaub, 2008), pp. 21-41, 25-31.
limited to historians with a clear left-wing profile, that the working class emerged from the Second World War politicised and radicalised.\textsuperscript{13}

The fact of the matter, as we have seen in the three previous chapters, is that there was often a profound disconnect between these hardened activists and the people they were supposed to represent. Nowhere was this disconnect more marked than in the relations between the post-war labour movement and women. Charged with feeding the worker family, women often bore the brunt of the extreme material shortages of the first post-war years. Yet, their bread-and-butter grievances mostly fell upon deaf ears amongst male labour elites. Gareth Pritchard points out how the male activists dominating the Antifa liberation committees in post-war Germany, often hailed as a prime example of a libertarian and participatory socialism in the ‘window of opportunity’ literature,\textsuperscript{14} considered such grievances ‘trivial’ and viewed them as a token of women’s ‘political backwardness’\textsuperscript{15}. In typical style, one prominent activist bemoaned the ‘petty demands’ women made: ‘One woman wants a flat, another a loaf of bread or a job for her son, yet another complains that her neighbour has more potatoes than she does’.\textsuperscript{16}

It was exactly these kinds of issues that also divided male elites and female grassroots in the four parties under review in this thesis. There was a deep rift between provincial and national socialist leaders boasting about such political achievements as nationalisations, economic planning, or even democracy itself and the rank-and-file women

\textsuperscript{13} It is a token of how pervasive this dimension of the ‘window of opportunity’ narrative is that ‘mainstream’ historians often struggle to explain how the radical challenge to a (state) capitalist restoration unravelled so quickly, but never question its existence. The following quote by Norman Naimark, illustrates this point vividly. Discussing the first post-war years, Naimark insists that ‘Mark Mazower has correctly noted that there was both justifiable euphoria on the left and remarkable resilience on the right. There was a surge of communist and socialist support, as well as a steady reassertion of conservative power. There was revolution and there were attempts at restoration. And this holds for both eastern and western Europe’. See: Naimark, ‘Stalin and Europe’, pp. 32-33. He refers to: Mazower, \textit{Dark Continent}, pp. 294-295.


\textsuperscript{15} Pritchard, \textit{Niemandsland}, p. 161.

\textsuperscript{16} Quoted in: \textit{Ibid}. 191
(and doubtlessly many men too) perceiving little or no improvements in their material situation. And when male socialist leaders were confronted with expressions of female discontent, they tended to be extremely dismissive too. Whether it was local PPS officials denouncing female strikers as ‘hysterical women’\textsuperscript{17} or the SFIO press repeatedly displaying ‘a barely disguised contempt’ for women voters,\textsuperscript{18} the post-war socialist parties certainly showed little sign of having surmounted their nineteenth-century prejudices.

In these circumstances, the premise underlying the ‘window of opportunity’ narrative – that the working class and the Left more generally came out of the war in a strengthened or even dominant position – seems very questionable indeed. Not only did the centrality of food in the post-war economy place industrial workers at the mercy of peasants, after all, the lingering misogyny amongst socialist (and communist) leaders also went a long way towards alienating the majority female vote. Although they did not immediately recognise it themselves, the four parties therefore actually started the process of political reconstruction from a position of weakness.

\textsuperscript{17} Quoted in: Fidelis, Women, Communism, and Industrialization, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{18} The quote concerns a report in the SFIO daily Le Populaire ‘sneer[ing] at “one young blond” in an extravagant fox fur, who revealed, when questioned, that she had unwittingly voted for two former Vichy supporters’ in the April 1945 local elections. See: Joan Tumblety, ‘Responses to Women’s Enfranchisement in France, 1944-1945’, Women’s Studies International Forum, 26/5 (2003), pp. 483-497, 488. And after the November 1946 parliamentary elections Le Populaire lamented that ‘elections today hardly seem to interest anyone, especially women who, mostly, don’t know what it is all about’. Quoted in: Duchen, Women’s Rights, p. 36.
Part 2: Political Reconstruction
Chapter 5: The Lessons of the Past

By late 1945, the schism that would tear post-war Italian socialism apart was beginning to take shape. Having been accused by some of the party’s future secessionists of subordinating the PSIUP to the PCI, Pietro Nenni rejected their claims that ‘Italy would be the only country in Europe where there is no great socialist party’. It was all fine for Giuseppe Saragat to argue that the socialists led the government in Belgium, he told the PSIUP Executive, ‘[b]ut that was also the case before the war and they have regained a position that is in certain respects analogous to that’. In fact, across the continent ‘we are witnessing a resumption of situations that already existed before. In Norway, the socialists were in power and have returned. In Sweden, they were in power and have remained’. It could not be held against the PSIUP, he argued, that ‘the situation [for socialist parties] is more favourable in other countries’. For the Italian socialists, after all, the sole frame of reference remained ‘1919-20, when we were the only party of the working class, when the impetus of the entire working class was behind us, and when, despite all that, we not only failed to resolve certain problems, but even failed to frame them’.¹

Such historically informed perceptions of national vicissitudes were more than once a decisive factor in socialist attitudes towards political reconstruction. The past had taught the four parties a plethora of political lessons: what form democracy should take, which social constituencies could be relied upon, and which political parties to work with. Yet, these lessons varied considerably from country to country and from party to party. The PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, were haunted both by their countries’ dictatorial pasts and by their own role in the demise of democracy in the 1920s. To counter the still omnipresent ‘fascist’ threat, the working class had to present a united front this time

¹ ‘Seduta pomeridiana’ [18 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, pp. 5-7.
around. The ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other, were confident of their countries’
democratic traditions and of the broad political consensus around them. For the parties to
finally prevail in the democratic contest, however, it was crucial that socialism broke free
from its historical working-class ghetto and reached out to other social groups.

This chapter seeks to retrace how the widely divergent lessons the four parties drew
from their respective national histories shaped their approach towards rebuilding
democracy. There are two dimensions to this. In the first place, the experience of party-
political rivalry and cooperation during the interwar years pulled the parties in opposite
directions. Whereas the ČSSD and the SFIO had found democracy to be in safe hands with
the centrist and centre-right parties, the PPS and the PSIUP concluded that a close-knit
alliance between communists and socialists represented the only hope for democracy.
Secondly, history had left the parties with polar impressions of the democratic maturity of
their people. If the ČSSD and the SFIO felt that centuries of freedom struggles had instilled
democratic beliefs amongst wide sections of their societies, the PPS and the PSIUP
despaired that their recent pasts had demonstrated that there was no popular bulwark of
democracy beyond the working class. It was these widely divergent historical lessons that
lay at the root of the two sets of parties’ strongly divergent conceptions of democracy,
which we will outline in the extended conclusion to this chapter.

**Unity and Disunity**

At the moment of liberation, none of the four parties advocated simply reverting to the pre-
war ways of doing politics. Even the ČSSD, which had participated in governments almost
throughout the interwar First Republic, insisted that Czechoslovakia ‘cannot and must not
return to 1938’. Instead, it was to ‘implement a radical transformation in its political,
economic, social, and cultural system’. The concept of unity frequently played a key role in such considerations. Each of the four parties agreed that the political disunity and party fragmentation of the interwar years, particularly on the Left, had contributed a great deal to their inability to achieve a socialist transformation. By the war’s end, accordingly, they all found themselves in some sort of partnership with the communists. Working with a party of questionable democratic credentials, which was competing for the same voters, quickly proved a challenge, however. Whether the communist alliance outlasted the heady days following the liberation, therefore, depended on how the four parties assessed their historical experience of surviving on their own.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the impetus for working-class political unity emanated chiefly from the socialists. Uninhibited by Moscow-ordered moderation, it was them much more than the communists banging the drum for the single working-class party. ‘Aware of the irresistible strengths that the working class will draw from its union’, a PSIUP resolution of August 1943 read, ‘the Socialist Party intends to realise the fusion of socialists and communists in a single Party based on a clear understanding of the revolutionary purposes of the proletarian movement’. For the time being, however, the communists preferred national to working-class unity, as the PSIUP was to find out the

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3 Alongside a post-liberation revolutionary ‘euphoria’, tactical considerations may well have played their part in the socialists’ ‘fusionism’ too. Peter Heumos, for example, argues that the Eastern European socialist parties hoped to outflank the communists amongst the working class by preaching ‘greater socio-political radicalism’. As for the French socialists, Wilfried Loth claims that their endeavours to achieve ‘working-class unity’ were inspired in large part by their desire to benefit, by association, from the prestige that the communists had gained as the driving force of the French Resistance. See: Peter Heumos, ‘Arbeiterschaft und Sozialdemokratie in Osteuropa 1944-1948’, Geschichte und Gesellschaft, 13 (1987), pp. 22-38, 30; Wilfried Loth, ‘Die französische Linke und die “Einheit der Arbeiterklasse” 1943-1947’, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 35/2 (1987), pp. 273-288, 275.
hard way when the PCI ‘seriously compromised’ the two parties’ Unity of Action Pact by entering the second Bonomi government without the socialists.5

These dynamics were to repeat themselves in other countries. During the final stages of the war, several ČSSD leaders called for a merger with the communists in the near future, with Bohumil Laušman even going so far as to claim that the ČSSD had ‘fulfilled its historical mission as a reformist party’ and that it would be ‘impossible to reconstitute it in the long run’.6 Yet, fusion was not on the agenda of the Muscovite KSČ leadership at that time. The uncoordinated September 1944 merger of the underground organisations of communists and social democrats in Slovakia, hence, came as ‘an untimely [and] unpleasant surprise’ for communist leaders – one to which they would later partially attribute their electoral setbacks in Slovakia.7

In its efforts to further the cause of working-class unity, the SFIO likewise met with initial communist reluctance. Still during the clandestine period, the socialists had approached the PCF with a proposal to form a ‘Committee of Understanding’ that was to ‘study the problems of worker unity, thereby paving the way for it’. ‘What an example for France and for the world [it would be]’, the proposal concluded, ‘if we could one day say that [...] the two parties of the working class have, in the underground struggle, laid the groundwork for the unity of tomorrow!’ Though it was regrettable that the communists had rejected that proposal, Daniel Mayer told the November 1944 SFIO congress, ‘I believe the congress will be almost unanimous in saying that the offer we made back then has not

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6 Quoted in Kaplan, ‘Tsechoslowakische Sozialdemokratie’, p. 296f.
7 Ibid, p. 282. With approximately 40% of the vote, the communists did spectacularly well in the Czech lands during the May 1946 parliamentary elections. Yet, in Slovakia, in spite of the fact that the party landscape there was basically limited to two parties, they only managed 30% against the 61% for the nationalist and centre-right Democratic Party.
lapsed, that [...] we have the right and the duty to repeat it publicly to the Communist Party at this forum’. 8

The communists did accept this time around and the Committee of Understanding met for the first time in December 1944. In fact, even though the single working-class party was to remain elusive, all four parties eventually managed to tie themselves to the communists in an official alliance: the PSIUP and the PCI agreed a new Unity of Action Pact in October 1943, the ČSSD, the KSČ, and the National Socialists of the ČSNS established a Socialist Bloc in June 1945, and the PPS and the PPR formed a United Front in November 1946.

The practical experience of cooperating with the communists both in such partnerships and in national government, however, would quickly dampen the four parties’ enthusiasm for a speedy unification of the two wings of the labour movement. Before long, the socialists were striking an altogether different tone about the timeliness of a united working-class party. ‘We must not keep the problem of the fusion and of the new party at the centre of our discussions’, Nenni told the PSIUP Central Committee in October 1945, ‘because that is not the problem of the moment’. 9

In the SFIO leadership, meanwhile, the opponents of a single party, amongst them Augustin Laurent, André Le Troquer, and André Philip, had gradually gained the upper hand over such initial advocates of an (eventual) socialist-communist merger as Daniel Mayer or Jules Moch. After a majority within the SFIO Executive had already voted down a plan to run the upcoming local elections on a common platform with the communists in

9 ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, p. 25.
March 1945, the socialist representatives to the Committee of Understanding took the question of ‘organic unity’ off the table altogether by June of that year.11

The PPS more and more veered towards party-political autonomy from the PPR too. To be sure, the programme that socialist leaders put before the August 1945 PPS congress had still envisioned future ‘organisational-political unity’ and the communists made sure that a commitment to a single working-class party formed part of the United Front agreement that the PPS and the PPR entered into in November 1946. In the face of ever-increasing communist pressure for a merger over the year that followed the creation of the United Front, however, the socialists did all in their power to hold off and postpone unification.13

In view of their later trajectories, the four parties actually articulated remarkably similar misgivings about their communist allies. In the first place, these concerned what they experienced as the roundly disloyal attitudes of the communists towards their socialist partners. Looking back on the campaign for the May 1946 parliamentary elections, Zdeněk Fierlinger lamented how the ČSSD had come under attack not only from the Right, ‘where the initiative we showed in the implementation of the great socialist reforms and nationalisation was naturally not received sympathetically’, but also from the Left, where the communists resented ‘the idea of an existing strong Social Democratic Party’. In Slovakia, for example, the communists had accused the social democrats of ‘splitting the socialist forces’ after the resurrection of the Slovak wing of the ČSSD in January 1946. As

13 In April 1947, for example, the PPS rejected out of hand a PPR proposal to announce the unification of the two parties during the May Day celebrations. And at the December 1947 PPS congress, Julian Hochfeld presented a set of programmatic theses that foresaw a PPS-PPR merger only as the end result of a pan-European process of communist-socialist rapprochement. See: De Graaf, “The Usual Psychological Effects of a Shotgun Wedding”, p. 149; Kersten, The Establishment of Communist Rule, pp. 425-428.
the elections neared, Fierlinger declared, such ‘conflicts within the workers’ ranks’ had only grown deeper.\textsuperscript{14}

The French socialists were likewise incensed by communist tactics vis-à-vis their party. After a series of PCF press attacks upon the SFIO, tensions between the two parties reached boiling point by the turn of 1945. For many within the SFIO Executive, the time for an ultimatum had come: if the communists were to continue their attacks the socialists would walk away from the Committee of Understanding. Philip summed up the general mood arguing that the socialists had to either ‘[make] peace or [wage] war’ with the communists, for ‘we seem to be victims of an inferiority complex by continuously acting in accordance with the attitude of others’.\textsuperscript{15} It is indicative of how exasperated even the erstwhile supporters of socialist-communist unity were that Mayer largely echoed Philip’s sentiments during the following reunion of the Committee of Understanding. He told the communists that the meeting would be ‘decisive’: ‘either we maintain the Committee of Understanding and develop fraternal relations or we suppress it and choose war, but the ambiguity has to stop’.\textsuperscript{16}

Albeit in far more veiled terms, PPS leaders also admonished their PPR counterparts not to turn socialist-communist cooperation into a one-way street. ‘When one speaks of “unity” [but] seeks to impose supremacy’, socialist Minister of Labour and Social Security Jan Stańczyk told a joint PPS-PPR plenum, ‘unity can collapse’.\textsuperscript{17} And even the Italian socialists, in many ways blessed with the most moderate communist party


\textsuperscript{17} ‘Protokół z wspólnego posiedzenia CKW PPS i KC PPR’ [28 September 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/6, fo. 28.
in post-war Europe, complained about communist animosity. Palmiro Togliatti’s recent
equation of the PSIUP with ‘those struggling against the PCI’, Nenni told a post-election
gathering of the two party leaderships in June 1946, ‘has had a negative backlash within
socialist circles’. The Unity of Action Pact, he continued, had to be ‘adapted [...] to the
present situation, stripped of ideological content, and brought to the level of concrete
action’.19

Such ideological concerns were the second main reason for socialist parties to
abandon their initial fusionism. All of the communists’ affirmations that they were now
committed to a multi-party system and a national road to socialism notwithstanding,
lingering apprehensions over their democratic sincerity and their international allegiances
were quick to resurface amongst the socialists. In Eastern Europe, as we have seen, such
apprehensions had their basis in everyday practice. But even in Western Europe, where the
communists did by and large play by the democratic rulebook during the first post-war
years, socialist leaders had all sorts of misgivings.

When the French communists published their outline for a single working-class
party in June 1945, the so-called ‘Charter of Unity’, Vincent Auriol was quick to identify
worrisome trends. At face value, he told the SFIO Executive, the communist text might
appear acceptable, but that was ‘not the same after an intensive study’. Stalin and Lenin,
after all, ‘are presented as the heirs of Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not
surrounded by guarantees, [and] there is no clarification regarding democratic centralism’.
In the final analysis, he declared, ‘the communists have not changed and their tactics are

18 Out of all the post-war European communist leaders, PCI Secretary General Palmiro Togliatti is generally
regarded to have been most genuinely committed to a ‘national road to socialism’. For even at the height of
the First Cold War, he kept insisting on ‘using peaceful and legal means to further the development of
Communism in Italy’; doing so ‘despite – and not because of the existence of the Cominform’. See: Silvio
pp. 3-27, 16.
19 ‘Riunione Direzione e Comitato Sindacale’ [28 June 1946], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito
Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 20.
the same in all countries: in Belgium, in Italy [...], and in Yugoslavia where Tito has suppressed the [non-communist] parties'.

Though not going as far as that, Nenni certainly questioned whether the communists had really changed. During a June 1945 meeting of the DC and PSIUP leaderships, he assured his interlocutors that ‘tactical’ rather than ‘ideological’ motivations had been ‘decisive’ in the socialists’ decision to enter into the Unity of Action Pact. ‘We are no longer the only party of the working class’, he explained, ‘and have by our side a communist party which has worked harder [in the anti-fascist Resistance – JG] and which benefits from the prestige of Stalin and of the popular sympathies for the Soviet Union’. With regard to ideology, the PSIUP could only hope: ‘Have the communists definitively moved away from the totalitarian ideology or not? Is the dissolution of the Comintern real?’ The answers to those questions had ‘not yet been given’.

If each of the four parties quickly backtracked on the idea of a single working-class party, however, the question of their broader relations with the communists remained wide open. And here, for all of their essentially similar experiences with and reservations about the communists, the socialists were to move in opposite directions. Whereas the ČSSD and the SFIO concluded that there was no basis for continuing their formal partnership with the communists, the PPS and the PSIUP both renewed their unity pacts with the communists in October 1946. Much more than their post-war relations with the communists, it seems to have been the four parties’ conflicting appraisals of whether history offered socialism any alternative to the communist alliance that determined this outcome.

For the Italian and Polish socialists, on the one hand, the foremost lesson of the past was that disunity on the Left would only benefit the authoritarian Right. In their view, the

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21 ‘Relazione sul convegno socialista – democratico cristiano’ [1 June 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2188, p. 9.
socialist-communist splits of the early 1920s, placing the two parties on a war footing for the best part of the following fifteen years, had paved the way for the reaction, for dictatorship, and ultimately for fascism. The ‘infighting’ between communists and socialists after their 1921 schism, read the political report that the PSIUP Directorate presented to the party’s April 1946 congress, ‘was not the least cause of the advent of fascism’. On a broader level, moreover, ‘the experience of the last quarter of a century serves to demonstrate how, when communists and socialists struggle between themselves, [it] is never in the interest of the proletariat, of the popular and middle classes, of democracy, but in the exclusive interest of the reaction, in its worst forms, fascism, Nazism, [and] Falangism’ – a reference to the Spanish fascist movement and system after Franco’s victory in the civil war from 1936 to 1939.

PPS leaders similarly attributed their country’s descent into right-wing dictatorship to the interwar divisions on the Left. During a December 1946 international conference of Central and Eastern European socialist parties, Kasimierz Rusinek reproached the Austrian delegate for claiming that ‘the unity of the proletariat’ had ‘practically been realised within the socialist party’ in his country. ‘Before the last war’, he exhorted, ‘the Polish socialists were of the same opinion and, unable to find common ground with the communists as a consequence, had left the initiative to the parties of the Right; the result was the Pilsudski dictatorship’.

At the root of these fatal divisions, both parties agreed, lay the extreme positions that had characterised working-class politics for most of the interwar period. According to Rusinek two ‘recipes’ for taking power had existed, ‘and both were wrong’. The communists, on the one side, had ‘preached the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only

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22 ‘Relazione politica della direzione del partito per il XXIV congresso nazionale’[15 February 1946], Orientamenti: Bollettino di Commento e di Indirizzo Politico, 18 January 1948, p. 27.
solution possible’. The socialists, on the other, had ‘believed that “the expropriation of the expropriators” would be realised automatically’ and had taken a ‘strictly defensive’ attitude towards the bourgeoisie as a result. With the ‘victory of fascists’, he declared, the proletariat had ‘paid the price [...] for the political mistakes of the socialists and the orthodoxy of the communists, both knowing only one “recipe” without taking into account the objective and specific conditions of each country’. In similar terms, Nenni lamented the two interwar ‘degenerations of Marxism’: a ‘reformist’ degeneration that saw ‘socialism as the natural outcome of bourgeois democracy’ and a ‘sectarian’ degeneration that ‘lumped the entire bourgeois world together’. It was exactly these two currents that had dominated interwar socialism and communism, he argued, ‘with disastrous consequences in Germany and Italy’.

For the sheer magnitude of its impact, the Italian and Polish socialists frequently cited the fate of Weimar Germany as the ultimate vindication of their alliance with the communists. ‘If there had been a united front [in interwar Germany]’, PPS International Secretary Stanisław Dobrowolski explained, ‘Hitler would not have risen to power’. And the united front was ‘a life-and-death question for the Polish working class’, too, for without it, the country would ‘unquestionably’ be governed by ‘the reaction’. Nenni likewise defended socialist-communist unity of action with reference to ‘the Weimar tragedy’. ‘We do not want to do an encore to the Weimar Republic’, he told a September 1944 PSIUP convention, ‘which was stillborn because it was established on the basis of civil war between socialists and communists’.

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26 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fo. 224.
27 ‘Relazione Nenni’ [September 1944], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc 2186.
28 ‘Discorso Nenni, Segretario del Partito Socialista Italiano’ [4 September 1944], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc 2186.
If the PPS and PSIUP divided the blame for the interwar socialist-communist struggles in their own countries more or less evenly over the two parties, they attributed the socialist-communist conflict in Weimar Germany almost entirely to the social democrats of the SPD. Their progressive ‘embourgeoisement’ by their non-proletarian coalition partners, the Italian and Polish socialists insisted, had not only alienated their party from its working-class roots but effectively turned it into an ally of ‘the reaction’. It was for these reasons that the PPS and PSIUP remained very suspicious of working with non-proletarian parties.

As early as January 1946, Sandro Pertini warned that government collaboration with right-wing parties had unleashed a ‘neo-opportunist tendency’ within the post-war PSIUP. He was adamant that socialist leaders, although in coalition with bourgeois parties, should ‘never forget the purpose of the working class; they must not forget that they are socialists and that, for every measure they take, they have to ask themselves whether it benefits the working class or not; otherwise they only bring harm to the Party’. ‘The shadow of [Gustav] Noske [Weimar’s social democratic Defence Minister in 1919-20, who played a key role in the suppression of the 1919 left-wing uprisings – JG]’, he warned, ‘hangs over our comrades in government’. If ‘a situation like the current were to continue for a long time’, after all, ‘we will one day realise that we have deprived our Party of every revolutionary content, of every class and socialist content, to have gentrified it’.29

Speaking at the March 1946 PPS Supreme Council, Stanisław Szwalbe likewise raised strong objections to cooperation with the centre-right. ‘If you meet people saying that we should not cooperate with the PPR and should go with the PSL [instead]’, he warned party representatives, ‘that means they want to push us into the arms of the reaction

again’. The post-war PPS, he concluded, ‘has its revolutionary line and will not let [...] power slip from its hands’.30

For both parties, thus, the most important political lesson of the past was that socialists and communists had to close ranks in order for the working class to prevail. History taught them that equidistance to the political extremes on the Left and the Right often amounted to surrendering to ‘the reaction’. In October 1945, Nenni still gladly noted that ‘there is nobody [within the post-war PSIUP] suggesting a centrist politics, [...] based on the old slogan: neither revolution, nor reaction’. By simultaneously fighting the communists on the Left and the reaction on the Right, after all, the PSIUP ‘would suffer the same fate as German social democracy, i.e. we would bit by bit be absorbed into the reactionary orbit’.31 By late 1947, however, PPS Central Committee member Julian Hochfeld was lamenting that the ‘fatal and tragic mistakes’ that interwar PPS leaders had made – ‘who talked of the unity of the working class to be sure, but [only] under the banner of the PPS’ – were being repeated by ‘some socialists in Western Europe’. In the face of ‘a big reactionary offensive’, he explained, they had come up with the doctrine of the Third Force – ‘[positing] that neither the communists, nor the bourgeoisie are any good, only we ourselves’.32

That was of course a barely disguised attack upon the SFIO and its participation in a centrist ‘Third Force’ coalition committed to simultaneously fighting off the perceived communist and Gaullist threats to democracy in France. Indeed, after the party had acquiesced in the removal of the PCF from the French government in May 1947, the post-war SFIO increasingly came to replace the interwar SPD in the rhetoric of the PPS and the PSIUP. Socialist leaders in Poland pointed out that the subsequent developments in France, above all the ‘insurrectionary’ strikes of the autumn of 1947, proved that ‘their policy of

30 Rada Naczelna [31 March 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2032/1, 235/II-6, fo. 3.
31 ‘Seduta pomeridiana’ [18 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, p. 12.
collaboration with the Communists is not only hypothetically but categorically the right
one’. In reference chiefly to the situation in France, accordingly, Józef Cyrankiewicz told
the December 1947 PPS congress that the Polish socialists were ‘wiser than the West
European socialists by a whole historical period’. Nenni, for his part, questioned the entire premise behind the Third Force. ‘We
cannot make any concessions to the doctrine of the Third Force’, he told the January 1948
PSIUP congress, ‘because that is a doctrine that goes against all of our ideologies, against
all of our positions’. The truth was, he continued, that there was ‘no plurality of forces’ –
‘there are only two [...]: on the one side the bourgeoisie and on the other the working
class’. Those socialists believing that the bourgeoisie was fighting communist ‘excesses’
rather than the labour movement as a whole, therefore, were making a fatal mistake. For
history taught that, when push came to shove, the bourgeoisie did not distinguish between
communists and socialists. ‘In 1934 Austria [when the socialist-led Republican Defence
League rose up against the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the conservative
government – JG]’, after all, ‘there was no communist party [as the government had
already outlawed that party – JG]; only the [Austrian] Social Democratic Party’. But that
had not stopped ‘the Austrian bourgeoisie’ from fighting the social democrats ‘with canons
and rifles, massacring unarmed workers’. And ‘[i]n the Spanish parliament elected in
1931 there was only one communist; in the Spanish parliament elected in 1936 there were
no more than twenty communists’. Yet, ‘the police fought the Spanish socialists, much like

33 This was how Denis Healey described it in his report of the December 1947 PPS congress. Labour History
Archive and Study Centre, Manchester [hereafter LHASC], Labour Party Archives, International Department
(LP/ID), Box 13.
34 Quoted in: De Graaf, ‘“The Usual Psychological Effects of a Shotgun Wedding”’, p. 153.
35 This latter point amounts to propaganda, as the Republican Defence League was the para-military wing of
the Austrian Social Democratic Party and of course did have weapons. On the 1934 events in Austria and
their broader impact upon the interwar international socialist movement, see: Gerd-Rainer Horn, *European
Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism, and Contingency in the 1930s*, (Oxford/New York:
it is fighting the communists in some countries today, by means of violence, oppression, [and] the physical destruction of working-class militants and workers’ organisations’.

If the interwar experiences of such countries as Austria and Spain closely resembled those of Italy and Poland, however, they certainly were nothing like those of Czechoslovakia and France. In fact, centre-left and centrist bourgeois parties had been the closest allies of the ČSSD and the SFIO for most of the interwar period. It was these more positive experiences with centrist alliances and with democratic politics in general that account for the two parties’ increasingly centrist orientation when democracy found itself mounting under pressure during the post-war years.

Not that the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists were overflowing with affection for their centrist coalition partners. In the first place, they accused the bourgeois and Catholic parties of being disloyal to and using all sorts of dirty tricks against socialism, especially at election time. The ČSSD leadership charged the ČSNS with targeting a ‘Goebbels-like propaganda’ at social democracy during the campaign for the May 1946 parliamentary elections. Its ‘spurious flyers’, claiming that a merger of communists and social democrats would follow suit after the elections, had ‘deliberately created an atmosphere of uncertainty’ around social democracy. SFIO leaders, for their part, often complained bitterly about the MRP – the charges including its

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‘vicious’ attacks upon the SFIO as well as its ‘desertion’ and ‘betrayal’ of the yes-camp in the May 1946 constitutional referendum.

In ideological and socio-economic terms, moreover, the gap between socialism and the centrist parties seemed to have widened rather than narrowed. The ČSSD noted how the ČSNS, under the influence of bloc-building in international politics, had taken up the role of ‘mouthpiece of the Right in Czechoslovakia’. Insofar as the ČSNS was ‘the sewer to which all of the reaction converged’, as Laušman put it, these tactics had been a success. The SFIO likewise observed how the ‘Radical Socialists’ [after the official name of the Radical Party: the Republican, Radical, and Radical Socialist Party] of times past had increasingly become the ‘Radical Reactionaries’ after the war. ‘Since the liberation’, after all, the Radicals had ‘demonstrated [...] that, for them, the defence of the Republic amounted to no more than defending the last privileges of the bourgeois Third Republic’. The MRP, finally, remained an enigma for the socialists. To be sure, it had supported the nationalisations and other structural reforms in the economy, but the party’s ‘solutions for social and economic problems appear to put it on the road of paternalism and corporatism more than on that of social progress’.

What was never really in doubt for both the ČSSD and the SFIO, though, was the ultimate democratic reliability of the parties to their right. And, as post-war unity began

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42 ‘Volby a čs. sociální demokracie’ [1946], IA, Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Písemnosti související s ústřední, veřejnou a politickou činností B. Laušmana, Karton 34, Související činností v soc. dem. 1928-1948, p. 7.
giving way to socio-political polarisation, that more and more outweighed the misgivings the two parties held about their bourgeois coalition partners’ economic policy preferences. According to Philip, ‘capitalism […] as we have known it’, of the type that had historically carried the support of the centre-right, would be ‘incapable of reconstituting itself’ anyway. ‘We are in a transitory regime’, he told the August 1946 SFIO congress, ‘which will lead […] either to democratic Socialism or to an authoritarian and technocratic collectivism, taking the shape of a national Socialism or of a national Communism’. It followed that ‘the principal enemy at the present moment is no longer only capitalism as we have known it, [but] it is totalitarianism, in every form that it manifests itself, and it is authoritarianism’.

For the ČSSD, Deputy Secretary General Vojta Erban was increasingly playing up the democratic over the economic attributes of socialism as well. ‘We are above all […] aware’, he wrote in October 1946, ‘that socialism and democracy are essentially the same thing, because socialism does not only have an economic side but […] is based on the rule of a free people’. Yet, the social democrats also knew ‘very well’, he continued, ‘that socialism was, and is to this day, sometimes understood as a mechanic collectivism, which does not respect the individual and therefore means subjugation and dictatorship’.

In the face of these dictatorial collectivisms, it was imperative that the political centre pulled together against the formation of extremist left-wing or right-wing blocs. The ČSSD always counselled against left-right polarisation. After the May 1946 parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia, Laušman was quick to dispel press reports that ‘a Marxist camp’, consisting of the KSČ and the ČSSD, now held a two-seat majority over ‘a non-Marxist camp’, encompassing all other parties. ‘[I]f we divide the nation in two blocs’, he

declared, ‘we will come to political and civil struggles, and that would be the beginning of the end’. And even Fierlinger, the main leader of the ČSSD’s left wing, by no means advocated exclusive cooperation with the communists. Defending his ill-fated Unity Pact with the communists at the November 1947 ČSSD congress, he claimed that the pact had never been intended ‘to be limited to two parties only’ but was always ‘to be enlarged to a third party, i.e. the National Socialist Party’. There had been ‘no question of forming some kind of left-wing bloc’, he insisted, ‘but rather of preventing the creation of a right wing one. Nor do we want to isolate any of the other political parties as far as they want to work with us at all’.

The SFIO was constantly at pains to avoid fuelling polarisation too. For that reason, the party refrained from responding directly when, immediately after the new Constitution was finally voted through in the October 1946 referendum, the MRP went public with demands for a revision. It would be ‘a mistake’, insisted SFIO Deputy Secretary General Yves Dechézelles, to ‘rally the Right behind De Gaulle and create an anti-Marxist bloc’ by taking these demands, however unacceptable, head-on. A similar rationale was behind socialist leaders’ lukewarm response to communist overtures to establish ‘vigilance committees’, reminiscent of the anti-fascist bodies that had been constituted during the February 1934 crisis, in the wake of the creation of the Gaullist RPF in April 1947. For fears of providing De Gaulle with an easy target in the form of ‘a socialist-communist

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49 ‘The Mission of Social Democracy in the New State’ [November 1947], ANM, Fonds Zdeněk Fierlinger, Karton 40, Sjezd soc. dem. v Brne, p. 45. In view of the role Fierlinger later played both during the Prague Coup and in the subsequent merger of the ČSSD and the KSČ, these comments must of course be seen in the light of his (unsuccessful) efforts to retain the ČSSD Chair after his September 1947 Unity Pact with the communists was engulfed in a wave of intra-party indignation. Yet, the very fact that he chose to play up alliances with centrist parties in these efforts, tells us much about the sentiments within the ČSSD at that time.
50 ‘Comité Directeur’ [16 October 1946], OURS, ‘Réunions du Comité Directeur du 4 septembre 1946 à 30 juillet 1947’, p. 64.
bloc’, the SFIO instead opted ‘to unite all republican energies and [...] to invite the Communist Party, the Radical Party, and the MRP to make contact with it’.\(^{51}\)

By that stage, however, some party leaders were already pointing out that it would be a ‘challenge’ or even ‘paradoxical’ to ‘defend the Republic’ and ‘struggle against dictatorship side by side with the communists’.\(^{52}\) And come the time of the August 1947 SFIO congress, Paul Ramadier was no longer mentioning the PCF amongst the parties involved in ‘the work of Republican defence’. Instead, he urged party members to set aside any qualms about the ‘clerical tendencies of the MRP’ or the ‘conservative tendencies of certain members of the [Radical] RGR’. Those were ‘secondary preoccupations’, he declared, ‘the only thing that matters is to know whether we agree on the essential point; i.e. the Republican struggle’.\(^{53}\)

In his address to the November 1947 ČSSD congress, which would vote him in as party leader, Laušman likewise placed the defence of the democratic republic front and centre. After providing a lengthy exposé of how the party had prospered since its democratic wing had prevailed over its revolutionary wing in the 1880s, he proceeded with a thinly veiled attack on the Soviet inspirations of the KSČ. ‘Czechoslovakian social democracy will always be on the watch’, he argued, ‘that nobody anchors foreign ideas and tendencies in our nation, which would be in conflict with the deep-seated democratic, moral, and progressive sentiments of the citizens of the republic and with its socialist foundations’. It was ‘substantiated by our national history’, after all, that the ‘violent introduction of foreign models only brings unnecessary and heavy harm to socialist endeavours [...] and impedes the road to socialism’. For that reason, ‘we must never allow


that our politics are influenced by foreign interests, irrespective of whether these come from the Left or the Right, interests that are uncongenial or even run counter to our spirit, which diverge from our manifesto'.

Much the same arguments underlay the SFIO’s embrace of the Third Force doctrine in late 1947. In a propaganda brochure making the case for this new type of coalition, the party claimed that the authoritarian designs espoused on the leftmost and rightmost extremes of political life contravened a national democratic spirit. There were ‘millions of republicans, democrats, socialists, [and] trade unionists’, it insisted, who ‘do not accept and do not want to accept either the solution of personal power desired by the RPF or the solution of Stalinist dictatorship, both of which would inevitably result in the destruction of democratic institutions and the suppression of political liberties’. The brochure cited the German, Italian, and, crucially, Soviet experiences as proof that dictatorship ‘cannot provide the slightest solution for the problems posed by the evolution of modern society in its fundamental relations with the economical, the political, and the exigencies of freedom and democracy’. The ‘necessity of a Third Force’ sprang ‘fatally from that observation’; it was ‘a historical necessity for our country and for the world, at risk of sinking into chaos’.

**Internal Soul-Searching**

The four parties traced national democratic traditions not only to their historical experiences with party alliances, however. At least as important as the party-political

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lessons of the past were the lessons history had taught them about their respective societies. These two lessons were interconnected in many ways, as the socialists’ historically informed perceptions of democratic and anti-democratic social constituencies fed into their party-political decisions. The fact, then, that the industrial working class formed the only truly democratic constituency for the PPS and the PSIUP was one further reason for close cooperation with the communists. Yet, their strong proletarian orientation left little room for a genuine outreach to other (disadvantaged) social groups. The ČSSD and the SFIO, by contrast, were far more confident of the sound democratic beliefs of the middle-class voters who had historically backed centrist and centre-right parties. In order to win these groups over to their parties, though, it was imperative that socialism lost its sharp proletarian edges.

In fact, for each of the four parties the first post-war years represented a period of soul-searching about their identity as proletarian organisations. In the post-war context, after all, that identity was doubly problematic. In the first place, the socialists were acutely aware that the industrial proletariat formed a minority of the electorate in each of the four countries and was going to remain so for the foreseeable future. After the yes-camp’s defeat in the May 1946 constitutional referendum, Mayer had to conclude that even the combined political forces of the working class represented ‘less than one half of the country’. ‘[E]specially in times of economic reconstruction and redirection’, he declared, ‘it is impossible [...] to govern without the consent or the benevolent neutrality of those broad segments of the population that are called middle classes, but who make up the social majority of the nation in France’.

According to ČSSD Secretary General Blažej Vilím, this message had too frequently been lost upon interwar social democracy. ‘We have to [...] frankly
acknowledge’, he told the October 1945 ČSSD congress, that, in most European countries, socialist parties had ‘overestimated the strength of the industrial proletariat’ and ‘underestimated the significance of other strata of the nation’. The ‘development of the political situation in the First Republic’ presented ‘an example’ of this. The failure of the Left ‘to become a decisive factor’ in interwar Czechoslovakia, after all, had been due not to only of ‘the fragmentation of our socialist movement’ but also to the resilience of ‘a series of right-wing parties leaning on farmers and the middle classes’.57

Secondly, a significant part of this working-class minority had abandoned socialism in favour of communism. In October 1945, Nenni noted how the great bulk of the Italian working class now backed the PCI, with ‘the ratio between us and the communists 1 to 10, if not 1 to 15 or even 1 to 20’ in many industrial zones.58 The ČSSD and the SFIO, for their part, often alluded to the defection of the working-class vote to communism as one of the causes for their post-war electoral woes.59 And although it is difficult, in the absence of free and unfettered elections at both national and factory level, to measure the exact balance of power between communists and socialists amongst the working class, the PPR had certainly grown from a tiny sect into a mass working-class party.60

Socialist leaders identified various reasons for their setbacks and the communists’ gains amongst the working class. Addressing the PSIUP Central Committee in January

58 ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, pp. 21-22. Figures for the Milano area, where the socialists had historically been strong, indeed show a huge swing towards the PCI amongst industrial workers – though not as big as Nenni outlined here. In the elections to the provincial FIOM– the Italian metalworkers union, which contained more than a third of all unionised workers in the province – approximately 70% of the votes cast in some of the main factories of Milano’s industrial Porta Romana district went to communist candidates against a mere 20% and 8% for PSIUP and DC candidates respectively. See: Behan, The Long Awaited Moment, pp. 191-193.
60 In 1942, the PPR had a mere 4,000 members. By 1947, that number had rocketed to 872,000 members. See: Gary N. Marks, ‘Communist Party Membership in Five Former Soviet Bloc Countries, 1945–1989’, Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 37/2 (2004), pp. 241-263, 253f.
1946, Nenni listed a series of ‘factors’, including the prominent role the communists had played in the anti-fascist resistance, the prestige the Soviet Union had acquired by its military victories, and the ‘Rome or Moscow’ scare campaigns of the Mussolini regime, which had created an apparently clear-cut choice between fascism and communism. Above all, however, he pointed to the ‘in many respects unfair judgment [...] that reformism [the Italian brand of reformism practiced by Filippo Turati and other PSI leaders in the first decades of the twentieth century, which had seen the party fighting for a reformist agenda but stopping short of actually joining ‘bourgeois’ governments – JG] paved the way for [Italian] fascism like [German] social democracy for National Socialism’. 61

The survey that the ČSSD commissioned from the Czechoslovakian Institute for Public Opinion Research to analyse its poor showing in the May 1946 parliamentary elections came to similar conclusions. In general terms, its report, for which more than 1,000 voters representative of the electorate as a whole were interviewed, pointed out that the ČSSD had lost out to the KSČ because voters were ‘grateful’ to the Soviet Union and the Red Army for the liberation of Czechoslovakia, because voters saw the KSČ as the more radical option in a post-war ‘tendency to the Left’, and because it had not been sufficiently clear what the ČSSD stood for. Yet, those criticisms that seemed to emanate directly from workers often concerned the history of the ČSSD. While in government under the First Republic, the report summarised such charges, ‘the party had not achieved [...] what it could and should have achieved’: it was reproached for having broken promises, for having ‘always betrayed workers during strikes’, for having ‘done nothing for workers’, and for having teamed up with the right-wing Agrarian Party. One respondent complained that the ČSSD, when in power, had not done everything in its

61 ‘Relazione Nenni al Comitato Centrale’ [7 January 1946], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2190, p. 2.
power for the working class, whereas another went as far as attributing the party’s losses to the ‘reactionary’ behaviour of its interwar leaders.\textsuperscript{62}

If the four parties faced similar challenges to their working-class identity, however, the concomitant soul-searching processes produced very dissimilar results. The PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, re-affirmed their proletarian character and strove to carve out a niche for themselves in the working-class movement. The ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other, sought to broaden their platform to include all ‘working people’ and tailored their message to that end. The lessons of the past, this time on whether there was any popular stronghold of democracy between the working class and ‘the reaction’, once again proved a crucial factor in determining these opposite outcomes.

For the PPS and the PSIUP, these lessons were very clear: there were ‘no bourgeois democrats’ in their countries.\textsuperscript{63} For all of its lofty rhetoric about rights and freedoms, the two parties insisted, the interwar years had shown the bourgeoisie more preoccupied with its own selfish interests than with the future of the nation or democracy. Pointing out how there had been no ‘luxury citizens’ amongst those defending his home town of Gdynia against the Germans in 1939, Rusinek was adamant that the Polish bourgeoisie had ‘always in history’ valued ‘its own life’ higher than ‘freedom and the life of the nation’.\textsuperscript{64} Lelio Basso was more elaborate. Its profit margins having been destroyed by the consequences of the First World War, he explained, the interwar bourgeoisie was no longer able to offer the working class the ‘reformist and paternalistic’ concessions it had used to ‘blunt the revolutionary desire of the masses’ before 1914. The only way for the bourgeoisie to restore its ‘shaky economic predominance’, then, was to forcibly squeeze salaries and

\textsuperscript{62} Čs. ústav pro výzkum veřejného mínění: Neúspěch sociální demokracie v květnových volbách’ [1946], ANM, Fonds Zdeněk Fierlinger, Karton 40, Neúspěch soc. dem. ve volby, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{64} XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Sojuszniczca, 2029/1, 235/I-12, fo. 129.
recover the costs of war from the working class. In order to halt the accompanying process of class awakening amongst the proletariat ‘conservative forces, capitalist classes, reactionaries, [and] monarchists have instigated and supported the fascist reaction in Italy, Germany, Spain, Hungary, etc’. It followed that a new ‘bourgeois restoration’ in Europe ‘would only mean new dictatorships, new fascisms, [and] new wars’.65

In the alleged absence of bourgeois democrats, the PPS and the PSIUP regarded the industrial proletariat as the sole group on which a democratic state could be built. To be sure, the two parties were well aware that the working class found itself in a numerical minority vis-à-vis other social groups and they certainly talked a lot about the need for alliances between the proletariat and other underprivileged constituencies. Yet, any overtures towards such groups always sprang from a doctrinaire position. Socialist leaders in both countries often spoke with contempt about the utter ‘political backwardness’ of peasants, who failed to see that their ‘objective’ interests lay with socialism – a topic to which we will return in far greater detail in the next chapter.

Even more contentious than reaching out to peasants, who, for all of their mistakes, were at least still manual labourers, was reaching out to the (lower) middle classes. It was this question that often dominated the debates between the supporters and the opponents of communist-socialist unity of action within the PSIUP. Giuseppe Saragat, the leader of the party’s anti-communist wing that would break away at the January 1947 PSIUP congress, strongly advocated a genuine socialist outreach to the (lower) middle classes. These groups, he reasoned, had been the backbone of interwar fascism and it was crucial for democracy to keep them out of the hands of the Right in post-war Italy.66

66 SFIO International Secretary Salomon Grumbach was probably right when he noted, after the PSIUP had split, that both the pro-communist and the anti-communist camp were ‘obsessed’ with the legacy of the early 1920s: ‘[Nenni] is obsessed by the memory of the [communist-socialist] split when Mussolini came to
Yet, the supporters of the communist alliance remained extremely wary of attempts to create ‘middle-class socialism’.67 They feared that the PSIUP, in seeking to tailor to the preferences of the (lower) middle classes, would compromise its proletarian character. ‘It is often claimed’, argued Basso, ‘that we can abandon our unitarian line to make room for [...] all those middle classes who have proletarianised or are in the process of proletarianisation, but who do not join our party because they are afraid of communism’. But the ‘rhetoric’, he continued, that there was ‘only one socialism and that all working people are equal’ was fundamentally flawed. For if ‘we know that the worker and the peasant, who possess nothing and live only from selling their labour [...] are instinctively revolutionary [...] and instinctively realise that that their emancipation is a class problem’, the same could certainly not be said of the (lower) middle classes. ‘[F]or the petit-bourgeoisie, for the professional, and often for the state employee too’, after all, ‘the problem of emancipation’ remained ‘a problem of individual emancipation’. The only way for these groups to ‘acquire a proletarian conscience’ was for them to be ‘firmly guided by a strong working class’. That was not going to happen, however, if the PSIUP alienated the industrial workers in its ranks by forsaking upon socialist-communist unity. Doing that, insisted Basso, could only result in the ‘denaturalisation’ of the party. For by ‘throwing wide open the entrance to the middle classes, [...] we will simultaneously throw wide open the exit for workers and peasants’.68

PPS leaders were likewise adamant that their party was a proletarian organisation first and foremost. ‘[D]espite our mass nature’, Włodzimierz Reczek told the December 1947 PPS congress, ‘nobody can deny that we have a pronounced class profile’. That, he

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67 This was how Nenni denounced Saragat’s conception of socialism at the April 1946 PSIUP congress in Firenze. Quoted in: Di Scala, Renewing Italian Socialism, p. 56.
68 ‘XXIV Congresso del Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria, 12 aprile 1946, seduta pomeridiana,’ ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 88, Fasc 2193, pp. 73-76.
argued, ‘is our strength’. The ‘example of those socialist parties that diluted their working-
class composition [and] descended into the bourgeoisie’, after all, ‘teaches how adversely
that affects their politics, how that blunts militancy, and distorts ideologically’.69

That was surely another taunt at the SFIO, which, as we have seen, increasingly
became the epitome of all that was wrong with anti-communist (Western) European
socialism for the PPS. In defence of their party’s proletarian orientation, PSIUP leaders
similarly raised the sceptre of France. Even Alberto Jacometti – by no means the most
ardent pro-communist within the PSIUP leadership70 – was on message in this respect.
Orienting the PSIUP towards the middle classes, he warned the April 1946 party congress,
carried the ‘danger’ of following in the footsteps of the SFIO. For while the SFIO had
‘gained in the North [of France] and in the belt around Paris, not a single worker has voted
for the Socialist Party in the Southern band stretching from the Pyrenees to the Alps. All
the votes of workers [in that area] have gone to the Communist Party. We cannot allow
that to happen in Italy’.71

In their efforts to (re-)gain support amongst all segments of the ‘working people’,
however, the French socialists often felt that they had no choice but to distance themselves
from the communists. Already in late 1944, Roger Priou-Valjean warned the SFIO
Executive that the party risked losing the ‘great current of sympathy’ it had garnered
amongst ‘middle classes, proletarianised white-collar workers, artisans, peasants, etc.’ by
aligning itself too closely with the PCF.72 And as election results confirmed the
considerable working-class swing towards communism, the SFIO’s focus increasingly
shifted to recovering what had historically been, as Moch described it, its ‘classic clientele’

69 XXVII Kongres [December 1947], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/3, 235/1-26, fo. 82.
70 Jacometti, after all, would later oppose running the April 1948 parliamentary elections on a common list
with the PCI. And in the backlash following the PSIUP’s abysmal performance in these elections, he replaced
Basso as Secretary General on an ‘autonomist’ ticket.
71 ‘XXIV Congresso del Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria, 13 aprile 1946, seduta antemeridiana,’
ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 88, Fase 2193, p. 15.
72 ‘Comité Directeur’ [21 December 1944], OURS, ‘Procès-verbaux des réunions du Comité Directeur du
– public sector workers. In dealing with the demands of public sector workers, the group frequently hit hardest by the anti-inflationary policies of post-war governments, Guy Mollet instructed his fellow party leaders not to ‘forget about the political repercussions’. The ‘world of public sector workers’ constituted ‘the essential bedrock of the Party’, after all, with teachers making up ‘our best recruiters’. Yet, there was ‘a real discontent’ at the grassroots, which was ‘exploited by the Communist Party’. While it was still impossible to give in to all their material demands, therefore, Mollet insisted that ‘in the form and on the moral level all reassurances are given to public sector workers’.74

In the face of an even more significant working-class surge towards communism, the ČSSD similarly opted to reach out to non-proletarian constituencies. That was the foremost rationale behind the ČSSD dropping the designation ‘Worker’ from its name at the party’s October 1945 congress. According to Vilím, the name change would help ‘unite […] the industrial working class’ and ‘other strata of working people’. For the party had ‘shown too little interest in other strata of the nation’ before the war, he claimed, ‘especially in peasants, who were ultimately left with no choice but to join the Agrarian Party, thereby strengthening the power of the reactionary landowning clique within that party’.75 Evžen Erban, the ČSSD’s Secretary General of ÚRO, likewise declared that the new party did not want to ‘restrict itself to the working class only’ but ‘become a party of the working people of city and countryside, of salaried workers, and of the self-employed’. Though he was adamant that ‘[t]he party should lead the middle classes and not the middle classes the party’, he conceded that ‘[t]he working class cannot win its struggle if it does not obtain other strata of the working people as an ally’. The ČSSD, accordingly, had to

‘clarify to the working class that the victory of socialism urgently requires the winning over of the middle classes, which we must not repel with an insular politics of class containment.’ 76

This far greater willingness, by comparison with the Italian and Polish socialists, to reach out to non-proletarian social constituencies had its roots in a fundamentally different understanding of national history and national traditions on the part of the ČSSD and the SFIO. The past had taught the two parties that the great majority of their populations, including the middle classes, were committed to freedom and democracy.

For SFIO leaders, this went right from the wartime Resistance all the way back to the French Revolution. The ‘struggle for national liberation and democratic liberation’, declared SFIO Executive member and later Interior Minister Édouard Depreux at the party’s first post-war congress, demonstrated ‘that France has remained the country of 1789 and 1792 [when the First French Republic had come into being – JG], the country that has taught the world the use of freedom and democracy and, with that sense of the universal that characterises the genius of our people, has proclaimed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, that imperishable charter of politically emancipated mankind’. 77

ČSSD leaders traced back the democratic traditions of Czechoslovakia even further than that. In what must be seen as another warning to the communists, Laušman elaborated on a nineteenth-century nationalist narrative concerning the alleged “‘natural democraticality” of the Czechs’ 78 to point out that dictatorship was inimical to the national spirit. ‘Our nation may be small’, he told the November 1947 ČSSD congress, ‘[but] it has

76 Ibid, p. 133.
always stood out in its spiritual fortitude [and] the strength of its convictions [...]. Our endeavours were always thoroughly humane, our ideas always progressive and, and this I want to stress, socialist. Remember the Hussites [the followers of the fifteenth-century religious reformer Jan Hus, who, during their wars with the papal armies of the Holy Roman Empire, founded an egalitarian commune in Bohemian Tábor – JG! Remember the democratic theories of state that guided us in the Middle Ages [and] found their personification in our great [fifteenth-century] King George of Poděbrady, remember the teachings of [seventeenth-century educational reformer John Amos] Comenius and the exploits of [nineteenth- and twentieth-century national independence partisans Karel] Havlíček and [Tomas Gariggue] Masaryk!’

This was how ‘the whole world’ knew Czechoslovakia, insisted Laušman, and how it would remain known ‘for eternity’. For the country, he continued, had ‘never as a whole nor in any significant part succumbed to [...] reactionary frenzies or anti-democratic temptations’. Instead, it had always been ‘freedom-loving, humane, tolerant, and progressive’. The implications for post-war Czechoslovakia were clear. It was ‘self-evident’, Laušman claimed, that ‘it never was possible, that it is not possible, and that it never will be possible in our nation to cultivate a politics foreign to these national feelings and beliefs, to our innate worldview’. Every attempt to introduce ‘violent and dictatorial methods’, therefore, ‘would have to fail. Our nation cannot simply be enslaved because freedom and democracy are in its blood and are its whole life’.79

If a predilection towards freedom and democracy was shared across the classes, however, socialist beliefs certainly were not. And for all of their rhetoric about guiding the middle classes towards socialism, the ČSSD and the SFIO more frequently found themselves reassuring non-proletarian constituencies regarding their intentions. The

desired outreach to the middle classes, then, often came at the price of abandoning socio-economic radicalism. For if those ‘small proprietors, artisans, [and] small shopkeepers who are the Republican spirit’, as Auriol put it, ‘come to the proletariat when freedom [and] the Republican institutions are under threat’, they ‘moved to the Right’ when their ‘interests are affected [and] uncertainty is knocking at the door’. 80

It was crucial for the two parties, accordingly, not to deter the middle classes from socialism by adopting revolutionary and leftist positions. ‘The grandest left-wing politics’, warned ČSSD Central Committee member and chairman of the party’s Commission for Tradesmen Pavel Sajal, would hardly be ‘a magnet’ attracting such groups. The middle classes, he argued, ‘are not opposed to socialism, but [...] demand democracy, the rule of law, and order within and profitability of nationalised firms’. 81 Above all, however, the middle classes wanted guarantees that their long-term position would be safe under socialism, insisted the report that the Commission for Tradesmen submitted to the November 1947 ČSSD congress, amid fears that that the ‘independence’ they had been promised in the 1945 government programme was ‘limited by time’. 82

The SFIO sought to assuage similar fears in a propaganda brochure directed at artisans and small businessmen. ‘[F]ar from wanting to destroy the middle classes’, it insisted, the party had ‘always and everywhere come to their defence’. Had Jean Jaurès not written, after all, that ‘socialism is not opposed to small business. It does not concern itself

with the proletarians of a single class, because, if that were the case, it would simply be replacing a tyranny with a tyranny, an oppression with an oppression’.83

**Conclusion**

We have seen in this chapter that the two sets of parties drew widely divergent lessons from their national and Europe’s interwar history. For the PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, history painted a very grim picture indeed. In this picture, both the working class and its political representatives were completely isolated in their struggles for democracy and socialism. Time and again, after all, the interwar bourgeoisie had decided to throw in its lot with dictators in order to safeguard its economic interests. It followed that class struggle would be an inevitable feature of post-war society, requiring the working class to pull together and present a united front.

For the ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other, history offered an altogether more reassuring picture. In this picture, the working class and the socialist parties had always found non-proletarian social constituencies and centrist parties on their side when democracy came under pressure. The main lesson of the past, accordingly, was that democracy would survive as long as the political centre ground held. And in the increasingly polarised post-war world, that lesson warranted the search for new alliances across class boundaries.

The significance of historical lessons, however, stretched far beyond the mere question of alliances – whether political or social. They also crucially shaped the four parties’ attitudes towards the key dimension of political reconstruction: the rebuilding of democracy. For each of the four parties, democracy had both political and economic

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connotations. In political terms, it was to guarantee the rights and freedoms we still associate with democracy today: free and fair elections, freedom of speech, conscience, and association, and the checks and balances between executive, legislative, and judiciary powers. In economic terms, it was to usher in ‘structural reforms’ in the economic system: the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, land reform, and/or genuine worker participation in industrial decision-making. If the four parties agreed on the overall objective to establish both political and economic democracy, however, they certainly did not on the prioritisation of one over the other or on the methods with which best to achieve this goal.

For the Italian and Polish socialists, the institution of economic democracy had to precede the re-introduction of political democracy. In their view, it was pointless to resurrect political democracy without first emasculating the economic power structures upon which bourgeois domination rested. For that reason, the PPS and the PSIUP were proponents of what they called ‘popular democracy’ (they also used ‘new democracy’ and ‘socialist democracy’ to describe this phenomenon): a system in which the working-class parties would temporarily be guaranteed a dominant position in government even if the electoral arithmetic did not allow for that. During this transitional period, the government could implement structural economic reforms, whilst building up a system of direct grassroots participation in public life. It was only after the thorough political re-education that came with the experience of participation that their backward and disoriented electorates would be equipped to face up to the temptations of political democracy again.

Both parties were very much aware that ‘popular democracy’ involved overstepping the confines of political democracy in the short run. But their history had taught them that that was the only way to achieve freedom in the long run. The programmatic motion that the leadership of the clandestine PSIUP in Northern Italy –
which included Basso, Morandi, and Pertini – adopted in November 1944 makes this point very clearly. ‘The Party knows’, it proclaimed, ‘that true freedom will be given to the Italian people not by the Anglo-Saxon armies, not by the CLN, not by a government of concentration, neither by a Constituent Assembly if that is not an Assembly of workers’. True freedom would rather be realised, it continued, ‘by the abolition of the privileges that derive from property, by the forfeiture of the right that sanctions [these privileges], and by the destruction of the economic system upon which bourgeois domination is based’. And that was not going to happen as the result of a negotiated process. ‘The freedom of the people cannot come from alliances with groups that, even if they talk of socialism and are willing to make concessions today, want to salvage capitalism in its substance; neither can it be assured by any electoral majority that does not lead to the elimination of the interests that stand in the way of [freedom]’. Quite the contrary, ‘[f]reedom can only be achieved in a new order proclaimed by the people and constituted outside of existing legality, which is a protection and a shield for the supremacy of a class’.84

For the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists, on the contrary, abidance by the rulebook of political democracy was a pre-condition for the establishment of economic democracy. In this respect, even though they would not admit to supporting ‘bourgeois democracy’, socialist leaders in both countries much fostered the political legacy of the interwar bourgeois-liberal state. It was electoral majorities that had to decide about governmental outcomes and any attempt to subvert this process would obliterate the freedom that was at the very core of socialism. Only once political democracy had been achieved, economic democracy could be built following a parliamentary and constitutional trajectory.

84 ‘Mozione programmatica del Comitato Centrale per l’Alta Italia’ [November 1944], Orientamenti: Bollettino di Commento e di Indirizzo Politico, 18 January 1948, p. 10.
Far from advocating the overthrow of existing legality, therefore, the ČSSD and the SFIO always insisted on working within the confines of political democracy. It is very telling that the two parties always spoke of extending political democracy with economic democracy rather than the other way around. That was because their history had taught them that political democracy could not only survive within the framework of bourgeois capitalism, but also make the capitalist system increasingly social. It was this belief more than anything – that liberal capitalism, for all of its economic injustices, did guarantee ‘personal and civic rights’ and could be transformed from within – that set the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists apart from their Italian and Polish counterparts.

The question dividing the two sets of parties with regard to political reconstruction, then, was whether socialism could be achieved within the existing institutional structures and by legal means. The next two chapters will delve far deeper into the four parties’ responses to this question. First, we will compare their attitudes towards the three principal institutions of ‘bourgeois democracy’. Subsequently, we will contrast their views on the participatory structures that were at the heart of socialist conceptions of ‘popular democracy’.


86 That was at least how the 1945 programme of the ČSSD’s Action Committee put it. ‘Program akčního výboru – Československé sociální demokracie’, Archiv ČSSD, Fond č. 71, Část II Československá sociální demokracie (1945-1948), I. Sjezdy čs. socialní demokracie, 111 XX. sjezd konany 19.-21. rijna 1945 v Praze, p. 9.
Chapter 6: Elections, Parliaments, and Constitutions

In August 1947, an article in the ČSSD’s theoretical weekly questioned the course Czechoslovakian democracy had taken since the Second World War. ‘The notion of political democracy, as understood by the nineteenth-century thinkers and as formulated by T.G. Masaryk’, it observed, ‘has changed considerably after the Second World War and after the experience of fascism’. In the place of the old slogans of freedom, equality, and brotherhood, ‘that is [the watchword] “equal rights for all”, which the bourgeoisie completely abused’, had now come the ‘very narrow’ slogan of ‘democracy only for democrats’. But it was doubtful, the article continued, ‘whether this narrowing really constitutes a step in the right direction and whether it protects democracy from abuse’. The meaning of words, after all, ‘ultimately depends on who expresses them and, after the experiences with Hitler, who pretended to be the only genuine socialist and democrat, we know that it is more important […] which power gives words their actual significance’. The new slogan of democracy only for democrats, therefore, not only failed to ‘provide any guarantee for democracy’, but also carried within it a ‘danger’. For ‘one powerful group’ could easily declare ‘that it only truly and for one hundred per cent represents democracy and that it only is entitled to democratic freedoms, whereas all others only [have] the democratic obligation to keep silent’.1

Historians typically portray the first post-war years as the period during which (Western) European socialism unreservedly came to embrace representative democracy as ‘much more than the political form adopted by the bourgeoisie within the capitalist state’.2

For if the economic and social instability of the interwar years had still ‘left important

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sections of Social Democracy with strong and lingering doubts about the parliamentary road to socialism’, the subsequent ‘years of oppression and persecution under a swastika-dominated Europe’ drove the socialist movement ‘towards the acceptance of pluralist democracy after 1945’. In these circumstances, ‘virtually all Socialists insisted political democracy was an end in itself. The concept included both respect for individual civil rights and adherence to a system of political decision making founded on free, universal suffrage. Most Social Democrats favoured parliamentary democracy as a constitutional system’.

Yet, as the above story already hints at, the experience of dictatorship (initially) also drove some socialists in the opposite direction. Far from embracing the parliamentary road to socialism, these socialists argued that ‘bourgeois democracy’ had failed their countries and would, if reconstituted, only usher in new dictatorships. For that reason, they advocated a radical, albeit temporary, curtailing of the franchise, the party landscape, and/or the rights and freedoms of their political rivals more generally. These anti-representative sentiments amongst post-war European socialists, however, have hardly received any scholarly attention. This is unfortunate, as the question of whether socialists should adhere to the democratic rulebook of bourgeois society divided the four parties under review in this thesis more than any other question.

This chapter aims to demonstrate this by comparing the two sets of parties’ attitudes towards the three key institutions of bourgeois democracy. In the first place, it will analyse their views on elections. Whereas the ČSSD and the SFIO treated election results as infallible reflections of the popular will, the PPS and the PSIUP were often dismissive of their meaning after decades of dictatorship. Secondly, it will delve into their perspectives upon parliamentary activity. If the ČSSD and the SFIO saw parliament as the

2 Orlow, Common Destiny, p. 45.
chief bulwark of democracy, the PPS and the PSIUP mostly regarded parliamentarism as an outdated and overly legalistic form of doing politics. Thirdly, it will address their approaches towards constitutions and above all constitutionalism. Whilst the ČSSD and the SFIO were adamant that the rule of law was to be upheld at all times, the PPS and the PSIUP were more willing to countenance the proletarian parties using dictatorial methods in the struggle for political power.

Elections

In the wake of liberation, each of the four parties relished the prospect of elections. With the last (free) parliamentary elections dating back (almost) a decade in Czechoslovakia (1935) and France (1936) and as far as a generation in Italy (1921) and Poland (1922), socialist leaders considered a popular verdict on the state of parties to be long overdue. What is more, they fully expected elections to go their way. The 1930s Depression having discredited capitalism and the disastrous consequences of the appeasement of, or the collaboration with, fascism having tainted many on the interwar bourgeois Right, party leaders were confident that an electoral breakthrough towards socialism could finally be achieved.

Pietro Nenni was exuding such confidence when he told the September 1944 National Convention of the PSIUP that ‘we have faith in the [still to be elected – JG] Constituent Assembly’, for ‘we know that we have the great bulk of the people behind us’. Much like their Italian and other Western European counterparts, the French socialists

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came out of the war considering a transition to socialism ‘a dialectical near-certainty’. The resolution adopted by the November 1945 Supreme Council of the PPS, for its part, emphasised that the upcoming parliamentary elections were ‘to be not only a reflection of the real social-political balance of power in the country, but also a working people’s trial of Polish fascism’. That the entire pre-war ruling class was subsumed under this banner became apparent from the long list of charges the resolution levelled against ‘Polish fascism’, which included depriving parliament of the right to control the Sanacja government, the dissolution of trade unions, and ‘the alliance of the reaction and Hitler in 1934’ – that is, the ten-year non-aggression pact that the Piłsudski government and Nazi Germany had entered into in January 1934. As a result of elections, the resolution concluded, the working class would finally be able to ‘realise its fundamental programme’.7

Yet, this supreme confidence in the outcome of free and unfettered elections would quickly dissipate. Within the PPS and the PSIUP, the elation initially surrounding the prospect of a popular vote made way for gloom even before the first ballot had been cast. Already at the first post-war congress of the PPS, Wincenty Stawiński – the socialist member of parliament for Pabianice (near Łódź) – counselled against calling elections anytime soon. Finding itself in power in 1918, he reminisced, the party had also called elections and lost. To entrust the Polish people with a ballot again, would amount to ‘the burial of the achievements of the Provisional Government. We first have to educate Polish society’.8 Albeit in slightly less dramatic terms, Lelio Basso also warned against viewing

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6 The quote is from Marc Sadoun, who points to the similarities between socialist rhetoric – ‘socialism is the master of the hour’, ‘we are the masters at present’, and ‘after Hitler us’ – within the SFIO, the Labour Party, and the exiled German SPD respectively. See: Marc Sadoun, *Les socialistes sous l’occupation: résistance et collaboration*, (Paris: Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1982), p. 269. Dietrich Orlow provides further Dutch and German examples of post-liberation socialist euphoria. See: Orlow, *Common Destiny*, p. 289f.

7 ‘Uchwały Rady Naczelnej’ [4 November 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Rada Naczelna, 2032/1, 235/II/5, fo. 10a.

8 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fo. 196.
the upcoming parliamentary elections as a cure for all of Italy’s political ills. ‘We would be making a very serious mistake and expose the country to dangerous delusions’, he wrote in August 1945, ‘if we attribute miraculous virtues to the Constituent Assembly; if we think, following an old parliamentary mentality, that electoral rallies can resolve a crisis so profound as the one tormenting us, can give a democratic conscience to a people that never had one’.9

What seems to have underlain this pessimism regarding electoral outcomes amongst Italian and Polish socialists was a deep-seated belief that their societies were ill-prepared for the temptations of democratic politics. Whilst almost impervious to democratic and socialist arguments, party leaders in both countries lamented, large swathes of their electorates were easily swayed by reactionary and populist solutions.

This was especially true for the two countries’ large peasant majorities. All of their rhetoric about the essential community of interest between industrial proletarians and rural labourers notwithstanding, PPS and PSIUP leaders often despaired of the political acumen of their peasantry. There were repeated allusions to the utter backwardness of peasants, many of whom were lacking basic literacy skills and would believe anything their local priest told them. These were people who, in the words of leading Polish socialists, were only just ‘returning to humanity’, having been ‘the property of counts and wealthy landowners’ for centuries.10 And whereas ‘the message of socialism’ had never reached the countryside, soon-to-be-elected PSIUP parliamentarian Bianca Bianchi told her party’s April 1946 congress, the ‘almost omnipresent’ Catholic Action [the largest lay organisation of the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, which played a significant role in post-war election

10 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fo. 131, 269.
campaigns – JG] was ‘leading women towards the DC’ and ‘all small villages’ had ‘a church denigrating socialism’.\textsuperscript{11}

In these circumstances, the crucial peasant vote was unlikely to befall socialism. Although PPS and PSIUP leaders did not tire of repeating that peasants’ ‘objective interests’ lay with socialism, they had to acknowledge that peasant electoral behaviour was frequently determined by far from objective factors. Recounting what he had heard at the January 1948 congress of the PSIUP, Léon Boutbien informed the SFIO’s International Commission that the ‘many illiterates without political education’ in the largely rural south of Italy would vote for ‘no matter who’. Even the PCI had been able to make considerable inroads\textsuperscript{12} in some of the more pious districts by claiming that a vote for the communists amounted to a vote for Saint Joseph – a reference to Italy’s founding father Giuseppe (=Joseph) Garibaldi, whose image adorned the emblem of the Popular Front.\textsuperscript{13}

Basso affirmed that the political understanding of the peasantry did not exceed a very basic level. ‘[D]eliberately kept in a state of illiteracy and superstition’, he argued, ‘rural plebs’ voted ‘against their own interests because they are unable to “consciously” exercise their right to vote’. To be sure, when faced with such a simple yes-or-no question as “do you approve land reform?” – one of the three questions that had been put to the Polish people in the People’s Referendum of June 1946 – peasants would overwhelmingly vote yes. But come the time of the next parliamentary elections, Basso continued, those same peasants would ‘certainly vote for the candidates of the priests, i.e. for the exponents and representatives of the old feudal nobility, [who are] opposed to peasant interests and to

\textsuperscript{12} Of course, the PCI’s success in the rural areas of Southern Italy – for it was in the rural South much more than in the industrial North of Italy that the communists outperformed the socialists in electoral terms – must also be attributed to the radical traditions amongst landless rural labourers in that region. On the PCI and the Southern peasantry, see: Paul Ginsborg, ‘The Communist Party and the Agrarian Question in Southern Italy, 1943-1948’, \textit{History Workshop Journal}, 17/1 (1984), pp. 81-101.
\textsuperscript{13} ‘Réunion de la Commission Internationale du Parti Socialiste’ [17 January 1948], Centre d’Histoire Social, Paris [hereafter CHS], Fonds Marceau Pivert, 559API42, 1948, p. 5.
land reform in particular’.¹⁴ Jan Żerkowski – the PPS chairman of the Parliamentary Commission for Cooperatives, Supply, and Trade – likewise cautioned his fellow party leaders that peasant enthusiasm for specific socialist policies would not translate into electoral support for socialism. ‘We know very well’, he explained, ‘that the small farmer and peasant do not come to socialism’. Contrary to what the Congress of Socialist Peasants was claiming, socialism was ‘not catching on with the peasant’ – ‘he is taken in by the cooperative movement, by the League of Peasant Self-Help, but not by socialist ideology’.¹⁵

Just how much of a mountain the parties had to climb in electoral terms was borne out further by election news seeping through from abroad. The results of the late 1945 elections in Austria and Hungary, both of which had returned the main Catholic centre-right party with an absolute parliamentary majority, made for particularly terrible reading. When, in late November 1945, the PPS Central Committee discussed the trajectory towards parliamentary elections in post-war Poland, several party leaders reflected on the lessons to be learned from these experiences. Józef Cyrankiewicz insisted that the Polish parliamentary elections would be ‘prepared politically and organisationally, so that the PSL will not follow in the footsteps of the Smallholders in Hungary’ – i.e. the Independent Smallholders’ Party, which had secured 57% of the vote in the Hungarian elections. Henryk Wachowicz agreed that the PPS found itself ‘in a difficult situation’. ‘If the PSL does not join us [the PPS and the PPR – JG] in a common bloc’, he explained, ‘it will receive many many votes’. The Austrian elections, after all, were ‘an example of the demagogical grasp of the reaction’.¹⁶

¹⁵ Rada Naczelna [31 March 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2032/1, 235/II/6, fo. 33.
According to the Italian and Polish socialists, that grasp reached well beyond ignorant and illiterate peasants. PPS Central Committee member Stanisław Skowroński argued that ‘the potential strength of the reaction in Poland’ was ‘exceptional’, its mesmerism attracting such diverse groups as ‘the petit-bourgeoisie, philistines, the clergy, [and] teachers’. By October 1945, Nenni had likewise identified a broadening appeal for reactionary politics in post-war Italy. Examining the causes of ‘the noteworthy intensification of reactionary activity’ since the PSIUP’s September 1944 National Convention, when he had still predicted a straightforward victory for the Left in democratic elections, he highlighted three phenomena. In the first place, ‘all political, social and economic forces’ fearing ‘the tidal wave emanating from below’ were rallying around the monarchy. Secondly, the purge had driven a segment of the population ‘to conservative or even reactionary positions’. But ‘the most serious phenomenon’ was the popular misery ‘creating vast groups of malcontents, who we cannot forever ask to make sacrifices, to tighten their belts, etc’.18

As such misery hit the working class first and foremost, PPS and PSIUP leaders were increasingly fixated on reactionary stirrings in their traditional industrial heartlands. Franco Mariani warned of ‘political speculators’ preying upon legitimate worker grievances to plunge Italy into chaos before democracy could take root. The same ‘reactionary and parasitical classes that have subsidised and sustained fascism’, he explained, were now hoping to ‘profit from unemployment and misery’ by ‘creating street tumults and insurrections’, which would, in turn, be quashed ‘by exactly those Allies [i.e. the Anglo-American troops which had assumed control over law enforcement in early

17 ‘Protokół posiedzenia CKW PPS’ [14 May 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/2, fo. 51.
18 ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, pp. 13-14.
post-war Italy – JG] upon which these reactionary currents have pinned their hopes to
destroy the nascent democratic structure of our country’.19

What was worse, there were indications that dissatisfied workers were turning their
back on the Left altogether. The many votes for non-party (i.e. neither socialist nor
communist) candidates in factory council elections, Wachowicz told the PPS Central
Committee in November 1945, ‘bears testimony to the fact that even the most conscious
class, the working class, takes a hostile attitude towards us’.20 And, as the parliamentary
elections drew closer, that became an increasing cause for concern. By May 1946,
Cyraniewicz was stressing the need to ‘draw up an economic plan for the working class’.
For ‘if positive changes [in working-class wages, living standards, etc. – JG] have not
been effected by the time of the elections’, he warned, ‘a surprising situation might
transpire at the last minute, which we must avoid with respect to the PSL. That would
deprive us of our driving force in the electoral struggle – the working class’.21

By contrast with the PPS and the PSIUP, the euphoria surrounding electoral
outcomes lasted rather longer within the ČSSD and the SFIO. Right up to the first
parliamentary elections in France (October 1945) and Czechoslovakia (May 1946), party
leaders and activists in both countries had been expecting to come out on top in the
democratic contest. The ‘overwhelming participation’ in the ‘more than 5.000 electoral
meetings’, reflected the ČSSD on its 1946 campaign, ‘seduced many of our functionaries
to too optimistic expectations of the election result’.22 Bohumil Laušman, though claiming
not to have been amongst ‘the greatest of optimists’ himself, also granted that the ‘reports
coming in from some provinces’ and the assumption that ‘we would be able to win two

19 Interview Hadfield with Franco Mariani, AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.1.3., Fasc. 4.
20 ‘Protokół posiedzenia CKW PPS’ [30 November 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny
Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/2, fo. 10.
21 ‘Protokół posiedzenia CKW PPS [14 May 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet
Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/2, fo. 53.
22 ‘Zpráva o činnosti Československé Socialní Demokracie k XXI. řádnému sjezdu v Brně 14.-16. XI. 1947’,
Archiv ČSSD, Fond č. 71, Část II Československá sociální demokracie (1945-1948), I. Sjezdy čs. socialní
demokracie, 112 XXI. Sjezd konany 14.-16. listopadu v Brně, p. XXVII.
non-member votes for every party member’ had made the party ‘overestimate its strength by 45-50 seats’ – a result that would probably have seen the ČSSD become the largest force in parliament.23

SFIO leaders likewise approached the elections to the Constituent Assembly with the utmost confidence. Opening his party’s August 1945 congress, Gérard Jacquet – who had been the Deputy Secretary General of the clandestine SFIO – professed that ‘times have never been more favourable to socialism’. Governments ‘presided by our friends’, after all, were being installed ‘around the world’ and ‘our Labour comrades have just secured a great success [i.e. the Labour Party’s landslide victory in the United Kingdom’s 1945 general election – JG]’. In France, too, ‘all eyes are turning towards us’. With ‘offers for collaboration’ coming in ‘from all walks of life’, Jacquet concluded, the SFIO had ‘at no moment in its history [...] been as powerful as it is today’.24

The actual election results, then, were a harsh awakening for the SFIO and the ČSSD. Relegated into third and fifth place in parliament respectively, behind both the communists and the main centre-right and/or Christian democratic parties, illusions of a Labour-like electoral breakthrough were rapidly dashed. Unlike their Italian and Polish counterparts, however, the French socialists and the Czechoslovakian social democrats did not attribute their electoral woes to an underdeveloped and uneducated society.

In fact, party leaders in both countries identified ample appeal for democracy and socialism amongst their electorates. According to the ČSSD, the election results were proof that the interwar ‘reactionary parties [including the Agrarian Party – the strongest political force in the First Republic]’, which had been outlawed for their collaboration with the

Protectorate authorities, no longer enjoyed significant support in Czechoslovakian society. The fact, after all, that only ‘a negligible number’ of voters had made use of their right to cast a blank ballot, an option introduced to allow people to register their protest at the disappearance of the party of their choice, constituted ‘evidence’ that the new order was backed by ‘the overwhelming majority of erstwhile followers of these parties’. Guy Mollet also noted a sea change in popular attitudes in post-war France. In the aftermath of the liberation, he declared, there had been ‘an immense call for socialism’, reflected in ‘a desire for change, a revolutionary drive’. It was ‘a tragedy’ that ‘the SFIO has been unable to respond to that call’.26

The ČSSD and the SFIO identified three causes for their failure to capitalise upon this favourable Zeitgeist. In the first place, there were the countless organisational and propagandistic shortcomings which Mollet dubbed ‘internal causes’ for defeat at the polls.27 After their party came a disappointing third in the October 1945 parliamentary elections, SFIO leaders listed a raft of problems in these areas. Marius Moutet – Minister of Overseas France in both the Popular Front and various post-war governments – explained how the disparities in the organisational preparedness of the parties had made themselves felt in his Drôme department. Whereas the communists had put up ‘a great effort’ with ‘[local] newspapers and a profound organisation’, he lamented, ‘we changed our Federal Secretary during the election [campaign]’ and suffered from ‘a lack of organisation’.28 Moutet’s and other SFIO leaders’ pleas for the creation of socialist factory groups, a better organisation of party propaganda, and the political and administrative

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training of the party cadre notwithstanding, however, progress was slow. By November 1946, after a third consecutive election defeat for the SFIO, Mollet was still calling for the streamlining of the party’s message, for more use to be made of written propaganda, and for the reorganisation of the party’s factory, women’s, and youth groups.29

The ČSSD likewise imputed its May 1946 election defeat in large part to organisational failings. The party’s Central Organisational Commission identified no fewer than twelve deficiencies in the party organisation, including the insufficient development of local and factory party organisations, an unqualified party cadre, and the lacking agility of national and provincial party leaders.30

One party arm singled out for particular criticism within both the ČSSD and the SFIO was the national party press. Provincial party branches complained bitterly about the ‘ideological ambiguity’ of their national press organs,31 about their lack of ‘reflection on the party line’ and of ‘arguments allowing us to defend our politics’,32 and about their ‘snobbish’ attitude towards the everyday concerns of the people.33 But even national party leaderships, themselves in charge of the party press, were frequently scornful of their own newspapers and periodicals. The ČSSD’s Central Organisational Commission acknowledged that there were ‘major weaknesses in our press’: the national daily Právo lidu was not answering to the ‘organisational needs of the party’ and the provincial ČSSD press was not being provided with ‘the unified guidance it deserves’.34 The SFIO

31 ‘Prohlášení krajského výkonného výboru čs sociální demokracie v Plzni’ [1946], ANM, Fonds Zdeněk Fierlinger, Karton 40, Vysledek Voleb, p. 6.
leadership similarly found fault with the lacking cohesion between the socialist press and socialist ministers, whilst Édouard Depreux lamented that the party’s national daily *Le Populaire* ‘does not make enough of our semi-successes’.

Both parties needed all the positive exposure they could get, for they struggled to leave a strong mark on their electorates. This was the second main cause to which ČSSD and SFIO leaders attributed their electoral setbacks. Squeezed between the communist and bourgeois/Christian democratic poles in the post-war coalition governments, socialist leaders in both countries often lamented that their parties lacked a clearly defined profile other than that of perpetual compromise. After the strong polarisation of the war years and the liberation struggle, compromise was hardly what voters were looking for. Zdeněk Fierlinger wrote that the ČSSD had entered the parliamentary elections in ‘an unenviable position’. ‘We found ourselves [...] somewhere in the centre between the communists and the other parties’, he explained, whereas ‘[d]evelopments after every war and every revolution have a tendency to move away from the centre’. Mollet likewise pointed out how it was ‘normal’ that, after fascism, ‘the great bulk of voters are attracted towards extremes’. It had been ‘our mistake’, he continued, ‘to suggest that we were not one of these extremes’.

What is more, their key intermediary position between the communists and the centre-right, in personnel as well as policy terms, had the ČSSD and the SFIO at a disadvantage during campaign time. The two parties repeatedly stressed how they had fallen prey to their own devotion to national unity and recovery. ‘Czechoslovakian social democracy [...] did all in its power to secure national unity and reconcile the political

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forces’, read the resolution that the ČSSD Central Executive Committee passed after the party’s dismal showing in the May 1946 parliamentary elections, but this had come ‘at the price of the greatest party-political sacrifices’.39 As the party delivering the Prime Minister, after all, the ČSSD had been forced to practise the ‘due restraint’ that had certainly not been observed by the other parties during the election campaign.40

SFIO leaders similarly claimed that their ‘too loyal’41 attitude and their ‘excess of honesty’42 had cost them dearly in elections. ‘Without regard for its electoral interests’, insisted a manifest the SFIO Executive published in May 1946, ‘the party [...] has served national interests first by demanding a massive reduction of the military budget, subsequently by delegating its people to the heaviest governmental posts [...], and finally by telling the country the truth about our economic and financial problems and putting forward rigorous, but necessary, solutions towards these’.43

It was in the severe popular discontent about the terrible socio-economic situation that the ČSSD and the SFIO found a third major cause for their unpopularity with the electorate. If this was one electoral concern they shared with the PPS and the PSIUP, the four parties heartily disagreed who was the main beneficiary of the bread-and-butter outrage amongst their voters. Rather than the ‘reactionaries’ pointed to by the Italian and Polish socialists, it was the communists who stood to gain most from a continued squeeze on living standards according to the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists. Even though communist leaders were co-signatories to and vociferous supporters of the austerity packages adopted by their governments, they seemed to be able

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40 Ibid., pp. XXVIII-XXIX.


to deflect the blame for the concomitant popular misery on their socialist coalition partners. Viewed as parties of government through and through, the ČSSD and SFIO complained that they were being punished for the hard choices their governments had been forced to make. The communists, on the other hand, had managed to portray themselves as the great outsiders. They represented, in the words of SFIO Deputy Secretary General Jacques Arrès-Lapoque, ‘the dissatisfied’.

This, the ČSSD and SFIO claimed, had everything to do with the communist tendency to play on popular grievances with demagogical campaigns. Time and again, the two parties accused their communist coalition partners of making false claims or completely unfeasible demands, often in direct contradiction to government policies they had supported before, to appeal to a particular electoral constituency. This was the case with the millionaires’ tax controversy, which rattled Czechoslovakian politics in the autumn of 1947 and constituted the catalyst for the defeat of Fierlinger’s pro-communist wing at the November 1947 congress of the ČSSD. The controversy revolved around the way in which peasants, who had been hit by a severe drought in the summer, were to be compensated for their losses. On the same day that Vaclav Majer – the ČSSD’s Minister of Food – proposed to raise state-sanctioned grain prices, the communists blindsided their coalition partners by putting forward an extraordinary levy on millionaires instead. After all other coalition parties voted this down as unworkable, the communists went on the offensive: branding the ministers who had voted against the levy ‘defenders of millionaires’ in their press and exploiting their domination of the (officially non-party)

44 After the party’s abysmal performance in the May 1946 parliamentary elections, ČSSD presidium member Frantisek Nový argued that ‘public opinion […] condemns us as an accomplice for all the bad things the communists have done’. Quoted in: Kaplan, ‘Tschechoslowakische Sozialdemokratie’, p. 299f. SFIO leaders, for their part, partly attributed their electoral losses to the fact that the electorate had closely identified their party – unlike the PCF and the MRP – with tripartisme. ‘Comité Directeur’ [13 November 1946], OURS, ‘Réunions du Comité Directeur du 4 septembre 1946 à 30 juillet 1947’, pp. 81-82.
trade union movement to organise workers’ meetings demanding that the levy would be adopted. Far from bullying the party into submission, however, these attacks only made the ČSSD more combative. If the communists wanted ‘a dirty campaign’, the party leadership concluded, ‘they can have it’.46

The French socialists described their experiences with the communists in very much the same terms. When the PCF, after its November 1946 election victory, published an outline for a ‘governmental programme’, the SFIO leadership concluded that the communists were far more interested in scoring political points than in solving France’s problems. During a meeting of the SFIO Executive, several socialist leaders derided the communist programme for being ‘demagogical’, for containing ‘flagrant contradictions’, and for lacking ‘any means of realisation’. The PCF, argued Oreste Capocci, ‘continues to view the French people as a bunch of moujiks’ – after the backward serfs in pre-revolutionary Russia.47 Ministerial solidarity, moreover, seemed a concept foreign to the PCF. After his first six months as Minister of the National Economy, André Philip dubbed his dealings with the communists ‘cruel’. ‘[I]t is very difficult to govern with the communists’, he told the SFIO’s August 1946 congress, ‘because they do not bring [...] the minimum of intellectual honesty to the table’. In governmental negotiations, after all, ‘they take positions geared exclusively towards the next elections [and] put forward demagogical propositions with the sole purpose of making their colleagues reject them’. For these and other reasons,48 Philip concluded, the SFIO ‘should have the courage to state that we no longer want permanent unity of action with the communists’.49

48 He mentioned two more: the communists’ ‘instinctive’ predilection to serve the interests of the Soviet Union and their efforts to manipulate the nationalisations so as to assure ‘the domination of their party over the structure of the State itself’.
The four parties, then, attributed their (anticipated) electoral woes to widely divergent causes. The Italian and Polish socialists, on the one hand, felt they were destined to lose out in democratic elections. Having hardly known democracy and still imbued by decades of unchallenged right-wing propaganda, they argued, their impressionable electorates were always more likely to vote for ‘reactionary’ candidates backed by church and clergy than for socialists as yet unable to deliver upon socialism in material terms. The Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists, on the other, primarily blamed themselves for their poor showings in elections. Victory had been within reach, they insisted, but their parties had not been equal to their organisational task, had failed to communicate their programmes in an effective manner, and had allowed themselves to be manoeuvred by their rivals. These contrasting renditions of their difficulties at the polls were reflected in the four parties’ approaches to elections.

The PPS and the PSIUP, believing that divisive campaigning would only disorient their electorates, opted for the broadest possible party-political unity. At first, their efforts to achieve such unity extended even to the centre-right. In the face of ‘the forces and interests’ hoping ‘to nip democracy in the bud’, Nenni wrote in July 1944, ‘the most comprehensive national unity is required’. For that reason, both socialists and communists had endeavoured to ‘draw the DC into the united proletarian front’. But these efforts were to no avail. By October, Nenni was warning that ‘the distrust’ the ‘parties of the centre’ – this time mentioning the social-liberal Democratic Labour Party alongside the DC – were showing communists and socialists was ‘bringing a civil war closer’.

For the PPS, Jan Stańczyk was even more alarmist. ‘If we cannot put together a bloc of six [i.e. the projected electoral alliance between the four ‘Lublin’ parties – the PPR, the PPS, the SL, and the SD – and the two legal centre-right parties – the PSL and the SP –

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51 Pietro Nenni, ‘Non deludere il popolo’, *Avanti!*, 29 October 1944.
negotiations towards which broke down repeatedly in 1946 – JG], he admonished, ‘we risk a revolution’. For ‘if only a part of society can muster enthusiasm for us, we will definitely not be able to rely on the police to deal with the bands [the term Polish socialists used to describe the underground groups fighting the government – JG]. Because the Soviet Union ‘cannot allow that there is a revolution to the rear of its army, it will have to crush it – and then our role as government will be finished’.52

Of course, neither a civil war nor a revolution ensued after the centre-right refused to join forces with the socialist-communist bloc in Italy and Poland. Yet, the emergence of a clear political frontrunner to their right (the DC in Italy and the PSL in Poland) in the first real electoral test in both countries, only served to strengthen commitment to party unity on the left within the PPS and the PSIUP. By the time of the second test, the two parties found themselves in a united front and on a common list with the communists.

The aim of these electoral blocs was twofold. In the first place, they were to prevent the escalation of social conflicts at a time of great dangers to democracy. In this respect, Julian Hochfeld compared the challenges facing post-war Poland to those of wartime Britain. Despite the party’s resolve to press ahead forming an electoral bloc with or without the PSL, he claimed, ‘the PPS is not [...] principally in favour of electoral blocs in all circumstances and at all times’. Neither, of course, was the British Labour Party. But, in 1940, with the country under attack from Nazi Germany, that party had agreed to postpone the elections and enter government, because ‘everyone realised that, in these circumstances, it was not possible to engage in [domestic] struggles [...] to fight elections on separate lists’. Poland, insisted Hochfeld, was ‘now fighting a battle equal to, if not harder than, that fought by Britain in 1940’. For whereas ‘the whole of British society’ had been ‘democratic and disciplined’ during the war, ‘we are a society politically far less

52 ‘Protokół posiedzenia CKW PPS’ [14 May 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/2, fo. 49.
mature’. Various issues were ‘still in an explosive state’ and ‘should not be exacerbated’. Political unity and social peace, therefore, were ‘indispensable’.53

For all of their mollifying effects on burning issues, though, the ultimate raison d’être of the electoral blocs the two parties entered into remained winning elections. This was less of an issue for the Polish socialists, who were well aware that the communists would never allow the real election results to see the light of day. For the PSIUP, on the other hand, the electoral significance of unity was paramount. According to Nenni, the Popular Front represented ‘the only hope of an electoral victory, without which we would see a fatal return to the clerical reaction’. Oreste Lizzadri, the foremost socialist trade unionist in post-war Italy, agreed. ‘The division of the popular classes on various lists creates distrust and leads to defeat’, he insisted, ‘whereas unity inspires confidence and constitutes a guarantee for victory’.54

The ČSSD and the SFIO, conversely, responded to their electoral setbacks by stressing their independence from all other parties and from the communists in particular.55 The ČSSD, declared Laušman in the wake of the party’s May 1946 election defeat, had made ‘only one mistake’ in its pre-electoral tactics: ‘that we did not draw a stronger line of demarcation between ourselves and the communists’.56 The SFIO likewise felt it had to disassociate itself from the communists in the struggle for the popular vote. When the PCF called for a joint communist-socialist campaign in favour of a yes-vote at the May 1946

54 ‘Riunione Direzione’ [6 November 1947], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fase. 21, fo. 100.
55 Especially in the Czechoslovakian case, the pre-war social democratic electorate seems to have defected to the communists in huge numbers. Jiří Sláma and Karel Kaplan note that, by comparison with the last pre-war parliamentary elections in 1935, the ČSSD lost nearly half of its voters – ‘the lion’s share’ of which switched to the KSČ. In post-war France, the picture was more mixed. Disputing the contemporary view that the SFIO lost votes predominantly to the MRP in the June 1946 elections, Bruce Desmond Graham argues that the socialists seem to have lost to the PCF, the MRP, and even the Radicals in more or less equal measure. See: Jiří Sláma & Karel Kaplan, Die Parlamentswahlen in der Tschechoslowakei 1935 – 1946 – 1948, (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986), p. 62; Graham, The French Socialists and Tripartisme, p. 180.
56 ‘Volby a čs. sociální demokracie’ [1946], NA, Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Pisemnosti související s ústřední, veřejnou a politickou činností B. Laušmana, Karton 34, Souvicející činnosti v soc. dem. 1928-1948, p. 11.
constitutional referendum, Daniel Mayer immediately issued the SFIO’s provincial federations with ‘an absolute ban’ on common propaganda with the communists. Amid widespread applause for the Secretary General’s swift response within the SFIO Executive, Charles Dumas, who had just returned from the April 1946 PSIUP congress, advocated going still further. On the basis of ‘conversations with various foreign socialists’, he concluded that ‘not only we should not campaign together with the communists, but make very clear what separates them from us’.57 The next parliamentary elections seemed to vindicate that position, with the socialists having, as Depreux noted, ‘gained votes from the communists there where we have emphasised the differences between them and us’.58

There was much more than just electoral considerations, however, to the ČSSD’s and the SFIO’s antipathy towards party-political unity. The two parties very much believed that democracy was best served by the resumption of ‘normal’ party competition. To be sure, they agreed that their countries had seen too much political fragmentation during the interwar period and that the number of parties needed to be narrowed down. But if party integration was driven to the extremes seemingly desired by some of their opponents, both ČSSD and SFIO leaders warned, democracy would emerge less rather than more stable.

This was how Fierlinger defended the decision to shelve ‘the idea of one great socialist party’, comprising the pre-war communist, social democratic, and national socialist parties, that ČSSD leaders had so enthusiastically advocated in the immediate aftermath of liberation. This idea, he recounted, had been strong ‘in the days of national humiliation’ [i.e. the period after the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938-39] and ‘in the concentration camps’, where ‘[e]very Czech feared the return of the pre-war chaos and of the political disunity in which Fascism and Nazism grew strong’. In the end,

however, the arguments for a broader, four-party political spectrum, with a communist and a social democratic party to the left as well as a Catholic and a nationalist party to the centre-right, won the day in the Czech lands. Just ‘[h]ow justified this solution was’, insisted Fierlinger, became clear by comparison with the subsequent developments in Slovakia, where a ‘political simplification to two parties’ had been tried – a reference to the fact that, until early 1946, legal political activity in Slovakia was confined to the Slovak Communist Party and the centre-right nationalist and Catholic Slovak Democratic Party. In view of the negative experiences with that system, he continued, ‘we also had to introduce the four-party system in Slovakia’. But ‘as a result of the fact that the two new parties, amongst them our own, are still too weak, political life in Slovakia is still prone to superfluously heavy shocks’. ‘The system of four political parties’, then, ‘has clearly proved itself to be the better system. It remains our duty to keep it’.59

The French socialists were equally quick to question the unitary designs so popular during the first post-war years. As we have seen, they had serious reservations about communist overtures towards working-class unity. But their misgivings concerned the brand of national unity championed by General De Gaulle at least as much. The socialists took particular issue with De Gaulle’s contemptuous attitude towards political parties whilst he was still Prime Minister. ‘A true democracy’, read a letter the SFIO Executive sent De Gaulle to complain about his refusal to meet with delegations of political parties, ‘cannot live without normal and regular party competition’. No doubt, it continued, political parties ‘should be transformed, their number reduced, their methods of propaganda overhauled, and the tone of their polemics modified’ and the SFIO had ‘set the example for that effort of transformation and adaptation’. ‘But a state without political

parties – and we use the plural, [because the existence of] a single party is a sign of dictatorship just as much as the absence of parties – is no longer a democratic state’.

Parliaments

The four parties’ contrasting perspectives on the merits of democratic elections were reflected in their attitudes towards the upshot of such elections: the parliamentary balance of power. The Italian and Polish socialists, on the one hand, believing that the electoral odds were stacked heavily against their parties, viewed parliaments mostly as vehicles for bourgeois interests. The legalistic and formulaic methods of parliamentary democracy, they claimed, would never give way to socialism in backward societies like theirs. For the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the other, who held their electorates in far higher esteem, parliamentary relations were always the point of departure. If socialism was going to live up to its democratic credentials, they insisted, the impetus for it should come from elected representatives.

At the root of these widely divergent attitudes towards parliamentary democracy lay opposite attitudes towards parliamentary elections and their results. The PPS and the PSIUP, after their initial post-war euphoria wore down, considered parliamentary elections a nuisance at best, a dangerous, possibly fatal experiment at worst. As early as September 1945, just months after their government had signed up to organising ‘free and unfettered’ elections in Poland, Stańczyk warned socialist and communist leaders against showing too much dedication to ‘the form’. Hitler too, he argued, ‘has risen to power by democratic

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means and had the great majority of the nation behind him.' If not going that far, Basso was similarly scornful of parliamentary outcomes. Whilst it was crucial for the working class to exercise power commensurate with its ‘real political strength’, he insisted, “‘political [strength]’, mind you, does not necessarily equate, indeed almost never equates “parliamentary [strength]’.”

For the ČSSD and the SFIO, conversely, parliamentary outcomes very much represented the real balance of political forces. As sacred expressions of the will of the people, the two parties insisted, election results were to be respected by those in power. After the ČSSD’s drubbing in the May 1946 parliamentary elections, Laušman’s rhetoric was all about honouring the result. ‘[I]f the communists ask us whether comrade Fierlinger wants to continue as Prime Minister’, he told a ČSSD provincial conference, ‘we will answer that we do not want one dekagram more responsibility than the electorate has given us’. To be sure, he continued, Fierlinger was a far more suitable candidate for the post than communist leader Klement Gottwald, who ‘would command the confidence of the East but less so of the West’, or national socialist leader Petr Zenkl, who ‘would command the confidence of the West but less so of the East’. Yet, ‘the electorate has decided and that is how it has to be’.

The French socialists were equally adamant that election results should be abided by. When the PCF became the largest party in the November 1946 parliamentary elections, the SFIO leadership concluded that the communists should take the lead in a new government. Whatever their personal misgivings about the intentions and loyalties of the communists, therefore, most socialist leaders felt they owed it to the electorate to support

61 ‘Protokół z wspólnego posiedzenia CKW PPS i KC PPR’ [28 September 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/6, fo. 25.
62 Lelio Basso, ‘Socialismo europeo (I)’, Quarto Stato, 15 September 1946.
PCF leader Maurice Thorez in his (ultimately unsuccessful) bid to secure a parliamentary majority for his candidacy for the Prime Ministry. François Tanguy-Prigent summed up the general mood within the SFIO leadership, arguing that ‘the election results show that voters want a government presided by a communist’. As a party ‘abiding by universal suffrage and anxious to respect democracy’, consequently, ‘we must vote for a communist Prime Minister’.64

The four parties’ divisions over parliaments and parliamentarism went deeper, however, than their different takes on the election results producing parliamentary outcomes. At stake was the very notion that parliaments, irrespective of their make-up, could bring about socialist change in the first place. For the Italian and Polish socialists, parliaments were inextricably linked to bourgeois society. The two parties took particular exception to the idea, widespread also within the larger European socialist movement, that democracy found its expression in freely elected parliaments. Basso bemoaned tendencies ‘to confound democracy and parliamentarism’.65 In fact, what so many of the PSIUP’s sister parties called democracy constituted ‘nothing more than the acceptance of constitutional legalism, of bourgeois legalism, i.e. the acceptance of a democratic formalism that has nothing in common with the substance of democracy’. The truth was, he continued, that ‘society is not founded on laws: that is a fantasy of lawyers’. For laws rarely kept up with social developments. Far from ‘having created modern society’, after all, the Napoleonic Code had merely given the already victorious bourgeoisie its legal outlet.66 Just as bourgeois parliamentary democracy had not been achieved by adhering to the laws of feudal society, proletarian popular democracy would never be achieved by

66 Lelio Basso, ‘Sul socialismo europeo’ [1948], Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso Isocco, Rome [hereafter FLB], Fondo Lelio Basso, Serie 15, Fasc. 6, pp. 24-25.
adhering to the laws of bourgeois society. For ‘every time that that democracy has made a 
stride ahead in history, it has been forced to turn its back on the law’. 67

If Basso made the theoretical case against parliamentary democracy, Wachowicz 
was more concrete. In his view, bourgeois parliamentary democracy only served to 
perpetuate social inequalities. In the United Kingdom, for example, ‘the worker and the 
Lord [...] notionally have the same right to vote [but], in reality, the Lord is in power – in 
other words, he who has money is in power’. Of course, in a parliamentary democracy, 
‘the working class can organise itself [and] elect its leaders in parliament, but modern 
history knows no examples of the working class succeeding in forming a government’. The 
Danish and Swedish social democrats who had been in government before and during the 
war, after all, ‘only gave [the government] their name, [whilst] failing to implement any 
reforms bringing their countries closer to a democratic system’. In fact, Wachowicz went 
on, ‘democracy must fade away in a revolutionary period’. For when ‘entering into class 
struggle, there is no longer question of democracy, only of class victories’. 68

Not all PPS and PSIUP leaders shared these principal objections against 
parliamentary democracy. In fact, there were many within both party leaderships arguing 
that a parliamentary road to socialism, whilst not an option in their countries, was perfectly 
viable in places like Great Britain and Scandinavia. Such leaders insisted there was no one 
precept for arriving at socialism – it was the social fabric and national history of a given 
country that determined which path to socialism it should take. It was ‘pointless’ to ask, 
argued Nenni, whether socialism would be achieved ‘by the methods of Lenin or 
Beveridge’. For reformist or revolutionary trajectories to socialism were ‘results not

URL: http://www.leliobasso.it/documento.aspx?id=e90b9808d8c6a2983ecd806716ca5f31 (last consulted: 22 
March 2015).
causes: a certain type of society produces a certain type of struggle’. Welcoming the foreign delegates to the December 1947 congress of the PPS, Stanislaw Szwalbe expressed similar sentiments. After emphasising that Poland’s economic programme was ‘a socialist programme’, he expressed the hope that ‘the dealings of our congress [and] the visit to our country will convince you that the PPS has chosen a proper socialist path – corresponding to the conditions of our country and the needs of our working class’.  

In this respect, Italian and Polish socialists frequently distinguished between two roads to socialism – one where socialism could be the end result of reforms enacted by parliaments and one where the economic bases of socialism had to be laid by extra-parliamentary means. Basso contrasted the feasibility of parliamentary trajectories to socialism in various regions. In the Scandinavian countries, he explained, ‘a democratic tradition has taken root, the proletariat has long since achieved a relatively high standard of living and, through this economic elevation, [it] has acquired political maturity’. In these circumstances, parliamentary democracy was ‘doubtless still the most effective method of socialist action’. The Eastern European countries, conversely, were ‘almost all underdeveloped industrially, with a numerically scarce and profoundly immature middle class, and with a vast mass of ignorant and often illiterate peasants’. Sticking ‘purely and simply to parliamentary methods’ in such circumstances ‘would mean keeping the old plutocratic classes in power indefinitely, would mean postponing for centuries not only the realisation of socialism but even the mere elevation of the material and moral living conditions of the proletariat’.  

Drawing on his experiences in the London wartime emigration, PPS Under-Secretary for Shipping and International Trade Ludwik Grosfeld similarly identified two  

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71 Lelio Basso, ‘Socialismo europeo (1)’, Quarto Stato, 15 September 1946.  
distinct roads to socialism. Especially during the war, he recalled, ‘very reformist [and] very right-wing convictions prevailed amongst socialists in the West’, who refused to recognise that the road the Soviet Union had taken since the October Revolution was ‘irrevocable’. Yet, the PPS had ‘to realise that the Western road to socialism, although it is completely different [and] arises under different circumstances, is equally irrevocable’. There were thus ‘two different systems and two different methods of socialism, which have grown out of different economic conditions’. For all of its ‘hidden games’ [probably a reference to Labour’s initial hovering between the London PPS and the Lublin PPS – JG], therefore, ‘we must declare [...] that the British Labour Party is a socialist party, which seeks to achieve socialism by its methods’.  

What increasingly angered both the PPS and the PSIUP, however, was that the respect they showed for the (North-) Western parliamentary road to socialism was far from mutual. During the May 1946 International Socialist Conference in the English resort of Clacton-on-Sea, Cyrankiewicz set out to ‘underline the difference between our methods of struggle and those used in the West’. Yet, the reception was mostly hostile. ‘[P]ersonal attacks’ had appeared ‘even in the left-wing Tribune’, whereas ‘the tone of the accounts’ of some sister parties bore witness to feelings of ‘superiority’.  

On the second day of his party’s April 1946 congress, PSIUP parliamentarian and Central Committee member Lucio Mario Luzzato likewise remonstrated against the notion that there were no other pathways to socialism than ‘the road of the ballot paper’. To be sure, he conceded, the Italian socialists were currently committed to the maintenance of ‘democratic legality’ (more on the reasons for that in the Constitutions sub-chapter). But that did not mean, as ‘a foreign representative’ had claimed the previous day, that ‘the

72 Rada Naczelna [31 March 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2032/1, 235/II/6, fo.32.
73 ‘Protokół posiedzenia CKW PPS’ [14 June 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/2, fo. 58. Indeed, Anita Prazmowska has pointed out that, as ‘European political life became polarised by the Cold War, the Polish Socialists felt both abandoned and misunderstood by their West European counterparts’. Prazmowska, ‘The Polish Socialist Party’, p. 352.
function of a socialist party is as it is’ – that it stopped at the defence of parliamentary democracy. For ‘the fundamentals of democracy’ were not merely ‘formal’ or ‘negative’, ‘only renunciatory in the sense that we affirm that we would in no situation deviate from the democratic path. No. You know that it is not like that, because all of you who want democracy know that tomorrow, where that is necessary, we would resort to any means the reaction forces upon us to defend socialism and the rights of workers’. 74

For the ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other hand, there was an indissoluble link between socialism and parliamentary democracy. Right from the outset, then, the two parties directed their efforts towards a rapid return to parliamentary normality. They were strong supporters of the provisional parliaments, set up in both countries pending the first parliamentary elections, as counterweights to almighty provisional governments. According to Vincent Auriol, the French Consultative Assembly provided ‘a solution’ for socialist grievances about the rightward thrust of the first De Gaulle government. Warning that withdrawing support from the government in an ‘anti-constitutional’ regime would not make De Gaulle go, he called on socialist delegates to the Consultative Assembly to instead be ‘assiduous’ and use their budget-setting powers to weigh upon the government in questions like subsidies for faith schools.75 Fierlinger too argued that the creation of the Czechoslovakian Provisional National Assembly had been ‘a step in the right direction’. For even if its unelected status meant it did not yet ‘give full expression to the real principle of parliamentary democracy’, it had given ‘the people [...] a wider representation’ whilst maintaining ‘the peace necessary for the further successful reconstruction of the State’. 76

As the provisional chambers made way for properly elected parliaments, the ČSSD’s and the SFIO’s commitment to parliamentarism only grew stronger. The two parties were adamant that, as far as they were concerned, parliament was now both the foremost arena for and the ultimate arbiter of national decision-making. They placed great emphasis, therefore, on their parliamentary fractions being able to operate free from outside constraints. This was the main reason the French socialists put forward to quit the ‘Delegation of the Left’ – bringing together the PCF, the SFIO, the Radicals, the Human Rights League, and the CGT to bolster the Left’s position within the first De Gaulle government – almost immediately after the November 1945 legislative elections. At the first post-election meeting of the Delegation, where a CGT proposal to give the Delegation a permanent character won the approval from all but the socialists, Mayer made it quite clear that there was now a higher authority for the SFIO to answer to. As ‘the sovereignty of the [Constituent] Assembly has to come to full bloom’, he declared, ‘we must not give the public the impression that it is outside of Parliament that decisions are being taken’. The socialists, then, would not ‘be bound upon the parliamentary level’. For it was ‘incumbent upon the elected Constituent Assembly and the government formed by the national representation’, read the letter with which the SFIO broke definitively with the Delegation, ‘to take responsibility for the conduct of public affairs’.77

The ČSSD similarly berated other parties for disregarding their parliamentary duties. Just like those of its provisional predecessor, lamented the ČSSD’s 1946 year report, the proceedings of the elected Constituent Assembly were initially dictated by the needs of the government. A whole range of parliamentary committees was ‘content to rubber stamp [...] governmental bills’, whilst deputies failed to ‘fulfil one of their most important tasks: that of controlling the state economy and public administration’. For that

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reason, the ČSSD decided to ‘take the initiative’ and ‘struggle for the improvement of parliamentary praxis’.

A first opportunity to do that presented itself when the newly-formed Gottwald government reserved the right to draft a new constitution for itself. In the parliamentary debate on the governmental programme, Oldřich John, the vice-chairman of the ČSSD’s parliamentary group, immediately protested that ‘we cannot agree that the new constitution will be drafted by the government, i.e. for the government by the [communist-dominated – JG] Ministry of the Interior – the entire business of drawing up a new constitution should instead take place on the parliamentary floor’. At first, the ČSSD’s vigour seemed to falter upon parliamentary inertia once more, as the social democrats found themselves isolated and outvoted within the parliamentary sub-committee on constitutional affairs. But when the ČSSD threatened to take matters to a head and bring forward a motion withdrawing support from the constitutional paragraph of the governmental programme, the other parties caved. Before long, the government yielded as well, agreeing that ‘drawing up a new constitution’ was ‘a matter for parliament’. It was the ČSSD’s perseverance on this particular question, insisted the party’s 1946 year report that formed the catalyst for the subsequent ‘breakthrough’ in parliamentary assertiveness. For ‘if we can affirm today that we were able to eliminate most of our parliament’s shortcomings – it now has its own rules of procedure, [its own] economic and audit commissions, [it] energetically summons ministers to provide an account of their activities, and [it] has passed a series of private members’ bills – the credits for that should go to our parliamentary group’.78

Much as the ČSSD and the SFIO prided themselves on having bolstered parliament’s standing, however, that standing was quick to come under renewed pressure. In the face of the socio-political polarisation that accompanied the drifting apart of the

post-war coalitions, after all, the two parties’ rivals increasingly took contentious issues to the streets.

In France, such extra-parliamentary pressure initially emanated chiefly from the movement around General De Gaulle. The bombshells repeatedly dropped by De Gaulle, often in the form of large public conventions, sparked fierce debate within the SFIO Executive. There were leaders on the left of the party – most notably Léon Boutbien (who, ironically, ended up in the Central Committee of the Gaullist Rally for the Republic in the 1970s) – pleading for the extra-parliamentary challenge posed by De Gaulle to be met and for the Left to start organising counter-rallies. The large majority of the SFIO leadership, however, wanted the party to steer clear from street politics. It would be ‘a mistake’, Philip told Boutbien after the launch of the RPF, to combat De Gaulle ‘on the terrain chosen by him’.79 Roger Priou-Valjean went further. He warned that it was dangerous for socialists to claim, as Boutbien had done, that ‘we should operate on the level of the “nation”’ rather than on that of ‘the government’. For exactly those types of arguments had been used before the war by the counter-revolutionary opponents of the Republic, who distinguished between ‘le pays réel’ and ‘le pays légal’ – that is, the notion at the heart of the ideology of the far right Action Française movement that the democratic institutions of the Third Republic had somehow been imposed on the ‘real’ France. It was ‘on the parliamentary level’, Priou-Valjean concluded, that the SFIO should ‘fight its battles’.80

The socialist commitment to parliamentarism was re-affirmed in the face of that other extra-parliamentary challenge confronting France in 1947: that of the increasingly communist-led strike movement. As the strikes lost their wildcat character and began looking more and more like a concerted attempt to destabilise the government, the socialist

attitude towards strikers changed too. When Auriol called for discipline in May 1947, he was no longer referring to discipline as a productivist mantra. ‘Discipline’, he declared, ‘is above all respect for the law; the law, having been voted in by an Assembly elected by universal suffrage, is the expression of popular sovereignty’. ‘Make no mistake’, he continued, ‘the day that this or that professional or social group purports to defend its interests, however justified these may be, by resorting to agitations or violence, they not only neglect the national interest but they threaten to plunge the country in disorder and anarchy’. By taking the law into their own hands, after all, these groups were undercutting the authority of the democratic institutions the SFIO leadership so cherished. ‘In our democratic regime’, Auriol concluded, ‘it is for the representatives of the nation to give echo to such claims, and it is government and parliament who, having heard all parties [and] having been presented with all arguments, are entitled to decide which measures should be taken in the national interest, and only in the national interest’.81

The ČSSD’s dedication to due parliamentary process was no less strong. This became very clear in the conflict between communist Minister of Agriculture Július Ďuriš and the Czechoslovakian National Assembly in early 1947. At stake were Ďuriš’ attempts to bypass parliament in the enactment of six controversial bills devised by his Ministry. Even before the bills could be discussed in government or parliament, the Ministry of Agriculture had extracts of them distributed amongst peasants. After that, the communist party machine went in overdrive. First, mass meetings were organised across the Czechoslovakian countryside, where peasants – who, according to the social democrats, ‘barely knew’ what was in the bills – ‘pre-approved’ the proposals. This, in turn, was followed by a ‘full-blown campaign’ for parliament to pass the bills without amendments.

‘To such manipulations of parliament’, insisted the ČSSD’s 1947 year report, ‘we could obviously not acquiesce’. Even though the social democrats by and large took a favourable view of Žuriš’ bills, therefore, they sided with the centre-right to pass a parliamentary resolution condemning the conduct of the minister.82

For both the ČSSD and the SFIO, then, the defence of parliamentarism was very much a matter of principle. The only way for socialism to retain its democratic character, insisted the two parties, was to adhere to the legal and procedural rules of parliamentary democracy. With the national and international menace to parliamentary democracy mounting over 1947, therefore, the maintenance of parliamentary authority increasingly became a life-or-death issue for both parties. In a world ‘heading towards conflict and mutual division’ once more, Fierlinger told the November 1947 congress of the ČSSD, ‘[s]ocial democracy, aspiring to achieve socialism by democratic means, always had to look for [...] the right remedy’.83 That remedy consisted of finding ‘socialist solutions, [that are] economically and politically viable’, whilst being ‘a driving force behind the legislative activities of parliament, the significance of which we have always pointed out and emphasised’. At the height of the communist and Gaullist challenges to parliamentary democracy in France, Paul Ramadier likewise banged the drum for parliament. For all the justified criticisms that could be levelled at the government, he implored on the December 1947 National Council of the SFIO, this was not a time for parliamentary deadlock. ‘[A]t the present moment’, he declared, ‘we must [...] show that the parliamentary regime is capable of governing France.84

Constitutions

The first task for the freshly elected parliaments in each of the four countries was to draw up a new constitution. All four parties were strong supporters of the constitutional projects that reached their (intermediate) conclusions in 1946 (France), 1947 (Poland), and 1948 (Italy and Czechoslovakia) respectively. That did not mean, however, that they took similar attitudes towards constitutions and constitutionalism. For the Italian and Polish socialists, on the one hand, the adoption of a democratic constitution was a step in the right direction but by no means the end point in the political struggle for socialism. If required, they insisted, the legal boundaries of constitutionalism could and should be overstepped in that continuing struggle. For the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the other, the rights and freedoms enshrined in their constitutions (both in their pre-war and post-war versions) were sacrosanct. To violate these constitutional principles, they argued, would open the door for tyranny rather than for socialism.

Much of this went back to the debate that had divided the socialist movement ever since the late nineteenth century: whether socialism could be achieved by piecemeal reforms within the context of bourgeois democracy or whether it could only be the result of a proletarian revolution outside of existing legality. The ČSSD boasted that it had been one of the first European parties to resolve this debate. Already at its 1887 congress in Brno, explained Laušman, the party had ‘settled’ this issue in favour of those pleading for a democratic road to socialism. This line was confirmed at the subsequent Hainfeld congress (1888-1889) of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, which committed social democracy across the Austro-Hungarian Empire to electoral and parliamentary politics. ‘And the result’, concluded Laušman, ‘was that, only shortly after that, social democracy achieved a
tremendous success: that, within ten years, we made the famous breakthrough of [...] introducing the so-called fifth curia [which gave suffrage to all men over the age of 24], through which we immediately got five Czech social democrats elected to the Viennese Imperial Council.\(^8\)

Within French socialism, the polemics between revolutionaries and reformists were rather more protracted. The compromise upon which the SFIO had been founded in 1905 – between the *guesdistes* rejecting any form of cooperation with bourgeois society and the *jauresisstes* embracing republicanism and reform as the road to socialism – remained fragile and kept the party out of government for most of the interwar period. Yet, the experiences of the 1930s and early 1940s – the February 1934 crisis, the Popular Front government, and the Vichy regime – shifted the balance in favour of working within the framework of bourgeois democracy. Even if official party rhetoric remained revolutionary, the post-war SFIO was firmly committed to upholding the democratic institutions of bourgeois France. Defending his new draft of the party’s declaration of principles (which e.g. included replacing the principle of ‘class struggle’ with the more conciliatory notion of ‘class action’) before the August 1945 congress of the SFIO, Léon Blum stressed just how crucial political democracy was to socialism. ‘All of us know now’, he insisted, ‘that there is an indissoluble link between socialism and democracy; that, without socialism, democracy is imperfect, but, without democracy, socialism is powerless’. That, he declared, was ‘a truth written in blood’.

It is a measure of how far the French and the Italian socialists had already drifted apart by this early stage that Nenni returned ‘bewildered’ from the same SFIO congress. If something as fundamental as changing the party’s declaration of principles had been proposed ‘in the times of [Pierre] Renaudel [one of the foremost advocates of

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governmental participation in the pre-war and interwar SFIO] or [...] [Jean] Jaurès’, he told the PSIUP leadership, ‘it would [have been] debated for five days and five months and every word would [have been] subjected to the most thorough scrutiny’. This time, however, it appeared ‘as if nobody cared’, which had ‘very much impressed’ Nenni ‘as a sign of the party detaching itself from socialist doctrine and turning its back on the interests of the working class’.86 For the Italian socialists, after all, reaching out to bourgeois society amounted to a vote of no confidence in the revolutionary tendencies within the working class. This is how Basso denounced both those socialists ‘viewing Italian politics only in terms of party competition’ and ‘the heirs and followers of old reformism’. What united them, he insisted, was their ‘distrust in the working class’ and their lack of belief in ‘the revolutionary possibility inherent in class politics’.87

The post-war PPS was equally dismissive of attempts to reform bourgeois society from within. Far from this ‘criticism of reformism’ having been imposed by the communists, argued Hochfeld, it was ‘part of [the] good traditions’ of Polish socialism. For, already before the war, such leftist party leaders as Cyrankiewicz, Oskar Lange (the world-renowned socialist economist, who became the Polish ambassador at the United Nations after the war) and Bolesław Drobner (the first Polish mayor of Wrocław and deputy to the Sejm, 1944-68) had raised much the same concerns about reformism as ‘we express today […] about Blum and his tactics [as well as] about [Ernest] Bevin [Labour Britain’s Foreign Secretary, 1945-51 – and a much-despised figure amongst left-wing socialists] and his tactics’.

Those leftists pleading for a more revolutionary politics do indeed seem to have been in the ascendancy within the PPS well before the communists cemented their dominant position in the aftermath of the Second World War. As the

86 ‘Seduta pomeridiana’ [18 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, pp. 5-6.
88 XXVII Kongres [December 1947], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/3, 235/1-25, fo. 218.
Sanacja regime grew more repressive in the 1930s, after all, the PPS leadership had increasingly taken its lead from the revolutionary socialism espoused by leading Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer.\textsuperscript{89} Bauer’s claim that the proletariat could, in the face of a reactionary threat, justifiably resort to a temporal dictatorship struck a particular chord and was co-opted in the 1937 Radom Programme of the PPS.\textsuperscript{90}

It was this issue – the use of dictatorial methods in the struggle for socialism – that sparked some of the fiercest debates within the post-war international socialist movement and ultimately saw the PSIUP ostracised from mainstream Western European social democracy along with the browbeaten Eastern European parties. For the Italian and Polish socialists, a proletarian dictatorship, whilst not an end in itself could constitute a political necessity in countries like theirs. The PPS was definitely the more extreme case in this respect, as it overtly defended the repressive and violent methods the Lublin government used against political opponents. In an open letter to the Labour Party – a response to a Tribune article castigating the ‘pro-Communist leadership of the [Polish] Socialist Party’ for, amongst many other things, ‘making a farce of the promise of free and democratic elections’\textsuperscript{91} – Hochfeld insisted that Poland and the United Kingdom were facing altogether different political challenges. If the Tories had won the 1945 general election, he argued, Labour would have only had to wait for five years to get another shot at power. ‘Not so for us’, it continued. ‘We are certain that, if we were to lose power, we would have to retake it not from conservatives, but from fascists; and not at the ballot box, but in an armed struggle’.\textsuperscript{92}

That meant, at least in the short term, that communists and socialists had to be guaranteed a commanding position in government irrespective of their true electoral

\textsuperscript{89} Bäcker, Problematyka państwa, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{90} Heumos (ed.), Europäischer Sozialismus, p. 140f.
\textsuperscript{91} ‘Retreat from Potsdam’, Tribune, 1 March 1946.
\textsuperscript{92} Julian Hochfeld, ‘List do towarysza z Labour Party’, Przegląd Socjalistyczny, 1 April 1946, pp. 3-8.
strength. The Polish socialists were well aware that this involved reverting to methods – including the falsification of election results, political persecutions, and an excessive reliance on the use of force – that, as the party leadership put it somewhat euphemistically, ‘are not entirely compatible with elements of our traditions’.93 Yet, these same democratic traditions, suggested the party programme that was put before the August 1945 congress of the PPS, had let down Polish socialism in the past. ‘At the current historical moment’, it proclaimed, ‘the Polish Socialist Party should concentrate its efforts in the first place on the problem of holding on to government’. That meant that the ‘misguided principles of democracy’ held by those socialists wanting to show ‘far-reaching tolerance to political opponents’ were to be ‘revised’. For the ‘fascist centres’ that had existed in pre-war Poland were not about to resign themselves to the new order and would ‘not shy away from deception, sabotage, and assassinations’.94 In these circumstances, insisted chairman of the programme commission Feliks Mantel, the PPS ‘cannot forsake the use of force, which at the present moment could prove crucial for the victory of socialism’.95

More recent scholarship has suggested, however, that the Polish socialists were never truly at ease with the blatant violations of constitutionalism on the part of the communists and the (communist-dominated) security services. These accounts stress socialist efforts, especially after the January 1947 elections, to restore civil liberties and the rule of law through the so-called Little Constitution – adopted in February 1947 as a temporary replacement for the ‘fascist’ 1935 Sanacja Constitution; a full new constitution was only enacted in 1952.96 Whilst such accounts are certainly helpful in debunking the old myth that the Lublin PPS consisted exclusively of communist stooges, they seem to overstate the extent of ‘socialist humanism’. Hochfeld, for one, was at great pains to draw

93 XXVII Kongres [December 1947], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/3, 235/I-25, fo. 220.
94 ‘Projekt Uchwała Programowa’ [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/I-7, fo. 12.
95 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/I-12, fo. 254.
a clear distinction between his ‘Marxist’ humanism and the ‘revisionist’ humanism he attributed to Blum – insisting that ‘the jump from the state of necessity [the proletarian dictatorship – JG] to the state of freedom’ was ‘by no means simple’. 97 And for all of their demands that the PPS should exert more influence over the running of the security services, socialist leaders strongly supported the principle of reverting to violence against the ‘reactionary’ opponents of popular democracy. 98

Perhaps Edward Osóbka-Morawski summed up the PPS attitude towards constitutionalism best when he argued that ‘integral democracy is not yet possible in Poland’. ‘We have some twenty years of Sanacja rule, of captivity, [and] of massive clerical involvement in a reactionary regime behind us’, he declared, ‘that is not a balance of power conducive to integral democracy’. The new government, therefore, needed some time to level the playing field. If it had ‘offended the democratic conscience and socialist morality’ in doing so, concluded Osobka, ‘that is transitory […]. Five years should suffice to level the chances of the reactionary and democratic camps – so that we will not have to offend the democratic conscience by the time of the next election’. 99

The post-war PSIUP leadership, conversely, was always extremely careful to operate within the margins of constitutionalism. In fact, it often used very legalistic and constitutionalist arguments to defend the governmental coalition with bourgeois parties. Nenni drew on such arguments to respond to his critics on ‘the self-proclaimed left’ of the PSIUP – i.e. those socialists who, yearning for their party to take a much more combative stance on such issues as the disempowerment of the liberation committees, were urging an

98 Roman Bäcker notes that the post-war PPS leadership was united in viewing ‘parliamentary democracy [...] as redundant or even harmful for Poland, which needed a strong government to achieve a similar civilisational transformation as had been achieved by Cromwell, the French Revolution, Lenin, and Stalin’. The terror that had followed the French Revolution, he goes on, served both as a model and as a justification for socialist leaders – with ‘the Jacobin guillotine’ becoming ‘a symbol [...] for the absolution of the terror committed by the Ministry for Public Security’. Bäcker, Problematyka państwa, pp. 97-98.
99 ‘Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z obrad Rady Naczelnjej PPS’ [4 December 1946], AAN, Akta Stanisława Szwalbego, Box 13.
exit from the government. ‘If we allow ourselves to be removed from power today’, Nenni
told the PSIUP’s Central Committee in October 1945, ‘the perspective of a Constituent
Assembly as a legalistic solution will disappear’. A new right-wing government, after all,
would surely repudiate the commitments entered into by the coalition government:
‘discussions about the date [for elections to] and the content of a Constituent Assembly
would be kicked into the long grass and we would be heading towards a plebiscite [on the
monarchy] that would be formulated in such a way as to deliver a pre-determined
answer’. 100

Three months later, Nenni painted an even more alarmist picture of what would
have happened had he heeded the advice of his leftist critics. ‘If we had abandoned
government’, he insisted, ‘the country would find itself in a truly dramatic situation’. For
‘in Southern Italy, the communist and socialist workers’ movement would already have
been outlawed, we would already have seen exiles arriving here [in Rome], and we would
have been mourning the victims of a civil war – which, with the Allies in the country, we
would have lost before it even began’. 101

In this respect, there were repeated allusions to ‘the Greek scenario’ – where the
Left had walked out of a government of national unity in 1944, only to find itself facing
not only the domestic Right but also the Western Allies in an unwinnable civil war. Time
and again, PSIUP leaders reminded their party that ‘the Greek scenario’ was one to avoid
at any price. Should the PSIUP embark on the same ‘adventures’ as the Greek Left,
admonished Nenni, ‘we would sacrifice the lives of our best comrades and, worse still, the
possibility of making democracy succeed’. 102 Such views were echoed even by those who
had been active within the revolutionary liberation committees. Nino Gaeta, who used to

100 ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, p. 18.
8.
102 ‘Seduta pomeridiana’ [18 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, p 13.
be the socialist vice-chairman of the Napoli liberation committee, warned the April 1946 PSIUP congress that ‘breaking national unity’ would leave Italy in an even more terrible position than Greece. For while Greece had at least been an Allied country during the war, Italy was bound by the conditions of its armistice with those same Allies. By practicing ‘a different politics than that of national unity’ and ‘adopting sectarian and factitious positions’, therefore, ‘we would ruin Italy forever’.  

When the DC finally undid the national unity government in May 1947, such fears only intensified. Speaking at one of the first meetings of the PSIUP Directorate after the communists and socialists had been removed from government, Nenni agonised over the prospect of opposition. ‘The state apparatus is right-wing’, he declared. Thus far, the Left had been able to ‘frustrate’ this apparatus ‘by our presence in government. But in what kind of situation will we find ourselves after a couple of months of opposition?’  

With left-right polarisation mounting across the continent over the months that followed and neighbouring France increasingly finding itself in an insurrectionary state, the situation did indeed seem to deteriorate steadily. By November, Luigi Cacciatore was expressing fears of worker agitations getting out of hand in Italy too. ‘There is a danger’, he argued, ‘of sliding to a situation of the French type, thereafter to a situation of the Greek type’. In these circumstances, it was incumbent upon the socialists ‘to rebuild the foundations, which are currently diluted, for a democratic development of political life in Italy’.  

Yet, the PSIUP’s commitment to constitutionalism always seemed to be motivated more by expediency than principle. In view of their country’s geo-political position within the Western bloc, reasoned Italian socialists, adhering to the rulebook of bourgeois

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104 ‘Riunione Direzione’ [16 June 1947], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 21, fo. 34.  
105 ‘Riunione Direzione’ [19 November 1947], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 21, fo. 110.
democracy offered far better hopes of survival than engaging in violent struggle with the bourgeoisie. That did not mean, however, that they were opposed to the use of force by communist and socialist parties if and when they were in a more ‘favourable’ position to do so. As other Western European socialists and social democrats began asking more and more questions of the methods used in the ‘popular’ democracies in Eastern Europe, then, PSIUP leaders stubbornly kept praising ‘the great efforts at renewal to which, after Russia, the countries of Eastern Europe have been subjected’ – culminating in the congratulatory telegram it sent Fierlinger in the wake of the Prague Coup.106

For unlike its Western European and, as we will see, Czechoslovakian counterparts, the post-war PSIUP refused to draw an absolute distinction between democratic and dictatorial trajectories to socialism. Whether a country arrived at socialism by democratic and peaceful means or by dictatorship and violence, Basso explained, depended on how far into the revolutionary process the proletariat took power. If it did so at the very start of a revolution, as in the Russian Revolution, there was bound to be a transitory period of repression and violence. But if the proletariat only rose to power towards the end of a revolutionary cycle, with the disintegrating old regime practically handing over power, democratic rules could be observed. It followed that ‘the differences between democracy and dictatorship are formal rather than substantial’. They were ‘different methods of struggle’ to be sure, ‘but the application of one over another does not depend on the free choice of individuals’. Instead, it was ‘the historical situation in which a revolution develops, that is the balance of power between the classes at the moment of a take-over [of political power – JG], that determines which method of struggle the proletariat should adopt’.107

106 [12 December 1947], FN, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 47, Fasc. 2033, fo. 220.
The ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other hand, were adamant that there was a clear-cut choice between democracy and dictatorship and that true socialists should always opt for the former. Right from the outset, the two parties made it quite clear that, as far as they were concerned, there was only one road to socialism. Speaking at his party’s first post-war congress, ČSSD Secretary General Blažej Vilím vowed that ‘Czechoslovakian social democracy is and remains the party, which will always pursue a democratic road to realise its ideals and construct a socialist state’. The seven-year struggle against Nazi terror, he argued, ‘has convinced us of the meaning of political freedom and the value of personal freedom’.108 Vilím’s French counterpart, Daniel Mayer, addressed the SFIO’s first post-war congress in remarkably similar terms. ‘We should be a veritable “social democracy”’, he declared, ‘i.e. those who create socialism without losing for a moment the sense of freedom and democracy; [...] bringing together at the same time ardent revolutionaries, partisans of profound social and economic transformations, and passionate republicans, enamoured by the liberty [...] of which we only know the price once we have lost it’.109

It was not only their wartime experiences of violent repression and dictatorship, however, that account for the ČSSD’s and the SFIO’s commitment towards a democratic road to socialism. In defence of their constitutional approach, they pointed at least as much to the degenerations of the dictatorial road to socialism, embarked on by the interwar Soviet Union. The French socialists were the more outspoken critics of Bolshevism.110 According to Mayer, the Soviet experience proved that structural socio-economic reforms,

110 Even when the PCF was still part of the government, the perversions of Bolshevism and the Soviet system were a constant feature within anti-communist SFIO propaganda. That only intensified when the communists were no longer a coalition partner. See e.g.: ‘Le Parti Socialiste et la défense des libertés’, Arguments et Ripostes, Bulletin Intérieur du Parti Socialiste (S.F.I.O.), 15 October 1946, OURS; ‘Théorie et pratique de la conception bolcheviste du syndicalisme’, Fiches Socialistes: Arguments et Ripostes, December 1947.
seen as the starting point for democratic renewal by the Italian and Polish socialists, did not by themselves suffice to liberate man from oppression. To be sure, such reforms as nationalisations or the empowerment of factory councils gave freedom ‘its full significance, its full meaning’. But ‘[w]e know now that economic transformations are not the essential condition [for freedom] and, in any case, do not exactly lead to freedom, because there is no freedom in Soviet Russia’. Dumas denounced the Soviet road to socialism in still stronger terms. ‘We want to create socialism in freedom’, he argued, ‘and we cannot say that Soviet Russia is the traditional country of socialism’. For ‘the dictatorship that was installed there more than twenty years ago is not the necessary and temporary dictatorship described by Karl Marx, but the dictatorship of a new aristocracy’.

The Czechoslovakian social democrats, possibly in view of the huge popularity that the Soviet Union had garnered in Czechoslovakia by first rejecting the Munich diktat and subsequently liberating the country from Nazi rule, practiced more restraint in their criticisms of the Soviet model. They did very much insist, however, that this model was not applicable in post-war Czechoslovakia. Even those on the pro-communist left of the ČSSD agreed that the ‘Czechoslovakian road to socialism’ had to be a democratic one. Speaking to workers in Plzeň, Fierlinger explained that ‘we want to secure our revolution not by a bloody civil war, but by the democratically expressed will of the entire nation’. In doing so, he argued, ‘we will avoid superfluous bloodshed, domestic conflicts, and unnecessary economic losses’. Evžen Erban similarly stressed how, in post-war Czechoslovakia, ‘a new social order’ was being built ‘with retention of the traditional

forms of political democracy’. In this respect, he declared, the Czechoslovakian revolution had much more in common with the medieval Hussite ‘revolution’ than with the Russian Revolution of 1917. The methods used during the October Revolution, after all, were ‘specifically Russian’ and could not be exported to ‘a state of developed industrial capitalism and parliamentary democracy’ like interwar Czechoslovakia.\footnote{Projev posl. Evžena Erbana, generálního tajemníka Ústřední rady odborů, na II. krajské všeodborové konferenci KOR v Plzni’ [15 June 1947], VA, Krajské Odborové Rady 1945-1960, Karton 1, Inv. j. 16 – KOR Plzeň 1947.}

The notion of nationally specific trajectories to socialism was of course very much part of Soviet discourse during the first post-war years and was actively propagated by communist parties eager to showcase their democratic credentials. Yet, the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists were quick to question the sincerity of the communists’ apparent new commitment to the rule of law. Already at the August 1945 SFIO congress, Philip pointed out that communists and socialists had an altogether different approach to practicing politics. For the communists, he explained, the conquest of power justified the use of any tactical means, regardless of their ‘moral value’ or their ‘intellectual contradictions’. The socialists, on the other hand, placed themselves within a democratic regime, ‘knowing full well that the proper functioning of that regime presupposes [the observance of] a number of moral rules, a number of just rules that are accepted by all democrats’.\footnote{Parti Socialiste – SFIO: 37ème Congrès national des 11, 12, 13, 14 et 15 août 1945’, FJJ, p. 296. URL: http://flipbook.archives-socialistes.fr/index.html?docid=50026&language=fra&userid=0 (last consulted: 22 March 2015).} Speaking in name of the SFIO’s Northern Federation at the party’s August 1946 congress, Eugène Thomas – the socialist Minister for the Postal Service in sixteen different post-war governments – was more blunt. Even though communists and socialists both used such slogans as ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, he declared, ‘we do not have the same definitions of those concepts’. For ‘we all know that the communist party is essentially an anti-democratic party [...] [and] [w]e also know very
well that, if the communists were to rise to power in our country, that would mean the end of freedom, would mean concentration camps, exile, [or] death for us’.”

Such assessments of communist intentions were inspired in no small part by reports about the situation in Eastern Europe. Even if early post-war Czechoslovakia was by far the most democratically governed country in Soviet-dominated Europe, its social democrats too increasingly complained about communist violations of constitutional processes. Over the course of 1947, the ČSSD became more and more anxious over the (communist-dominated) security services’ ever-tightening grip on public life. The party vehemently protested when the (communist-led) Ministry of the Interior tried to use a law dating back to the Austro-Hungarian period to enforce police presence at all public meetings and managed to get the police banned from meetings in all provinces where the communists were lacking a majority. In spite of such local successes, however, there was no halting the forward march of dictatorship. When the communists began calling for a wholesale purge of the security services after the ‘uncovering’ of an ‘anti-state conspiracy’ in Slovakia in September 1947, the ČSSD once again insisted that the rule of law was observed. Although the social democrats were in favour of removing all ‘reactionaries and anti-democrats’ from public life, Laušman insisted, ‘this purge has to take place within the legal framework of the state’. In questions like these, after all, ‘only the relevant laws of the republic can decide – we will fight any ulterior motives together with all true democrats’.

But such protestations were to no avail. During an October 1947 meeting of the ČSSD’s parliamentary group, deputies raised alarm over recent communist activities. Ivan Frlička – the chairman of the ČSSD’s Slovak wing – noted that ‘everything that is currently happening in Slovakia is being driven by the KSČ’. The communists, he warned, were trying ‘to break the [Slovak] Democratic Party after the Hungarian model’ – i.e. through the use of piecemeal ‘salami tactics’, by which the non-communist politicians and parties were eliminated one by one. What was worse, Miroslav Sédłak – one of the many social democratic parliamentarians who would go on to support Laušman in the November 1947 party leadership election – claimed to have obtained confidential KSČ instructions outlining how the communist domination of the trade union movement could be used to erode social democracy from within.\footnote{‘Schůze klubu poslanců’ [1 October 1947], NA, Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Pisemnosti související s ústřední, veřejnou a politickou činností B. Laušmana, Karton 34, Související činnosti v soc. dem. 1928-1948, pp. 2-3.}

As it turned out, however, the communists never really had to apply ‘salami tactics’ to Czechoslovakia, as they managed to eliminate the other parties with a single stroke during the Prague Coup. It was the shock of seeing a democratic country going totalitarian in a matter of days, that accounts for the huge backlash that the Prague Coup caused amongst those supporting a parliamentary and constitutional road to socialism. Within weeks, the parties condoning the events in Prague would find themselves out of or sidelined by the international socialist movement. By April 1948, Léon Blum, in many ways the spiritual father of the parliamentary road to socialism, launched a stark attack upon the concept of popular democracy. He still started on a conciliatory note, arguing how he understood that many ‘honest men’ had wanted to start from a tabula rasa in 1945 and rid themselves of those usual forms of democracy they considered ‘outdated and inefficient – especially the parliamentary form’. But those men, he continued, who currently claimed to be building a new, popular democracy upon the ruins of representative
democracy, might well one day regret ‘to have worked for authoritarian and totalitarian regimes’. For by justifying police state methods as a necessary evil, they were rapidly approaching the point of no return. Even Rosa Luxemburg, Blum explained, had defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitory phase during which interior legality, including universal suffrage, would be suspended, but the substance of democracy – personal rights and freedoms as enshrined in freedom of the press, freedom of reunion, freedom of association and freedom of thought – would be safeguarded. Without that, Blum insisted, the dictatorship of the proletariat ‘would be nothing short of a full-fledged dictatorship, of a personal or collective tyranny’.120

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that the two sets of parties took completely opposite attitudes towards the three key ‘bourgeois’ institutions of elections, parliaments, and constitutions. Contrary to what historians of post-war (Western) European socialism have argued, therefore, there was no across-the-board socialist conversion to a parliamentary road to socialism. To be sure, in their rejection of ‘bourgeois legalism’, the PPS and the PSIUP found themselves in the minority within the post-war international socialist movement. 121 But that does not mean we should dismiss their views as completely peculiar to these two countries. Within most of the post-war European socialist parties, after all, there was a vociferous minority supporting the conception of a ‘popular’ democracy.122

121 When the PPS and the PSIUP put a joint left-wing resolution before the November-December 1947 International Socialist Conference in Antwerp, they were only supported by the Hungarian social democrats. The ČSSD voted for the majority resolution that was backed by all Western European parties except the PSIUP.
122 This became very obvious when the PPS organised an international conference for ‘left-wing and revolutionary socialists’ in June 1948. Only three parties sent an official delegation: the ČSSD and the
How can we explain that anti-parliamentarianism became a majority position within the PPS and the PSIUP when, at the same time, the ČSSD and the SFIO (re-)affirmed their commitment to parliamentary politics? First and foremost, we have to return here to the four parties’ historical experiences with democracy and dictatorship and to the lessons they drew from their own national and Europe’s interwar history. The lessons of the past had convinced the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists that democratic socialism could only be achieved through elections, parliaments, and constitutions. For not only had their own experiences with ‘bourgeois’ parliamentary democracy been by and large positive, the degenerations of both fascist and communist dictatorships also taught them that there was no viable alternative to a parliamentary road to socialism. For the Italian and Polish socialists, conversely, the interwar experience with parliamentary democracy had been largely negative. Far from bringing socialism closer, they stressed that it had ushered in right-wing dictatorship in their own and a string of other European countries.

By themselves, though, historical experiences and lessons cannot account for the divergence between the two sets of parties in its totality. Italy and Poland, after all, were hardly the only countries that had succumbed to authoritarian or fascist dictatorship in interwar Europe. That had been the case in countries like Austria and Germany as well – yet the post-war socialist parties in these countries never advocated a radical departure from the parliamentary road to socialism. A further crucial factor in the four parties’ attitudes towards ‘bourgeois’ democracy, therefore, was their perceptions of the democratic preparedness of their own societies. As we have seen in the previous chapter,

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 Hungarian Social Democratic Party (both of which were already completely under communist control by that time) as well as the PSIUP. But the conference was also attended by a variety of left-wing dissidents that were or had until very recently been part of leading Western European socialist parties, including Pierre Stibbe (one of the leaders of the Bataille Socialiste movement, that was excluded from the SFIO in 1948) and Konni Zilliacus (the Labour MP for Gateshead, who was expelled from the Labour Party in 1949 to be re-admitted in 1952).
the ČSSD and the SFIO were confident of the sound democratic beliefs of the overwhelming majority of their electorates. When the two parties lost elections, accordingly, they tended to blame themselves. The PPS and the PSIUP, on the other hand, felt that their underdeveloped, rural, and Catholic societies were not yet ready for the temptations of democratic politics. For that reason, the two parties felt they could justifiably disregard electoral outcomes and eliminate ‘reactionary’ parties even if these had majority popular support.

To these historically and socially informed perceptions, however, we still need to add a third dimension that we have not discussed thus far: the opposite views that the two sets of parties took of the merits of representative democracy itself. The ‘bourgeois’ institutions of elections, parliaments, and constitutions were of course part and parcel of the representative system, but, according to Basso, a new order could not be based on such existing institutions: ‘[W]henever a new regime, whether political or social, has toppled the existing regime, that movement is condemned to failure if it, to legitimise and justify itself, immediately reverts to the institutions of the political, economic, or social regime it has abolished. […] All of the political revolutions of the nineteenth century have failed or succeeded to the extent that they have taken the precaution of a transitory dictatorship between the destruction of the old regime and the legal installation of the new’.123 We have analysed the socialist arguments for and against such a transitory dictatorship in this chapter. The question remained, however, what would come in the place of the ‘old’ institutions of elections, parliaments, and constitutions. It is to that question that we will turn our attention in the next chapter.

123 Basso, ‘Sul socialismo europeo’, FLB, Fondo Lelio Basso, Serie 15, Fasc. 6, p. 25 bis. The actual quote was made by Blum in 1919, but Basso (approvingly) cited it in the above 1948 article to attack what he regarded as the hypocrisy of leading Western European socialists over the Prague Coup.
Chapter 7: Democracy from below

In a March 1945 letter to Pietro Nenni, Pier Paolo Fauro – the socialist Italian representative at the London headquarters of the International Transport Workers’ Federation – expressed his concerns over the PSIUP’s plans for a thorough overhaul of industrial relations. At stake was Nenni’s campaign to bestow large competencies upon the revolutionary factory councils that had taken control over industrial management in the wake of liberation. This campaign, argued Fauro, had dealt with the question of worker self-management ‘more from a political than from an economic point of view’. Yet, it was in the economic realm that he expected difficulties to arise. ‘I think it is dangerous for the economic success of those industries and for their consolidation in the nation’s hands’, Fauro warned, ‘to directly give factory councils the power to decide over the technical, financial, and commercial problems of their firm’. It was doubtful, after all, if it would be possible ‘to find a sufficient number of workers capable to take on these responsibilities in the majority of factories’ or that there would be ‘sufficient harmony both within the factory council and between [the factory council] and the director of a company to allow for the decisions necessary for the prosperity of the firm to be taken with rapidity and authority’. In such a situation, Fauro continued, it would be hard to identify the culprit when things started going wrong in a factory. It was for that reason that the interwar Soviet Union, ‘after a fallacious experiment with worker self-management based on councils’, had decided ‘to entrust the running of every factory to a single person – the director, chosen, but not elected, on the basis of competency’. And even the British Labour Party, ‘notwithstanding that the cultural level of the British worker is certainly higher than that of
the Russian [worker] at the time of the [October] Revolution, had ‘a similar solution in mind’ for the administration of the nationalised sector.\(^1\)

Such revolutionary grassroots bodies as liberation committees and factory councils, which had taken over most of local and industrial decision-making in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, presented the four parties with opportunities as well as challenges, both politically and economically. In political terms, the experience of direct democracy offered by such bodies promised to animate electorates disoriented after dictatorship and war. At the same time, however, these bodies constituted rivals to the authority both of national party leaderships and of the traditional institutions of representative democracy. In economic terms, worker self-management was the embodiment of the workplace democracy that socialists had historically fought for. Yet, as representatives of an increasingly aggrieved workforce, the local organs of worker democracy frequently found themselves at loggerheads with the reconstruction programmes signed up to by socialist leaders in government. In the face of these pushes and pulls of grassroots democracy, the four parties once again took opposite attitudes. The PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, embraced grassroots participatory bodies as crucial vehicles in the struggle for economic and political democracy. The ČSSD and the SFIO, on the other, increasingly viewed such bodies as a menace not only to the fulfilment of their economic plans but also to the resumption of parliamentary normality.

This chapter endeavours to demonstrate how the question of grassroots democracy was at least as divisive as that of parliamentary democracy. In the first place, it will address the political aspects of grassroots participatory bodies. For the Italian and Polish socialists, popular participation in public life was key to the democratic and socialist (re-)education of their politically underdeveloped populations. For that reason, they insisted on the

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\(^1\) Pier Paolo Fauro to Nenni, 9 March 1945, FN, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 44, Fasc. 2025, fo. 98.
recognition of grassroots participatory bodies as full players in post-war decision-making. For the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the other hand, the concept of grassroots democracy was above all a guise for the political machinations of the communists. For that reason, they pleaded for the revolutionary committees and councils to be submerged into more controllable, top-down political and socio-economic structures as soon as possible. Secondly, the chapter will address the economic aspects of worker co-determination in industry. According to the Italian and Polish socialists, the success of the planned economy depended on input from below. That meant the guidance workers provided, through such intermediaries as cooperatives or factory councils, had to be taken seriously by those in power. The Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the contrary, believed their workers to be far too narrow-minded and self-interested to be entrusted with a real say in the running of the economy. That meant industrial governance was to be reserved to those, factory managers as well as trade union and political leaders, with a more lucid view of the bigger socio-economic picture.

Confronting the Council Movement

The grassroots participatory bodies that sprang up across Europe at the moment of liberation have captured the imagination of many historians. As revolutionary liberation committees and factory councils filled up the power vacuum left by collaborationist local administrators and industrial managers, these historians argue, a new type of society seemed in the making. With popular assemblies taking charge of local decision-making

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2 The historiographical strand referred to in the current and in the following paragraph has been discussed in far greater detail in the Introduction. Some of the key studies include: Horn, The Moment of Liberation; Behan, The Long Awaited Moment; Eley, ‘Legacies of Antifascism’; Heumos, ‘Betriebsräte, Einheitsgewerkschaft und staatliche Unternehmensverwaltung’; Niethammer, Borsdorf, & Brandt (eds.), Arbeiterinitiative 1945.
and workers placing their factories under self-management, after all, there seemed to be an 'opportunity for radical democratic change, or a “third way”' – a bottom-up system of direct participatory democracy rather than representative parliamentary democracy that promised to bridge ‘the gap between national arenas and the local everyday’.³

That this radical challenge to “[p]olitics as usual”⁴ came undone within months of the liberation, as we have seen in the literature review, these historians attribute in large part to the hesitant and in many ways contradictory attitudes⁵ that returning communist leaders adopted towards the radicalism at their grassroots. Far from placing themselves at the head of the council movement, after all, communist leaderships preached moderation in the wake of the liberation: urging liberation committees to surrender their weapons to the authorities and seeking to restore ‘order’ on the shop floor by curbing the competencies of factory councils. The radical aspirations of the liberation, in this view, were thus sacrificed on the altar of Stalin’s post-war outreach to the bourgeoisie and the Western Allies.

This strand of historiography, however, has by and large disregarded socialist attitudes towards grassroots participatory bodies. The scarce references to socialist parties that scholarship on the post-war council movement does provide, moreover, point in different directions. Some historians claim that the socialists were at least as, if not more, dismissive of grassroots participation than the communists.⁶ Others argue, though, that

³ Eley, Forging Democracy, p. 295, 297
⁴ Ibid, p. 296.
⁵ Historians have described the behaviour of the Italian PCI as particularly contradictory. Its leadership’s policy, they often claim, was one of doppienza (two-facedness): of working within a strictly parliamentary framework whilst not ruling out a future revolution, or even giving rank-and-file activists the impression that an insurrection was being prepared. See e.g.: Donald Sassoon, Togliatti e il partito di massa: Il PCI dal 1944 al 1964, (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2014); Pietro Di Loreto, Togliatti e la “doppiezza”: Il Pci tra democrazia e insurrezione (1944-49), (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991).
⁶ According to Geoff Eley, for example, “[t]he [British] Labour Government’s main model of reform was paternalistic and bureaucratic. A blend of Fabian progressivism (giving people what was good for them) and authoritarian trade unionism, it had little room for participatory democracy’. And Charles S. Maier claims that the French communists ‘did support new schemes for a workers’ voice in the tripartite management boards [...] for the nationalised industries [...]. But they had to retreat in the face of MRP and Socialist countermeasures to ensure a more technical supervision’. See: Eley, Forging Democracy, p. 296; Charles S. Maier, ‘The Two Postwar Eras and the Conditions for Stability in Twentieth-Century Western Europe’, American Historical Review, 86/2 (1981), pp. 327-352, 338.
socialist leaders took a far more positive view of participatory structures,\(^7\) only for them to be defeated by communists in government.\(^8\)

As is so often the case with scholarly assertions about the post-war socialist parties and the grassroots, such claims tend to be based on anecdotal evidence rather than a systematic study of socialist attitudes.\(^9\) A more thorough analysis of the attitudes the two sets of parties adopted towards the question of grassroots participation reveals that the positions taken by individual socialist parties varied greatly and that these positions were, in any case, never analogous to those of the communists.

The PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, were considerably more anxious about the (looming) disempowerment of the council movement than their communist coalition partners. The Polish socialists expressed particular concern over the fate of factory councils. In view of the ongoing struggle between the Soviet occupiers and the Polish underground, after all, there was no scope for resistance-led liberation committees in post-liberation Poland. Yet, factories abandoned by their German owners or supervisors did fall under worker control in the wake of the liberation\(^10\) and the Lublin government initially encouraged the spontaneously formed worker committees that took over management.

Right from the outset, though, the socialists found cause to question the sincerity of the communist commitment towards worker self-management. The protracted discussions about the decree empowering the revolutionary factory councils within the Lublin government had already left the PPS with the impression that the PPR was dragging its feet.

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\(^7\) See on the post-war French and Italian socialists: Andrieu, ‘La France’, pp. 134-139.


\(^9\) Claire Andrieu (see above in footnote 7), for example, seems to base her claims regarding the French socialists in large part upon the attitudes taken by the provincial SFIO organisation in the Allier department and on a tract written by SFIO Executive member Suzanne Charpy. As we will see below, however, their views were rejected by the large majority of the SFIO leadership.

on the issue. These suspicions were confirmed when the communist-dominated Ministry of Industry, within four months of the decree finally being passed in February 1945, issued new guidelines stripping factory councils of their financial and technical co-decision rights. Speaking at a September 1945 plenum of the PPS and PPR leaderships, Edward Osóbka-Morawski made it quite clear that the socialists were unimpressed. The significance of factory councils, he declared, was ‘often [...] not appreciated’. In the face of ‘tendencies to limit the competencies of factory councils’, he reminded the communists that the introduction of factory councils represented ‘a major reform’ and that their role could not be ‘reduced canteen control etc.’

The PSIUP similarly campaigned for wide-ranging powers to be devolved to the Italian National Liberation Committees, which came in the form of both liberation committees (CLN) and factory councils (CLNA). According to Nenni, the CLN(A) reflected the ‘democratic will of the people’ far better and commanded far greater ‘moral authority’ than the average local appointee of the Allied Control Commission. Pending local elections, therefore, the socialists claimed ‘[a]ll power’ for the CLN.

Yet, with the partial exception of the Action Party, such claims found little resonance with the PSIUP’s coalition partners and, far from being empowered, the position of the CLN(A) was steadily eroded under the first Bonomi government. This was one of the issues that contributed to the first major crack in socialist-communist unity of action during the post-war years, as the PSIUP refused to follow the PCI in joining the second Bonomi government. In the communiqué explaining this decision, the PSIUP castigated
the Prime Minister for having failed ‘to encourage the truly democratic forces in their
desire to permeate [and] radically renew [...] the old monarchical state organisation, still
completely tainted by fascist remains’. Instead, he had ‘doggedly pursued his design to
humiliate the new organisms that arose in the country through the national liberation
struggle – true [and] vital cells of democracy – and to restore the old bureaucratic and
monarchical Italy’.15

The reason that the PPS and the PSIUP felt so strongly about the disempowerment
of the post-war council movement was that they had envisioned these councils to play a
key role in the democratic re-education of disoriented electorates. In fact, the two parties
considered popular involvement in grassroots participatory bodies a crucial stepping stone
towards the development of democratic and socialist beliefs in their societies. Providing
ordinary people with a forum to discuss their everyday problems and take action to resolve
these, after all, direct participation in such bodies would be a far more effective school of
democracy than voting for distant representatives in parliamentary elections had ever been.
For that reason, the Italian and Polish socialists very much fostered the development of
such local and workplace consultative bodies as liberation committees, factory councils,
and cooperatives.

Much of this went back to the dim views, outlined in the previous chapter, that PPS
and PSIUP leaders took of their own electorates. Socialist leaders in both countries argued
that the political backwardness of their societies, deepened by the experiences of
dictatorship and war, presented them with enormous challenges. In a country where ‘the
democratic consciousness has always been very scarce and where fascism had free rein for
twenty years to erode it still further’, explained Lelio Basso, ‘our task is immense’. To be
sure, worker participation in the anti-fascist resistance and the liberation struggle had

15 ‘La crisi del primo governo Bonomi: Dichiarazione del Partito Socialista al Paese’ [10 December 1944],
‘contributed considerably to the education and the political preparation of the masses’.

‘[B]ut we cannot deny’, he continued, ‘that, within the same working population, there are still vast groups, especially amongst women and youngsters, who do not partake in the political struggle [and] who do not show an interest in political problems’. And it was in ‘this absenteeism, which easily generates scepticism and distrust’, that ‘the roots of all anti-democratic movements’ were to be found.16

For the PPS, Adam Rapacki – the socialist Minister of Shipping in the first Cyrankiewicz government – described the political acumen of Polish society in similarly derogatory terms. The Polish people, he claimed, ‘emerged from Polish history [...] a little anarchical and hysterical, socially still immature, [and] not always understanding that a revolution is happening before their eyes’. A socialised economy, then, would not by itself ‘suffice for the creation of socialism’. What was needed was ‘a socialisation of popular consciousness’.17

It was in this socialisation effort that the PPS and the PSIUP imputed a key function to grassroots participatory bodies. Such organisms as factory councils and cooperatives, Stanisław Szwalbe told communist leaders in September 1945, ‘have a key educational function and the government should rely on them’.18 And if governments were to draw upon grassroots participatory bodies, ordinary workers were to be drawn into them. As early as June 1944, Nenni warned workers against viewing the various workplace councils that had come into being during the liberation struggle as ‘no more than an expedient’ – as a means to fill the power vacuum left by fled or expelled managers, to secure the successful transition from a fascist to a democratic administration, and to revise the fascist

18 ‘Protokół z wspólnego posiedzenia CKW PPS i KC PPR’ [28 September 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy, 2037, 235/III/6, fo. 16.
management model. Wherever workers took such views, he insisted, it was ‘the duty of socialists to immediately raise awareness [...] of the immense importance of councils and of their infinite possibilities of development’. For ‘the function of councils’ was ‘not provisional, but permanent; not conservative, but revolutionary’. They constituted ‘the cells of a new democratic society, which should [...] lead to the amalgamation of the homo economicus and the homo politicus’.

According to the Italian and Polish socialists, therefore, the true significance of grassroots participatory bodies lay in their ability to combine the economic emancipation (to which we will return in the following sub-chapter) with the political re-education of the working class. Their accessible nature, after all, offered countless people with no experience of (democratic) politics the chance to acquaint themselves with some of the basic elements of democracy: discussion, compromise, and working together. To overcome the ‘political analphabetism’ afflicting large parts of Italian society, argued Basso, ‘we should start from concrete problems’. That meant ‘engaging workers, clerks, [and] peasants with the problems of their firm [...]’; make them discuss [...] salaries, the cost of living, [and] food, housing, [and] heating problems; gradually accustoming them to link their immediate demands to more complex questions and to move from a particularistic to a more general understanding of class relations’. To achieve that, however, it was ‘necessary to get peasants [and] workers, especially women and youngsters, to attend meetings where their problems are discussed – factory meetings, trade union meetings, meetings of mass organisations – [and to get them to] participate in elections for internal commissions [the official trade union representation within factories], for factory councils, for their local CLN [...] , for trade union bodies, as well as for the organs of the Youth Front and the Union of Italian Women’.

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20 Lelio Basso, ‘Per una coscienza democratica’, Avanti!, 29 August 1945.
Julian Hochfeld ascribed similar virtues to participation in the cooperative movement, which, after the disempowerment of the factory councils, became the chief grassroots darling of the PPS. Cooperatives, he explained, represented ‘consumer self-government’, with ordinary workers taking responsibility ‘for the satisfaction of their own needs’. In that sense, cooperatives were ‘a school of democracy in everyday life – a vibrant democracy, [being] cultivated constantly; not a ballot paper once every few years, [...] but [consumers taking] an immediate interest [...] in their own affairs’. Cooperatives were not merely ‘a branch of the democratic state’, therefore, ‘but its crucial component, in large part making up its democratic content’.²¹

For the Italian and Polish socialists, this educative function of popular participation always outweighed its party-political function. Socialist leaders in both countries repeatedly stressed that securing genuine mass engagement with politics was far more important than making short-term party gains. That meant the traditional focus on recruiting new members was to be abandoned. Nenni indicated the post-liberation surge in the PSIUP’s membership, probably the result of quite some members of Mussolini’s PNF jumping ship, was unwelcome. Party membership, he argued, was of ‘moral value’ and should not be regarded as a necessity to find a job.²² Basso, for his part, emphasised that it made no sense to unleash any form of propaganda, let alone socialist propaganda, upon the ‘apolitical’ masses.²³ The work of politicising these groups consisted of ‘day-to-day contact with the life of the masses, that is with factory, company, and rural life’ – meaning

²² Pietro Nenni, ‘Che cos’è e cosa vuole il Partito Socialista’, Avanti!, 23 July 1944.
²³ Lelio Basso, ‘Per una coscienza democratica’, Avanti!, 29 August 1945.

URL: http://www.leliobasso.it/documento.aspx?id=1fb14f1db3eb10586206df1cbf448089 (last consulted: 22 March 2015).
that the PSIUP could no longer ‘simply be an electoral machine, which springs into action [only] on special occasions’.  

The PPS leadership even urged its party activists to treat the January 1947 elections to the Sejm as an educational opportunity. ‘We desire that the elections represent not only the usual fight for power, that the election campaign is made up not only of agitations’, insisted the text that the party’s manifesto commission spread amongst regional party representatives, ‘[but] that they are part of [our] educational work, which could lead a majority of the nation to an understanding of reality’. For that reason, ‘our electoral action cannot be conceived as the usual agitations’, with the sole goal of winning the most votes. Instead, it had to be ‘another large-scale attempt to persuade society’.  

In order to see through the popular conversion to participation first, democracy next, and socialism ultimately, then, the PPS and the PSIUP felt they were to re-invent themselves as different types of parties – as parties taking their lead from the working masses rather than the other way around. That involved the creation of new bodies allowing party leaderships to remain in touch with the concerns at their grassroots. As the number of paid PPS functionaries rose above one thousand, explained Włodzimierz Reczek, the party was looking to avoid ‘the grave ills of German social democracy’, where ‘paid functionaries detached themselves from the masses, stopped understanding [the masses], [and] gave up on activism amongst the masses’. To counter this threat, he argued, the PPS had created ‘a system of councils’ – economic, professional, peasant, and women’s councils ‘energising broad circles of socialists and effectively controlling professional party functionaries’. The fact that these councils emerged ‘quickly and often

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25 ‘Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z obrad Rady Naczelnej PPS’ [4 December 1946], AAN, Akta Stanisława Szwalbego, Box 13.
as a result of the spontaneous initiative of grassroots party cells’ was testimony to ‘the aptness of our decision’.26

Basso likewise insisted on the need for new forms of socialist engagement with the party grassroots. In his view, the local party section no longer answered to the requirements of a mass proletarian party. He listed a string of practical reasons, including time constraints, inadequate transport links, and in-house duties, complicating efforts to draw workers into (mostly evening) sessions of local party sections. But even those workers who did attend would be reluctant to take the floor, he continued, ‘intimidated by the presence of “notables”’, the ‘lawyers or professors’ who often led local party sections. Whilst such notables tended to be ‘able speakers on general issues’, they lacked ‘direct contact with the rank-and-file’ – leaving workers with the impression that ‘their personal experience [and] their specific problems do not carry real significance’. That, in turn, led to ‘erroneous party attitudes, a gulf between the opinions of [party] leaders and the demands at the grassroots, [and] an insufficient interchange in party life’.27

It was for these reasons that Basso championed the creation of socialist factory cells. ‘If the party takes its decisions in contact with the factories’, he insisted, ‘its decisions will never be reckless and will always have the entire working class behind them’. For the factory cell activist ‘brings to party discussions not only his personal point of view, but an echo of all his colleagues’ voices; and, in turn, imparts upon his colleagues the significance and conclusion of the discussions conducted within the cell’. It was only by virtue of this ‘continuous exchange of sentiments, reactions, and ideas between [...] the qualified minority of party activists and the entire workforce of a company’, argued Basso, ‘that the [factory cell] activist acquires a genuine influence over [...] the non-organised

26 Ibid.
URL: http://www.leliobasso.it/documento.aspx?id=8be4cc201e75fa27ebf46b80f5195499 (last consulted: 22 March 2015).
masses; an influence [...] that would be sacrificed and lost if the political activism of a single company’s workforce was dispersed over various local sections, where members lacked direct and daily contact with non-members’. 28

Hochfeld similarly called for the PPS to be open to the input of non-members. Responding to outrage over ‘non-party’ workers (in all likelihood communist stooges – JG) calling on the PPS to step up its ‘verification’ effort (i.e. the purge of former members of the WRN resistance organisation) during a factory meeting in Wrocław, he defended the principle of non-members passing judgement on the PPS. The PPS, he claimed, ‘is more than a party, [it is] a movement’. If the party would someday enter elections on its own, after all, ‘it will turn out that we have far more voters than members’. And all of these people had ‘the right to speak up and to scrutinise [...] the PPS’. Rather than being ‘so resentful’, therefore, the PPS should ‘approach the masses with an open mind and tell them: “we are your party; by all means control what is going on in our party, because we are connected to you and [...] are part of the Polish nation”’. 29

The Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the other hand, were well ahead of their communist coalition partners in demanding the disbandment of the revolutionary council movement. In fact, they often viewed this movement as the spearhead of the communist challenge to democratic legality.

That was certainly how most SFIO leaders viewed the French liberation committees. The first post-liberation meetings of the SFIO Executive were dominated by the question of the Departmental Liberation Committees (CDL) – which, especially in Southern France, frequently overrode the authority of government-designated departmental prefects by installing themselves as the departmental administration and appointing...

municipal councils. The radicalism practised by these communist-dominated CDL, left socialist leaders with serious misgivings about the true intentions of the communists. Gaston Defferre, then the mayor of Marseille, complained bitterly about ‘communist demagogy’ within the CDL. Adrien Tixier, who, as the SFIO’s Minister of the Interior in the first two De Gaulle governments, was responsible for dealing with the CDL, demanded that all political parties took ‘an extremely firm stand’ – berating the communists in particular for failing to support the government. Jules Moch even drew a comparison between post-liberation France and pre-revolutionary Russia, ‘where the Soviets pursued a politics in opposition to that of the Kerensky government and the Duma’. The SFIO Executive heeded his advice not to allow ‘a third administration alongside the prefectural [and the governmental – JG] administration’, instructing the party’s parliamentary group to dismiss the departmental administrations the CDL had already formed and postpone any further administrative appointments until local elections had been called.

The Czechoslovakian social democrats likewise wanted their liberation committees and revolutionary factory councils to be replaced by properly elected bodies as quickly as possible. First of all, this concerned the National Committees (NV) – local and provincial government bodies that the exiled Czechoslovakian government had called into being in December 1944 to replace the ‘alienated’ pre-war administrative apparatus and rule liberated (parts of) Czechoslovakia pending the return of the government. Even if the NV lacked the spontaneous character of liberation committees elsewhere in Europe, therefore, their improvised nature offered the communists ample opportunities to strengthen their grip upon the state nonetheless. The KSČ readily acknowledged this, its leader Klement

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31 Ibid., p. 4.
32 Ibid., p. 3.
34 Frommer, National Cleansing, pp. 45-46.
Gottwald crediting the NV for providing the party with ‘a clean slate’ as regards the state apparatus, for being ‘a thorn in the side’ of its coalition partners, and for constituting ‘the main arena for the political struggle’. The communist domination of these bodies that, having been charged with the maintenance of law and order in the area under their control, often played a crucial role in sanctioning the abuses of the security services was a cause for rising concern within the ČSSD leadership. ‘In many national committees’, claimed the party’s 1946 year report, ‘key positions are occupied by people, whose actions only create distrust towards the new bodies of popular administration’. The ČSSD manifesto for the May 1946 parliamentary elections, accordingly, included the demand that the NV would be ‘founded on a solid basis’ and ‘duly elected’.

If the anti-communist message was still implicit here, the ČSSD was more outspoken in the question of the revolutionary factory councils. Time and again, the social democrats insisted that elections to these councils – which had been installed in the heat of the liberation struggle, but were still in place by 1947 – would be held to reflect ‘the current balance of forces’ within factories. According to the social democrats, after all, the present councils were far too one-sided and were constantly being abused for party-political purposes. In terms of their make-up, they put forward much the same arguments as they had done against the NV – claiming that, in many factory councils, there were ‘representatives, who only diminish the significance of these organs’. What caused their

35 Quoted in: Ibid, p. 47.
36 Benjamin Frommer points out that the communists headed 46% of the NV in the Czech lands in early 1946, with ‘the Party’s stranglehold on the national committees’ growing ‘even tighter’ after the May 1946 elections. See: Frommer, National Cleansing, p. 47f.
38 Ibid, p. XXVII.
40 Zdeněk Fierlinger, for example, told the November 1947 ČSSD congress that communist-social democratic struggles had arisen primarily there where ‘the original revolutionary factory councils remained for a long time’. In these places, after all, the factory council had ‘often used political pressure […] for party purposes’. ‘The Mission of Social Democracy in the New State’ [November 1947], ANM, Fonds Zdeněk Fierlinger, Karton 40, Sjezd soc. dem. v Brne, p. 28.
‘greatest distrust’, however, was that these councils were ‘made up almost exclusively of communists’.  

The ČSSD and the SFIO insisted, accordingly, that the post-war council movement, far from democratising political and economic life, often represented the law of the jungle. Underneath their severe protests against the communist perversions of grassroots politics, however, lay more fundamental objections against direct popular participation in political decision-making. Democracy, the two parties proclaimed, consisted of free and fair elections and the decisions of elected representatives were not to be challenged from below. That meant the political initiative resided with local, provincial, and national party leaders rather than with grassroots activists.

This was reflected in the arguments the ČSSD and the SFIO employed against communist conceptions of local democracy. Right from the outset, the French socialists made it quite clear that they were not about to follow the communists in creating ‘a new democratic legality’. At stake were communist proposals to convocate ‘patriotic’ or ‘popular’ assemblies – meetings at which the entire population of a given town or village could elect local representatives by show of hands. When this had been tried in post-liberation Corsica, Vincent Auriol told the November 1944 congress of the SFIO, gross irregularities had emerged. Lorries had driven ‘from one village to another’ to transport ‘voters’ to places where majorities were ‘shaky’ and, as a consequence, up to eighty per cent of votes cast had been declared invalid in some localities. 

It was not only the widespread opportunities for electoral fraud, however, that pitted the French socialists against direct democracy in such assemblies. The entire process

of electing representatives during public meetings, they argued, violated key principles of
democratic politics. For one thing, it allowed powerful local actors to bully their way to
power. ‘[W]e cannot accept assemblies’, insisted Daniel Mayer, ‘where agent provocateurs
might interfere, or men who go from town to town hurling abuse, sometimes at
gunpoint’. Even if their pressure was less explicit, moreover, the very dynamics of a
public vote enabled local employers to exert undue influence on its outcome. In this
respect, argued Auriol, the assemblies corresponded ‘in no way to the spirit of France, to
that freedom, that secret ballot that the Republic has given all voters forty years ago to
liberate them from the pressures of rural squires and city bosses’. It followed, as Mayer
put it, that assembly politics was ‘not […] what democracy looks like’. ‘[F]or democracy’,
he explained, ‘is expressed in elections with voting booths [and] ballots, and not in so-
called popular assemblies which are no more than a caricature […] and do not reflect
democracy at all’.

The Czechoslovakian social democrats likewise indicated that the communist
version of participatory politics was incompatible with their conception of democracy.
Their protests concerned communist challenges to the decisions of properly elected local
representatives. This became very clear in the controversies surrounding the elections of
new NV chairmen (effectively city mayors or provincial governors – JG) after these organs
had been given a fresh distribution of seats based on the local result in the May 1946
parliamentary elections. The ČSSD leadership had instructed its municipal sections and
provincial departments to vote for the candidate of the largest party locally, as long as that
candidate could ‘guarantee a harmonious cooperation between all parties of the National
Front’. In most cases, these elections went by smoothly. But in Olomouc and Plzeň, where
the KSČ had become the largest party, the communists fielded candidates that were

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44 Ibid, p. 32.
46 Ibid, p. 41.
'unacceptable' to the social democrats.\textsuperscript{47} When these candidates were subsequently defeated, the communists launched a series of strikes and demonstrations to prevent the installation of the elected chairman. These challenges to due democratic process met with strong social democratic condemnation. The national ČSSD daily castigated the communists for trying to pick and choose from democratic outcomes. ‘There is only one democracy’, it insisted, ‘and all attempts to subvert the implementation of a democratically taken decision by means of public speeches, work stoppages, etc. represent a diktat and an intimidation’.\textsuperscript{48}

The polemics waged during the Plzeň episode demonstrate how, as far as the ČSSD was concerned, this one and only democracy was representative rather than participatory. Time and again, the social democrats stressed that they had followed proper channels in electing a new mayor. The stipulations issued by the Ministry of the Interior prescribed that the reconstituted national committees were to elect a chairman during their first session and, by a margin of thirty-one to twenty-three votes, the Plzeň national committee had done so.\textsuperscript{49} ‘For every man of democratic convictions’, argued a commentary in the local ČSSD press, ‘that would have been the end of the affair’. But there was ‘a different [version of] democracy, communist democracy, for which the guidelines of the Ministry of the Interior [...] do not count and Josef Ullrich\textsuperscript{50} has to become mayor of Plzeň at any cost’. To that end, the communists had staged several factory walkouts and assembled a crowd outside city hall – threatening the mayor-elect with ‘a defenestration, a lynching,\

\textsuperscript{48}‘Odpověď představenstva naší strany a Práva lidu plzeňským komunistům’, Nový Den, 2 July 1946.
\textsuperscript{49}‘K volbě předsedy národního výboru Plzni’, Nový Den, 28 June 1946; ‘To že má byti demokracie?’, Nový Den, 29 June 1946.
\textsuperscript{50}Josef Ullrich, the leader of the KSČ in post-war Plzeň, seems to have been a very shady character indeed. Back in the summer of 1945, when the position of Chairman of the revolutionary Plzeň NV first had to be filled, his main intra-party rival for the post died in suspicious circumstances. Just as he was on his way to Prague – allegedly carrying with him a file on Ullrich’s inappropriate behaviour in the Buchenwald concentration camp – his car crashed. Rumours that Ullrich’s supporters had staged the accident were widespread at the time. See: Šlouf, ‘Rivalita komunistické strany a sociální demokracie’, p. 118.
and similar’ if he were to take up his new function. The social democrats were adamant, though, that they would ‘succumb neither to violence nor to demonstrations’. For ‘nobody else than the rightful national committee’ was entitled ‘to decide over its chairman, and certainly not the mob in the street’. 51

What outraged the ČSSD even more than the communist attempt at mob rule, however, was the blatant politicisation of (officially non-partisan) workplace organisations. The party insisted that the resolution signed by the leader of the provincial KOR as well as by the chairmen of all major Plzeň factory councils – claiming that the mayoral election had not been ‘in accordance with the will of the people’, calling for a fresh national committee vote on the matter, and urging the mayor-elect to hand back the committee’s chair to Ullrich in the meantime – lacked ‘any legal standing’’. Factory councils and trade unions, after all, had no stake in political appointments such as these – that was ‘a matter exclusively for political parties’. 52

This sharp delineation between the remit of political parties and workplace bodies was reflected in the ČSSD’s attitude towards factory cells. When the KSČ, quickly followed by the ČSNS, started (re-)building its factory cells in the summer of 1945, the social democrats immediately pointed to the dangers entailed in this operation. Now that the once fragmented trade union movement was finally united and factory councils had been empowered, explained Blažej Vilím at the October 1945 ČSSD congress, factory cells could only be a divisive force. In fact, he predicted that the creation of such bodies would ‘necessarily’ lead to ‘turf wars’ between factory cells on the one side and trade unions and factory councils on the other – as political functionaries, ‘overcome by narrow party interests’, would not be likely to resist the temptation to meddle in trade union affairs. Yet, the other parties had been impervious to the ČSSD’s arguments, Vilím

51 ‘To že má byť demokracie?’, Nový Den, 29 June 1946.
52 Ibid.
declared, leaving the social democrats with no choice but to follow suit. From an 
organisational point of view, however, it was clear from the outset that social democratic 
factory cells remained very much secondary to local ČSSD sections. ‘[A]ll of our party’s 
factory cell activists are first and foremost members of municipal sections’, concluded 
Vilim, which was to remain ‘the focal point of our activities’.53

Within the post-war SFIO, factory cells were accorded a similarly subordinate role. 
The statutes of the Socialist Enterprise Groups (GSE), adopted at the August 1945 SFIO 
congress, by and large limited their remit to spreading socialist propaganda amongst 
workers and providing the party leadership with information about worker sentiments and 
the economic fortunes of their companies. Neither individual GSE nor the National 
Commission of GSE had any say, accordingly, in setting local and national party policy, 
which remained the exclusive prerogative of the local SFIO section and the national SFIO 
Executive respectively, whilst ‘any incursion into the trade union domain’ was likewise 
strictly prohibited.54

In the increasingly volatile political and workplace climate of the first post-war 
years, however, it was difficult to restrict the GSE to this narrow brief. By the summer of 
1947, therefore, in the aftermath of a serious falling-out between the SFIO Executive and 
the GSE at Renault, which had supported the strike that ushered in the collapse of 
tripartisme in May, the party leadership set out to tighten its grip upon factory activists.

53 ‘Protokol XX. Manifestačního Sjezdu Československé Socialní Demokracie’, Archiv ČSSD, Fond č. 71, 
Část II Československá sociální demokracie (1945-1948), I. Sjezdy čs. socialní demokracie, 111 XX. sjezd 
54 ‘Parti Socialiste SFIO: 38ème Congrès national, 29, 30, 31 aoû et 1er septembre 1946’, FJJ, p. 110. 
URL: http://flipbook.archives-socialistes.fr/index.html?docid=51052&language=fra&userid=0 
(last consulted: 22 March 2015). In this respect, the GSE were to serve much the same objective as their 
interwar pre-cursor – the Amicales Socialistes. Donald N. Baker has argued that ‘[t]he Amicales Socialistes 
were not created by the wing of the party eager to evangelize the masses [...]. On the contrary, the men who 
created the Amicales Socialistes aimed at only modest and defensive goals — chiefly to stabilize the volatile 
working class, to combat the rising influence of the Communists in the labour movement, and to further party 
recruitment. The leadership's conception of the front organization required a strict subordination to the party 
hierarchy’. See: Donald N. Baker, The Socialists and the Workers of Paris: The Amicales Socialistes, 1936- 
Complaining that ‘certain GSE comrades’ suffered from ‘misconceptions’, Guy Mollet reiterated that the GSE’s ‘objective’ consisted of ‘making party slogans to reverberate in the social environment of adherents’. Just how much of a one-way street this was supposed to be becomes apparent from the new organisational scheme put forward by the SFIO Executive, which banned the GSE from as much as discussing party politics. What is more, the practice, dating back to the interwar pre-cursor of the GSE, the Amicales Socialistes, of allowing non-member ‘sympathisers’ to partake in GSE dealings was to be discontinued. ‘[T]he GSE should be made up only of party members’, chair of the SFIO’s Reorganisation Commission André Ferrat argued, ‘for it cannot be the case that the GSE can escape party discipline’.55

Socialising Socialism

On the face of it, the two sets of parties had rather more in common regarding the question of worker control of and participation in economic decision-making. In the immediate aftermath of the liberation, each of the four parties championed such new bodies of worker democracy as factory councils and cooperatives, calling for their creation and empowerment as well as for their autonomy vis-à-vis the state. At least in public, therefore, post-war socialist leaders insisted that the economy, even if large parts of it were to fall under the auspices of the state, would in fact be socialised.

The economic paragraph of the draft programme the PPS leadership drew up in 1945, for example, demanded that both the nationalised (i.e. all enterprises employing a workforce of more than fifty) and private sector would be subjected to ‘social control’ – by ‘worker delegates and factory councils’ within factories and through ‘the indirect

representation of consumers’ within branch organisations. For the PPS, however, worker participation in economic life was to reach its apogee in the third sector of the Polish economy – the rural and urban cooperatives that were to promote the exchange of products between city and countryside. ‘[I]n a socialist Poland’, Szwalbe declared at the August 1945 PPS congress, ‘we want to socialise rather than nationalise trade’. This was to be achieved by ‘cooperativisation’, he argued, which was ‘the highest form of socialisation’.57

The leadership of the PSIUP, for its part, advocated the wholesale socialisation of economic life. The draft resolution that Sandro Pertini prepared for a November 1944 convention of the (still clandestine) Northern Italian PSIUP called for worker self-management in both agriculture and industry. ‘[M]unicipal agricultural cooperatives managed directly by workers’ were to be created on expropriated estates in the countryside. In urban areas, meanwhile, ‘the integral socialisation’ of all state-subsidised and monopolistic industries as well as the entire finance sector was to find its expression in ‘decentralised management by autonomous entities that implement a national plan’.58 And such views do not seem to have been confined to the more radical socialist leaders in the occupied North. In liberated Rome, after all, Nenni was likewise calling for ‘the expropriation and cooperative management of the latifundium’ and ‘the socialisation of the trusts and monopolistic industry [...] which should be managed directly by factory councils’.59

If not going as far as that, André Philip did feel the need ‘to clarify’ what the SFIO had in mind when it demanded nationalisations. Speaking at the party’s November 1944 congress, he drew a sharp line between étatisme (a state-controlled economy) and

56 ‘W walce o socjalizm – Projekt Programu Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej’ [30 June 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-7, fo. 48.
57 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fo. 54.
nationalisations. The former, he explained, was ‘no more than the spread of bureaucracy, with direction by experts and senior administrative cadres – not that different from capitalism itself’. Nationalisations, on the other hand, presupposed ‘regional decentralisation, the rejection of every technical dictatorship, and the participation of the working class at all administrative levels’. The resolution adopted by the congress reiterated these points. The ‘socialisation of the commanding heights of the economy’, it insisted, ‘should neither lead to state capitalism nor to the bureaucracy of which the current monopoly constitutes an example’. To steer clear of that, factories were to be ‘managed by workers, in association with experts [i.e. technicians and management] and representatives of the general interest [i.e. government representatives], with each of these tripartite councils [...] implementing the national economic plan deliberated by the representatives of universal suffrage’.

The mid-1945 programme of the ČSSD’s Action Committee, finally, failed to even mention the concept of nationalisations in its description of the state take-over of the entire energy, banking, insurance, and transport sectors, of all large industrial and agricultural companies, and of all German and Hungarian property. The document made sure to warn, however, of the dangers entailed in this operation. The ‘bureaucratisation’ of economic life, it insisted, was to be avoided ‘by any means’. For that reason, the running of ‘socialised enterprises’ was to be entrusted to ‘local and stakeholder bodies’, which were better placed to ‘oversee their proper operation than the central authorities’.

In their rhetoric, then, the socialists were certainly amongst the strongest supporters of wide-ranging powers for workplace co-decision bodies. Yet, several historians have

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61 Ibid, pp. 281-282.
suggested there was little more to this than rhetoric, as the four parties were very much
complicit in undermining such bodies. If the Eastern European socialist and social
democratic parties initially tried to steal a march on the communists by their ‘greater socio-
political radicalism’, argues Peter Heumos, they subsequently went along with communist
and bourgeois efforts to ‘contain, channel into trade union structures, and disempower’
factory councils. The parties, after all, championed ‘the hierarchic-authoritarian company
model of the Soviet Union’, whilst ‘their economic and technical cadre, which carried
significant weight within the party apparatus above all in Czechoslovakia and Poland, only
considered worker participation a motivational tool to increase production’.  

The PSIUP and the SFIO come off even worse in academic accounts, which tend to
position them well to the right of the communists on the question of worker self-
management. With regard to post-war France, for example, Xavier Vigna claims that,
whereas the factory councils that came into being in the aftermath of liberation could count
on (limited) support from the communists, they ‘upset those socialist politicians most
attached to the industrial order of things, including the Minister of Production Robert
Lacoste’. For post-war Italy, meanwhile, Marialuisa-Lucia Sergio suggests that it was the
PSIUP’s Rodolfo Morandi who contributed most to the curbing of factory councils’
competencies – first, in his role as Chairman of the overarching CLN for Northern Italy, by
stripping them of all powers in questions of (managerial) dismissals and purges and
subsequently, as Minister of Industry in the second De Gasperi government, by drawing up
an extremely restrictive legal framework for factory councils that was ‘quasi-opposed’ to
communist perspectives. ‘[I]n spite of [...] all [their] rhetoric’, she concludes, it were the
socialists who ‘closed the book on the CLN (especially in their version as organs of

64 Xavier Vigna, ‘France after the liberation: The Labour Movement, the Employers and the Political Leaders
in their Struggle with the Social Movement’, in: Stefan Berger & Marcel Boldorf (ed.), Social Movements
and Challenges to Economic Elites after the Second World War, (forthcoming, 2015).

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company self-management and social control) to return to the rules of parliamentary representation and, above all, to affirm a new democracy based on parties’.  

In its near-exclusive focus on such ‘political’ issues as the purge of former collaborators and the disempowerment of the revolutionary factory councils that had placed ‘ownerless’ enterprises under worker self-management in the wake of liberation, however, such scholarship tends to brush over the macro-economic economic role that socialists wanted workplace co-determination bodies to play. As we have already seen in some of the oratory outlined above, that role lie predominantly in framing and adapting government planning. It was on this particular question that the two sets of parties, although their outward rhetoric remained roughly similar, took opposite attitudes once more.

The PPS and the PSIUP, on the one hand, insisted that economic planning could only be genuinely democratic if it took its lead from the grassroots. For centrally imposed plans, the two parties argued, would inevitably result in the creation of a dictatorial command chain and the proliferation of bureaucracy within the national economy.

As early as February 1946, Jan Topínski – together with Hochfeld probably the post-war PPS’ most significant theorist – warned of ‘centralising tendencies’ in the administration of Poland’s nationalised sector, reflected in the creation of state-wide branch conglomerates and in the state’s steadily increasing role in appointing the managerial and supervisory organs within nationalised firms.  


organisation, from there to the lower branch organisations, subsequently to the individual
companies, and only lastly to the workplace. In the first place, the ‘militarisation of
dependency relations’ entailed in that model made it impossible to address unforeseen
local circumstances affecting the fulfilment of the plan. In theory, explained Topinski, that
was the task of the various ‘sub-centres’ in the hierarchy, that is, the branch organisations
and industrial management, but the very presence of a superior organ made such sub-
centres reluctant to take forceful decisions, which, after all, might cause them to be blamed
for the non-fulfilment of the plan. Secondly, the fact that each of these sub-centres had ‘a
triple function’ – that of transmission belt, that of control organ, and that of executive – led
to ‘the growth of the clerical and bureaucratic apparatus’. And ‘the more we spend the
product of the [industrial] worker’s labour on organisational and control bodies’,
concluded Topinski, ‘the further we get from realising the socialist slogan: the product of
labour for its producers’.67

The PSIUP was equally dismissive of top-down planning. In the absence of any
form of economic planning in post-liberation Italy, Angelo Saraceno – the socialist
theorist, part of the group of intellectuals close to Morandi who co-founded the Institute for
Socialist Studies in November 1945 – criticised centralised planning in more general terms
than Topinski. Yet, the essence of his argument was much the same. Whilst stressing the
need for planning as part of a larger package of ‘industrial reform’ in the autumn of 1945,
he was alive to ‘the danger of state socialism, bureaucratic and centralised and anti-
democratic in substance’, that entailed. For that reason, he explained, the Italian socialists
did not view the plan ‘as a command from the centre’, even if that centre found itself

67 Topinski, ‘Dlaczego spółdzielczość?’, Przegląd Socjalistyczny, 1 July 1947, pp. 22-23.
‘under the aegis of a socialist government’. Instead, ‘the possibilities of successful planification are directly linked to the functioning of a real production democracy’.\textsuperscript{68}

According to the PPS and the PSIUP, such a production democracy would see workplace co-determination bodies playing a crucial role in economic planning. By means of their proximity both to the shop floor and to consumers, the two parties insisted, such bodies as factory councils and cooperatives often had a far better idea of what was realistic and desirable in terms of planning targets than central planning agencies.

Speaking at a November 1947 socialist economic conference, Morandi championed worker participation in economic planning. ‘The socialist plan’, he argued, ‘is implemented through a fundamental democratisation of productive life and a direct worker participation in the direction and control of it’. Far from seeking to regulate the working class ‘by administrative means’, then, socialist planning would breathe ‘new energies, which express and interpret the collective interest, into the economy’. The foremost vehicles to awaken and transmit these fresh energies, in Morandi’s view, were workplace co-determination bodies. In the quest ‘to make of every company unit and of every worker a conscious element of and driving force behind [the plan]’, therefore, he pleaded for the extension of works councils to the agricultural and banking sectors, for works councils to take on an extra-company role, for their participation in higher planning bodies, and for the development of cooperatives.\textsuperscript{69}

The Polish socialists likewise favoured decentralised economic planning.\textsuperscript{70} Topinski, for example, argued that central economic plans had to be ‘laconic in their formulations’ and that their fine-tuning was to reflect ‘impulses from the grassroots rather

\textsuperscript{68} ‘Relazione sulla riforma industriale – I consigli di gestione’ [1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.10., Fasc. 9, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{69} ‘Pianificazione e piani’, Bollettino dell’Istituto di Studii Socialisti, November-December 1947, pp. 228-231, 231.
\textsuperscript{70} Stanisław Szwalbe, for example, declared that ‘[t]he principle of planning should be regionalisation’ at the August 1945 congress of the PPS. XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fo. 51.
than from higher-up’. In this respect, he attributed a pivotal role to cooperative practices, which knew ‘no equal in conveying impulses from interested parties’. Following the cooperative model, therefore, Topiński advocated the creation of ‘supervisory boards’ for every single nationalised factory – on which workforce representatives (selected by the trade unions for larger companies and by factory councils for smaller companies), consumer representatives (those other companies or cooperatives buying up the factory’s produce), and state representatives were each allocated a third of the seats. Even if these boards were to be granted wide-ranging powers, including the right to appoint and dismiss factory management, there was little risk of them and their appointed managers straying from the central plan altogether as far as Topiński was concerned. The state still had other means to discipline ‘unruly’ factories through its investment politics, and would anyway often find the consumer representatives, who, having to fulfil a plan themselves, were dependent on their suppliers to stick to their commitments, on its side. What was certain though, he concluded, was that this method of industrial administration was ‘superior’ to ‘schematic plans’ using ‘a bureaucratic-hierarchic template’ in at least three ways. In the first place, the method had been tried and tested within the cooperative movement, where it had ‘passed its exam’. Secondly, it reduced the dangers associated with ‘an inflexible [and] slow clerical machine’. And thirdly, it allowed for ‘more freedom in social life’ than would be possible under ‘the excessive proliferation of the role of the bureaucratic apparatus’.72

The fact that Morandi and Topiński used such concepts as ‘democratisation’ and ‘social freedom’ already signals how, for the PPS and the PSIUP, grassroots participation in economic planning took on a political at least as much as an economic significance. Indeed, liberating workers from the duty of simply having to carry out third-party commands, irrespective of whether these came from the capitalist or the state, by giving

71 Topiński, ‘Dlaczego spółdzielczość?’, Przegląd Socjalistyczny, 1 July 1947, p. 23.
them a real say over their workplace and over the implementation of government planning was a cornerstone of what the two parties understood as economic democracy. ‘In the methods of the cooperative movement’, declared one of the resolutions adopted at the August 1945 PPS congress, ‘lies the realisation of economic democracy and socialisation’. For the PSIUP, Saraceno heaped even stronger praise upon factory councils. These bodies, he insisted, were ‘the foundation and bedrock of a productive democracy, without which every desire of [worker] control would be likely to remain a gimmick of formal democracy and get bogged down in a bureaucratic exercise’.

At first glance, it would seem as if the ČSSD and the SFIO shared these views. In their publicity, after all, the two parties made sure to present themselves as champions of grassroots participation in the implementation of economic planning. The ČSSD minority within the central trade union leadership, for example, put forward a motion calling for ‘national committees’ as well as ‘regional and central economic stakeholder bodies’ to be involved in lower-level planning. When this proposal fell on deaf ears with ‘the other parties in government’, the ČSSD’s parliamentary group was quick to re-launch it as a draft law. The SFIO’s 1946 ‘Action Programme’, meanwhile, foresaw the creation of ‘central councils’ – made up of worker, consumer, and state representatives – appointing managers and executing plans within each ‘socialised’ sector. ‘[I]nside the [individual] company and in the context of the plan’, moreover, factory councils were eventually to have ‘all the powers that are today possessed by a board of directors’.

Such rhetorical bravado notwithstanding, the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists in fact took very different attitudes towards worker co-

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73 XXVI Kongres [August 1945], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 2029/1, 235/1-12, fos 246-247.
74 ‘Relazione sulla riforma industriale – I consigli di gestione’ [1945], AdL, Camera del Lavoro, Class. 5.2.2.10., Fasc. 9, p. 6.
determination in economic administration compared to their Italian and Polish counterparts. The ČSSD leadership had limited confidence in workers’ (or workers representatives’) abilities to rise above their own narrow concerns and take decisions in their company’s and/or the national interest. Already at the ČSSD’s first post-war congress, Evžen Erban pointed to the many mistakes that the party had made when it ‘romantically idealised the proletariat’ in the past. ‘We know from political praxis and from socialist theory’, he declared, ‘that the working class alone, without political education, comes no further than syndicalism’ – a derogatory reference to the fragmented, sector-based forms of worker representation under the First Republic. And the foremost vehicle for that political education was not workplace co-determination bodies, which, as has been claimed elsewhere, reflected these syndicalist traditions in many ways, but the freshly-united trade union movement. For the trade union movement, explained Erban, ‘offers us great opportunities to influence the widest cadres, even their politically most backward parts, in a socialist spirit’. To achieve that, he concluded, ‘we must especially endeavour for the socialist education of lower-level trade union functionaries, in order for the trade unions to be stripped of all syndicalist tendencies and for them to be infused with a profound socialist class consciousness’.

Whilst Erban called on trade unions to sort out their grassroots, Bohumil Laušman urged industrial managers to do the same. Speaking at a June 1947 conference of ČSSD managers within the nationalised sector, he expressed his surprise at the fact that, in some companies, ‘every normal agenda item’ was passed by the factory council. The factory council, he argued, should neither ‘officiate’ nor ‘do business’. Its role, ‘alongside its traditional social and cultural tasks’, consisted of ‘control’ – and that did ‘of course’ not

mean ‘the control of each file’, but ‘the right [...] to inspect company records from time to
time [...] to assess the quality of its management’. What was more, explained Laušman, the
factory council had the duty ‘to assist management in its currently very difficult tasks’.
Above all, it was to make sure that ‘the workforce [...] realises what nationalisations mean –
what they have to offer to our people, but also which obligations they entail for all staff’.
In the interest of the entire workforce, therefore, the factory council was to undertake ‘that
there are no freeloaders within the company, that everybody is trying to work as hard as
possible, that those who in any way damage production [...] are punished, that there is
minimal turmoil in the production process, and that technological advances are quickly
made’.

The ČSSD leadership, however, increasingly felt that the majority of factory
councils were not fulfilling these tasks. At the party’s November 1947 congress, Václav
Majer delivered a scathing attack on some of their practices, which sounded much more as
an assault on the institution itself. To be sure, Majer granted that there were factory
councils which functioned impeccably. There were ‘others’, though, which ‘delay work
 [...] and burden their companies with superfluous ideas and expenses’. If that already
seemed like a negation of the consultative powers that the government had granted factory
councils, Majer was not finished yet. ‘Many factory councils’, he continued, ‘unduly
interfere in company business, thereby causing conflicts between themselves and
management and, as a consequence of that, unrest that harms production’.

Where leaders on the left (Erban), centre (Laušman), and right (Majer) of the ČSSD
were thus united in their scorn for direct worker participation in economic decision-

79 ‘Projev s. ministra průmyslu B. Laušmana na konferenci soci. demokratických ředitelů a náměstků nár. podniků’ [29 June 1947], NA, Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Pisemnosti související s ústřední, veřejnou a politickou činností B. Laušmana, Karton 26, Projevy B. Laušmana 1940-1947, p. 3.
making, the post-war SFIO saw some divisions on the issue. There was a group of leaders on the left of the SFIO Executive – most notably Suzanne Charpy, Pierre Commin, and Jean Rous – looking at grassroots participation in much the same way as the Italian and Polish socialists. Charpy hailed the two companies that had been placed under full worker self-management after the arrest or flight of collaborationist owners – car-manufacturing Berliet in Lyon and biscuit-producing Brun in Grenoble – as examples of socialism at work.81 Rous, for his part, championed the ‘democratic’ production regime in Labour Britain, ‘where the masses have been associated with the production effort and governmental action’.82 Commin, finally, called for ‘the popular masses’ to be able to participate ‘in the direction and control’ of economic plans.83

Time and again, however, these leaders stumbled upon what Rous dubbed the ‘anti-participationism’ of the SFIO at large.84 Indeed, the great majority of the SFIO leadership, including all of its ministers, were distinctively less enthusiastic about worker participation of almost any kind. The divergences between the pro- and anti-participationists often came to the fore in discussions over the socialist response to strikes. During the February 1947 strike of the Parisian press operators, Rous and Charpy pressed for (members of) the SFIO Executive to meet with a delegation of socialist strikers – stating that socialist leaders should listen to what their rank and file had to say. Such party heavyweights as Mayer and

82 ‘Comité Directeur’ [3 December 1946], OURS, ‘Réunions du Comité Directeur du 4 septembre 1946 à 30 juillet 1947’, p. 114. Rous was probably referring to the British ‘Joint Production Committees’ – factory bodies in which workers’ representatives and management held an equal number of seats and which were entitled to ‘advise’ management in all production-related questions except wages. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Joint Production Committees seem to have captured the imagination of Philip too, who ordered a number of studies into the British experience in the early stages of his tenure as Minister of the National Economy in 1945. Yet, by 1947, as we will now see, Philip’s and most other SFIO leaders’ enthusiasm for worker participation in production had cooled decisively.
Philip, however, took a far more hostile attitude towards any exchange of views with the socialist strikers, who had failed to ask the SFIO leadership for permission before joining the strike. The April 1947 strike at Renault was to fray tempers once more. Charpy and, to a lesser extent, Rous came out in favour of the strike’s demands. What is more, Charpy backed the Renault GSE, which had defied the communist-led factory trade union command to support the strike. It was the actions of these factory socialists in particular, which met with a remarkable brushing-down on the part of Mayer. In their attempts to steal a march upon the communists, he argued, the Renault GSE had ‘insufficiently concerned itself about the political repercussions of their attitude’. In fact, the communists had been ‘courageous’ by remaining ‘faithful to the commitments the government and the CGT have entered into’. ‘We should not try to surpass the communists on the Left’, he concluded – instead, ‘[t]heir language should be ours’.

But even away from the charged atmosphere directly surrounding major strikes, proposals for worker’s voices to be heard in economic administration met with derision amongst senior SFIO leaders. Time after time, then, Charpy’s calls for a far stronger role for workplace co-determination bodies went unheeded. According to Philip, nothing much was to be expected of worker control over production. In small and medium businesses, he explained, bosses could easily manipulate the workforce – as had been the case at Michelin, where workers had been ‘the instruments of management in the black market of tires’. Oreste Capocci, meanwhile, claimed that workers themselves did not view participation within such bodies as factory councils or price control committees as a

realistic way out of their socio-economic predicament. Communist trade unionists had been urging workers to make use of their rights within such bodies for the better part of two years, he pointed out, only for them to abandon these efforts when they realised just how ineffective these were.\(^89\) Perhaps Moch summed up the socialist argument against worker participation best, when he told Charpy that neither the factory councils nor the GSE ‘offer us effective support’. It was clear, he argued, that ‘the working class has not understood its role. We are faced with a stultification of worker morality, caused by more than five years of misery as well as […] by the politics of the Communist Party.’\(^90\)

For both the ČSSD and the SFIO, then, economic power necessarily had to reside with those at the apex of the economic pyramid: with governments and parliaments in questions of macro-economic decision-making, with trade unions in questions of worker representation, and with management in questions surrounding the production effort. The two parties, accordingly, never conceived of economic planning as a process that was to take its lead from the grassroots. As late as June 1947, a leader in the ČSSD’s theoretical weekly claimed that the recent Soviet experiences with planning ‘could be of the greatest assistance to us’.\(^91\) If a SFIO propaganda document on the planned economy did denounce ‘totalitarian’ forms of planning, the economic model it put forward was hardly less centralised and technocratic than that of the Soviet Union. The document after all listed ‘respect for governmental authority’ – allowing the state to ‘fulfil its role, which consists of arbitrating, deciding, and acting’ – and a ‘professional organisation’ – made up of


‘study, liaison, and executive organs’ – as the two key requirements for a planned economy.\textsuperscript{92}

**Conclusion**

We have seen in this chapter that the two sets of parties took completely opposite attitudes towards the question of grassroots participation in political and economic decision-making. These attitudes were closely linked to their conceptions of democracy. For the Italian and Polish socialists, on the one hand, grassroots participation was crucial to the well-being and ultimate survival of democracy. Both in teaching their ‘politically backward’ electorates the fundamentals of democracy and in transforming socio-economic power relations, they argued, participation was the cure for the ills of the interwar state. For the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists, on the other, grassroots participation was to be limited chiefly to voting in elections. Any grassroots challenge to the political or economic decisions of properly elected representatives, they insisted, was a dangerous affront to democracy.

In the last two chapters, two socialist conceptions of democracy have thus clearly come to the fore: a bottom-up participatory conception and a top-down representative conception. Yet, as we have seen, historians only tend to associate the post-war socialist parties with representative and parliamentary politics. For that reason, they have frequently misconstrued the attitudes of the PPS and the PSIUP as contradictory or even deceitful. In his study of the post-war PPS, for example, Jerzy Holzer detects a fundamental paradox in the socialist struggles against the disempowerment of cooperatives in the wake of the January 1947 parliamentary elections. ‘The objective of the [socialist] demands’, he

\textsuperscript{92} ‘Libéralisme ou dirigisme? Position du problème’, Fiches Socialistes – Arguments et Ripostes, July-August 1947, OURS.
argues, ‘was to guarantee societal participation in the administration of the country, but they were formulated immediately after the wishes of that society had been overridden in the coerced and falsified elections’. This argument, however, seems to be based on the dubious assumption that the Polish socialists, like their Czechoslovakian and French counterparts, viewed parliamentary elections as the apogee of participatory politics. As we have seen time and again in the last two chapters, they did not. From their perspective, therefore, it was perfectly consistent to acquiesce in or even support the communist violations of parliamentary democracy whilst at the same time denouncing their attacks on such grassroots participatory bodies as the cooperatives. For it was from the institutions of economic democracy rather than from those of political democracy that they expected the impetus for democratic renewal to come.

The PSIUP, in spite of its close alliance with the PCI in national politics, was often very critical of communist attitudes towards the grassroots too. In a September 1944 open letter to the PCI, Morandi explained that there was a fundamental difference between socialist and communist conceptions of the purpose of a working-class party. Whereas ‘the masses expressed their interests within and governed through the party’ in the socialist conception, he argued, the communist conception saw the party as an ‘instrument to manoeuvre the masses in accordance with the directives assigned to cadres’. Such objections to the communist model extended well beyond the party level. Indeed, the kind of economic system that the Italian and Polish socialists sought to build was in many ways the antithesis of the Soviet system. Even if they rarely mentioned the Soviet Union by name, a strong rejection of the top-down bureaucratic system that had been introduced there after the October Revolution was often implicit in their positions. At the height of the

communist-socialist struggles over cooperatives, chief PPS economist Oskar Lange even appeared to place the pre-war capitalist system and the communist-backed centralised system on the same footing. For now that private capital had been liquidated, he pointed out, ‘a danger equally harmful to democracy’ could emerge ‘in the form of economic concentration in the hands of the state bureaucracy’.  

The post-war ČSSD and the SFIO, conversely, frequently took a more positive view of the economic experiences of the Soviet Union. That is not to argue that the two parties were proponents of the type of micro-planning – with central organs setting meticulous targets for every individual unit in the production process – that had been applied to disastrous effect in the interwar Soviet Union. When the Czechoslovakian social democrats championed the Soviet model of planning, they were certainly referring to the wartime and early post-war Soviet experiment with a more decentralised macro-economic planning system.  

For all intents and purposes, however, this remained a technocratic model in which decision-making powers resided firmly with experts at the factory and ministry level.

Once again, the origins of this divergence between the two sets of parties can be traced back to their opposite experiences during the interwar years. The more radical line on worker self-management and popular participation adopted by the post-war Italian and Polish socialists, then, reflected their interwar disillusions with reformism and with working within the (economic) system more generally. Roman Bäcker has observed, for example, how the interwar PPS’ stance on grassroots participation radicalised as socialists were systematically removed from the state socio-economic apparatus by the Sanacja dictatorship.  

The Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists, by contrast,
had become increasingly embedded in their respective state socio-economic institutions during the interwar years. Alain Bergounioux and Gérard Grunberg have argued in this respect that the Popular Front government brought about ‘a profound change of mentality’ within the SFIO, with ‘technicians’ who had been part of or close to the government embracing Keynesianism and New Deal economics.\(^9^8\)

\(^9^8\) Bergounioux & Grunberg, *Le long remords du pouvoir*, pp. 154-156.
Part Conclusion: Political Reconstruction

In questions of political reconstruction, the historiography of post-war (Western) European socialism has often taken a roundly deterministic line. In the first place, as we have seen, this concerns the socialist attitudes towards the rebuilding of democracy. Historians have repeatedly pointed out that, for the post-war European socialist parties, there was only one trajectory to democratic socialism and that this trajectory ran through elections, parliaments, and constitutions.\(^1\) Exceptions to this rule, as the PPS and PSIUP presented, they have tended to dismiss as anomalies or, especially in the Polish case, even as traitors.\(^2\)

Secondly, and this is a dimension we have touched upon but not yet discussed in detail, historians have much concerned themselves with templates. Comparative histories of post-war (Western) European socialism have generally argued that there was a clear model for socialist parties to follow. This model – of a socialist party at ease with itself in practicing a reformist politics and in seeking to create a ‘capitalism with a human face’\(^3\) – was provided by the electorally most successful parties of the post-war international socialist movement: the British Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party. That the large continental socialist parties failed to repeat these successes such studies typically attribute to their struggles with ‘the vestiges of a Marxist teleology’.\(^4\) For even if most parties de facto embraced reformism, many socialist leaders ‘still didn’t hear the music and

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1. We have discussed this strand of historiography in greater detail in Chapter 6. See e.g.: Berger, ‘Democracy’; Orlow, *Common Destiny*.
2. We have discussed this historiography in greater detail in the Introduction. On the PSIUP as an ‘anomaly’ in the otherwise more successful picture of anti-communist, reformist, and governmental post-war Western European social democracy, see e.g.: Sabbatucci, *Il riformismo impossibile*; Cafagna, *Una strana disfatta*. On the post-war PPS as a party of careerists, crypto-communists, and traitors, see e.g.: Révész, *Die Liquidierung*; Norman Davies, ‘Poland’, in: Martin McIauley (ed.), *Communist Power in Europe 1944-1949*, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1977), pp. 39-57.
continued to proclaim their dedication to classic, prewar ideological goals such as transcending capitalism entirely'.

In our analysis, however, we have found very little to substantiate the claim that the British or ‘Swedish road to socialism [...] became a model for many Social Democrats in Western Europe’. Even the Czechoslovakian social democrats and French socialists, who shared with their British and Swedish counterparts a desire to reach out to non-proletarian segments of the electorate, rarely referred to the British or Swedish experience. In fact, it was chiefly the parties immediately to the right of the ČSSD and the SFIO that sought to emulate the Labour Party in creating a catch-all centre-left or centrist party. In France, the Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR) – one of the parties that would enter into the Radical RGR coalition for the 1946 and 1951 parliamentary elections – was initially the main standard bearer of travaillisme (‘labourism’). In Czechoslovakia, meanwhile, the National Socialist ČSNS, which, much like Labour, rejected Marxist notions of class struggle and oriented itself towards a cooperative socialism, ‘repeatedly petitioned the Labour Party in the autumn of 1946 to establish intensive relations between the two parties’. It was not just in Czechoslovakia and France that the Labour template seems to have exerted a strong attraction upon centrist parties. For even major Christian democratic parties sought to model themselves after the Labour Party.

3 After making this observation, Sheri Berman goes on to contrast the fortunes of socialists and social democrats in post-war Germany, Italy, and France with those of the post-war Swedish social democrats – who, she argues, ‘unlike most of their counterparts elsewhere [...] understood and believed in what they were doing’. See: Sheri Berman, The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe’s Twentieth Century, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 188-199.

6 Berger, ‘Communism, Social Democracy’, p. 6. Whilst generalising about Western Europe as a whole, much of the work on templates takes a narrowly North-Western European perspective – focusing mostly upon such countries as West Germany and the Netherlands.

7 Vinen, Bourgeois Politics, p. 183.


9 Dieter A. Binder, for example, has argued that the Labour Party, along with the Hungarian Smallholders’ Party, was the most important template for the post-war (Catholic) Austrian People’s Party – with the party going so far as to present itself as ‘Austria’s Labour Party’ during the campaign for the 1945 parliamentary elections. See: Dieter A. Binder, ‘“Rescuing the Christian Occident” and “Europe in US”: The People’s Party in Austria’, in: Michael Gehlër & Wolfram Kaiser (eds.), Christian Democracy in Europe Since 1945 Volume 2, (London/New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 139-154, 139.
The ČSSD and the SFIO, by contrast, took their inspiration from their own history rather than from foreign models. Already in mid-1946, and at this early stage his statement must not yet be seen as an exclusive reference to the Soviet model, Bohumil Laušman rejected all foreign models for the development of socialism in post-war Czechoslovakia. ‘[W]hen we talk about socialism’, he explained, ‘we do not mean a socialism that copies foreign models, but [...] we have in mind a socialism that springs from our own history, from our traditions, [...] from the spirit of our people and from the spirit of our nation’.10

That the road to socialism had to take its lead from national histories and traditions was of course something that the Italian and Polish socialists fully supported. When they referred to the British or Scandinavian experiences, accordingly, it was often to point out that that model was simply not applicable to their countries. To be sure, the Saragat-led minority within the PSIUP did point to the British and, to a lesser extent, Scandinavian examples as evidence that socialism could thrive there where it was not associated with communism.11 Yet, Sandro Pertini reflected the majority standpoint when he argued that ‘an educated man’ like Giuseppe Saragat would do better to base his views on ‘the objective Italian situation’ than on that ‘in Britain and other countries’. For despite Saragat’s claims that the ‘international situation [i.e. Labour’s 1945 landslide general election victory – JG]’ showed that there was ‘no longer a danger of a violent return of the reaction’, after all, the reality was that ‘we are emerging from a dictatorship imposed by violence, that Germany is emerging from a dictatorship imposed by violence, and that a dictatorship imposed by violence still exists in Spain’.12

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10 ‘Volby a čs. sociální demokracie’ [1946], NA, Fonds Bohumil Laušman, III Pisemnosti související s ústřední, veřejnou a politicí činností B. Laušmana, Karton 34, Souvicející činnosti v soc. dem. 1928-1948, p. 11.
Indeed, the experiences of other countries that had suffered through (or were still suffering through) a prolonged period of right-wing authoritarian or fascist dictatorship remained the main frame of reference for the post-war PPS and PSIUP alike. This list included Austria, Germany, Hungary, Spain, and increasingly also Greece. It did not include France, however. For all his later criticism of the Third Force, Nenni actually acknowledged in 1945 that France had better prospects of democracy than Italy. In France, he explained, ‘the vast resistance movements’ had given a fresh ‘impulse’ to political life. ‘We don’t have all that’, he continued; ‘we have a fascist, nationalist, [and] conservative basis, which has received severe blows [...] but which we need to watch from hour to hour, from minute to minute, that it does not rear its head again. [...] We have at the centre not, like in other countries, a democratic party, but a large Catholic party which is probably the strongest party electorally in Italy’. It was in this respect that the PSIUP leaders increasingly drew parallels between the situation in Italy and in Poland. In Poland too, after all, a communist-socialist bloc was facing strong Catholic and nationalist opposition. The major difference, of course, was that communists and socialists in Poland had succeeded in introducing such structural economic reforms as nationalisations, land reform, and planning. Far from embracing the British or Swedish road to socialism, therefore, the Italian socialists increasingly sang the praises of the ‘Polish road to socialism’.

All of this goes to demonstrate that we need to broaden our horizons in the study of post-war European socialism. For, at least during the first post-war years, socialist parties

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13 We have seen in Chapter 6 how PSIUP attitudes in domestic politics were shaped by fears of a ‘Greek scenario’. Even if the absence of American troops made a ‘Greek scenario’ far less likely in post-war Poland, PPS leaders increasingly warned of the dangers of sliding to a Greek situation too. See e.g.: Stanisław Szwalbe, ‘Na nowym etapie’, Przegląd Socjalistyczny, 1 March 1947, pp. 3-4, 3.
16 Nenni did so explicitly in a September 1947 article in Avanti!, whereas Basso cited the Polish experience with ‘popular democracy’ as ‘an example’ in a November 1947 meeting of the PSIUP Central Committee. See: Pietro Nenni, ‘La via polacca al socialismo’, Avanti!, 7 September 1947; Degl’Innocenti, Storia del PSI, p. 90.
insisted there was no one-size-fits-all template for success. What might work in one country, after all, could well have disastrous consequences in another. In deciding which templates to and which templates not to follow, the socialist parties were informed first and foremost by their own historical experiences and socio-economic structures. Even if this unsurprising fact has largely been lost on historians pre-occupied with a single template, it was often quite clear to the post-war socialists themselves. When, in 1957, after the PSIUP had finally broken with the PCI, a delegation of the Norwegian Social Democratic Party met with PSIUP leaders, the interlocutors no longer used the same concepts. ‘They talk about class struggle and Marxism like we used to do thirty years ago’, noted Haakon Lie, the leader of the Norwegian delegation; ‘perhaps that is because their socio-economic situation resembles that of us back then’. 17

Conclusion

It is remarkable how small a role the coming of the Cold War has played in our account. To be sure, the four parties made occasional references to the impact or presence of the emerging superpower in their half of the continent: with the French socialists underlining the importance of anti-inflationary measures in order for their country not to become totally dependent upon the Americans or the Polish socialists warning that the Soviets might step in if the political parties would be unable to form a broad-based electoral bloc. But this was all a far cry from the strongly Cold War-dominated picture that so many (socio-) political histories of post-war Europe (as discussed in the introduction) still paint.

In fact, superpower pressure does not appear to have been the foremost concern within any of the four parties. We have seen that the Polish socialists often thought Stalin, who served as quasi-official ‘arbitrator’ between the PPR and the PPS, to be on their side in domestic disputes with the communists. The Czechoslovakian social democrats, for their part, did not initially view the Soviet Union as a malevolent influence either. In a mid-1946 conversation with Koos Vorrink – the Chairman of the Dutch Labour Party – a journalist of the national ČSSD daily claimed that ‘Stalin and Molotov are better Czechs than the Czech communists’.¹ In Western Europe, meanwhile, leading Italian socialists did not even regard the United States as the major foreign actor in Italian politics. When, on the eve of the PCI’s and the PSIUP’s removal from the Italian government, Lelio Basso pointed to the American role in the deterioration of relations with the DC, Luigi Cacciatore was quick to warn not ‘to give excessive weight to American pressures’. If the United States wanted the communists out of the government, he insisted, that was because they were demanding

¹ This does not appear to have been an isolated opinion. Vorrink’s report, after all, notes how President Beneš told Stalin: ‘I am not afraid of you. I am afraid of the Czech communists, who are overly intent on copying Bolshevism’. See: ‘Enkele aantekeningen naar aanleiding van mijn reis naar Tsjecho-Slovakije (27 augustus tot 5 september 1946)’, IISH, Archief Partij van de Arbeid, Box 2286, p. 11.
an end to the economic deadlock within the coalition. ‘Far more serious’ than any American pressure was ‘the pressure from the Vatican’.²

Arguably the greatest divide between the historiographical fixation with the coming of the Cold War and the reality on the ground, however, is provided by the French case. This becomes very clear when we revisit the stormy days of May 1947, when the SFIO, during the political crisis that spelt the end for *tripartisme*, decided to press ahead with a new government that excluded the PCF. Traditional diplomatic history has described this as one of the high points of the early Cold War, which saw months of American pressure for the communists to be removed from the French government pay off.³ Yet, if we look at the actual discussions within the SFIO leadership at the height of the governmental crisis, an entirely different picture emerges. Whereas the international situation barely figured in its deliberations, constitutionalist arguments very much dominated the two sessions that the SFIO Executive held on 4 May 1947. All party leaders agreed that the constitution dictated that the communist ministers, who had voted against their own government’s economic policies, should be dismissed. What divided them, however, was the question of how socialist Prime Minister Paul Ramadier should proceed. Those around SFIO Secretary General Guy Mollet, fearing electoral disasters if the SFIO aligned itself too closely with the parties of the centre and the centre-right, called on Ramadier and the other socialist ministers to resign. Yet, the group of socialist ministers, who would go on to win the crucial vote on governmental participation at the SFIO’s National Council of May 6, considered this a constitutional impossibility. For even though the communists had voted

² ‘Riunione Direzione’ [3 May 1947], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 21, fo. 16.
³ Even if few historians would claim, as the PCF itself did after its removal from the Ramadier government, that the communist ministers were dismissed on the direct orders of the Americans, diplomatic histories of the episode stress that the United States did apply pressure to ‘encourage’ the socialists to form a government without the communists. Melvyn Leffler, for example, notes how Jefferson Caffery – the American Ambassador in Paris – noted in his diary in early May 1947: ‘I told […] Ramadier no Communists in gov[ernment] or else’. Quoted in: Melvyn Leffler, ‘The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan’, *Diplomatic History*, 12/3 (1988), pp. 277-306, 281.
against Ramadier, the ministers insisted, he had survived a parliamentary confidence vote, meaning that, constitutionally, he should stay on. Forcing Ramadier to resign, explained André Philip, would set ‘a serious precedent’, for that would ‘signify the replacement of a constitutional regime with a party regime’. Jules Moch agreed. ‘I want to underline’, he declared, ‘that the decisions of the Party are not irreversible. On the other side, we cannot ask Ramadier to subordinate respect for the Constitution to the decision of the Party’. ⁴

The point here is not so much to emphasise that abiding by the constitution outweighed all other considerations for (a majority within) the post-war SFIO. We have seen that time and again in this thesis. The point is rather to bring out that what historians have often portrayed as (one of) the foremost determinant(s) of socialist behaviour – the mounting tensions between the two emerging superpowers and its ramifications upon the domestic level – was in fact but a subordinate concern for each of the four parties.

If the coming of the Cold War was, at least initially, not a decisive factor in socialist considerations, however, we need to rethink the merits of the East-West prism through which historians have so often studied post-war European socialism and, by extension, post-war Europe as a whole. From the perspective of the liberation, after all, it makes little sense to place industrialised and democratic Czechoslovakia in the same category as rural and backward Poland. Nor is it entirely fair to only weigh the PSIUP against its Western counterparts, frequently countries with completely different political and socio-economic backgrounds, and subsequently to dismiss the Italian socialists as an ‘anomaly’. If we really want to understand why socialist parties from one and the same ‘bloc’ went in opposite directions, we must look across the ‘Iron Curtain’ that still exists in historiography.

With its focus on the set of problems that was common to socialists in East and West – the problems of post-war reconstruction – this thesis has endeavoured to do just that. What does this focus upon post-war socio-economic and political reconstruction tell us about the four parties which remains hidden in studies adopting a Cold War perspective?

First and foremost, it reveals just how strong the continuities between the pre-war and post-war years were. Pre-occupied with projecting back the later Cold War divide upon the first post-war years, the historiography of early post-war Europe has largely lost sight of the longer continuities between pre-war, wartime, and post-war Europe.\(^5\) In reality, however, far from the moment of liberation representing some sort of ‘Zero Hour’, at which the socialists could start from a clean slate, the four parties in many ways picked up where they had left off before the war.

The PPS and the PSIUP, even if they found themselves in national government for the first time in their existence, essentially remained anti-system parties. The PSIUP had been a revolutionary party ever since its ‘maximalists’ had defeated its reformists in 1912. By the end of the First World War, the party was ‘more intransigent, more united, and more left-wing’ than most of its European counterparts, having ‘stood out among west European socialist parties for refusing to support the war’.\(^6\) The subsequent rise of fascism, with the active or tacit support of the right-wing parties and the bourgeoisie, only deepened the socialist conviction that nothing was to be gained from working within the system.

Within the PPS, the move away from a parliamentary and reformist road to socialism came rather later. It was only after the Sanacja regime became increasingly authoritarian in the late 1920s that the party embraced a more radical conception of

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\(^5\) A notable exception to this rule is Martin Conway’s and Peter Romijn’s volume on the question of legitimacy in mid-twentieth-century Europe, which seeks to transcend the artificial historiographical barriers between pre-war, wartime, and post-war by focusing on the 1936-1946 period. See: Conway & Romijn (eds.), *The War on Legitimacy*.

socialism. Still, much as historians have disputed that the post-war PPS reflected the traditions of Polish socialism, many of the party’s attitudes had their roots in the 1930s. Whether it was by making the first overtures towards cooperation with the communists, by adopting a new party programme not excluding a transitory dictatorship, or by championing grassroots democracy and worker self-management, the interwar PPS was very much on the road towards becoming the post-war PPS.

The ČSSD and the SFIO, in contrast, considered themselves part of a system that was worth defending. For both parties, these beliefs had their origins all the way back in the nineteenth century. In its insistence on a robust defence of ‘Republican’ rights and freedoms, the post-war SFIO in many ways reproduced the discourse that the French Left had employed ever since the formation of the Third Republic in 1870: about the ‘two Frances’, a Catholic, monarchical, and authoritarian France and a secular, Republican, and democratic France. It was this notion that had prompted the French socialists to seek alliances with non-proletarian parties in the Republican camp following such political calamities as the Dreyfus Affair and the February 1934 Crisis. When the post-war SFIO perceived the Republic to be under pressure once more, accordingly, the party reverted to what it knew best – uniting with its long-standing Radical allies and with the Catholics reconciled to France’s secular constitution that made up the MRP against the ‘Caesarism’ of General De Gaulle and the new foe of Stalinism.

7 Norman Davies, for example, argues that the leaders of the WRN and the London PPS ‘followed the mainstream of non-Marxist Polish socialism’, whereas the party that became part of the Lublin government was ‘not a continuation of the mainstream PPS, but a tiny splinter group’. He is of course right that the Lublin PPS did not initially reflect the interwar PPS. Yet, by alluding to a ‘mainstream of non-Marxist Polish socialism’, he completely disregards the developments within the PPS under the Sanacja regime. See: Norman Davies, Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 75-81.


9 On how the socialists and Radicals pulled together in the face of such crises, see e.g.: Daniela Neri-Ultsch, Sozialisten und Radicaux – eine schwierige Allianz: Linksbündnisse in der Dritten Französischen Republik, 1919-1938, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005).

10 This was how Léon Blum put it when, in October 1947, he claimed that Republican freedoms were under attack from both the Left and the Right: ‘There exists a communist danger against personal and civil liberties.
If the post-war Czechoslovakian social democrats frequently drew on a nineteenth-century discourse too, theirs was one of national unity rather than division. In their view, history had pitted an overwhelmingly democratic Czech(oslovakian) nation against those wanting to impose ‘foreign’ dictatorial models on it. As it became increasingly clear that the communists were seeking to implement a foreign model of their own, therefore, the post-war ČSSD drew ever closer to the centrist and centre-right parties with which it had historically held up ‘Czech’ values.

Secondly, a focus upon post-war reconstruction highlights the social realities underlying political outcomes far better than a Cold War perspective does. The implicit or explicit assumption in many socio-political histories of post-war Europe, as we have seen, is that the working class and the Left more generally came out of the Second World War in a strengthened position. That the concomitant radical challenge to a (state) capitalist restoration unravelled so quickly, such histories often attribute to the coming of the Cold War. The defeat of the more radical policies that these accounts tend to impute to the post-war socialist parties, frequently on the basis of anecdotal evidence, are then taken to symbolise the frustration of the radical aspirations of the liberation.

This thesis has instead demonstrated that the weaknesses in the socialist position can be traced back to social realities wholly unrelated to the Cold War. In the first place, there were structural factors working against the post-war Left. The social consequences of the Second World War put the working class and the parties of the Left at a disadvantage vis-à-vis other social groups and non-proletarian parties. The urban working class, as we have seen, was hit particularly hard during the final stages of the war and the early stages of the liberation. On the receiving end of bombing campaigns, of (hyper-) inflation, and of the black market, ordinary workers certainly did not feel their position had strengthened.

But against the same liberties there exists a Caesarist danger of which we must be aware, before which we do not have the right to close our eyes’. Quoted in: Hitchcock, *France Restored*, p. 85.
The same was true for the working-class parties. Having for years or sometimes even for decades been the foremost focal point of state repression, left-wing organisations hardly emerged from the war in a stronger position than their centre-right rivals. This was what Pietro Nenni was referring to when he told the September 1944 PSIUP National Council that the post-war DC found itself in a ‘privileged situation’ by comparison with the PCI and the PSIUP. For ‘when we were in prison, or in exile, or liquidated’ under fascism, the Christian democrats still had their ‘natural centre of activity in parishes, so that [their organisation] never vanished [completely]’.11

The second weakness was more peculiar to socialism itself. Socialist parties, after all, tended to struggle more with the socio-economic demands of the reconstruction effort than their direct rivals to the left and right. In the face of the manifold economic difficulties of the first post-war years, socialist support was squeezed from two sides: with middle classes threatened by inflation rallying to the (centre-) right and hungry workers opting for the demagogically stronger communists.12 Socialist leaders were aware that the economic tide was very much against them. Philip, for instance, repeatedly pointed out that socialism presupposed prosperity.13 For the PPS, Julian Hochfeld was more elaborate. ‘Socialism’, he explained, ‘does not come to us in easy circumstances’. Instead, the ‘revolution takes place in times of crisis [...] on rubble and ruins’. This had immediate political

12 We have seen in Chapter 6 that the ČSSD and SFIO leaderships claimed that, even if the communists were co-signatories to and vocal supporters of the austerity packages that post-war governments implemented, their supreme demagogic skills still allowed them to be the main beneficiary of the popular dissatisfaction these packages generated. It was not just the Czechoslovakian social democrats and the French socialists making such claims. Commenting upon the situation in Hungary in January 1947, Denis Healey explained that the social democratic Minister of Industry had recently presented the government’s Three Year Plan – which he would doubtlessly have agreed with his communist coalition partners beforehand. As the Plan ‘inevitably gives priority to capital investment and agricultural development’, Healey noted, it would ‘entail [popular] sacrifices which Communist demagogy can easily exploit’. See: ‘Hungary – The Political Prospect’, LHASC, Labour Party Archives, International Department, Box 8.
consequences, as ‘the working class is hungry, is dissatisfied [and] all sorts of people prey on that’.

For the socialist parties, therefore, local socio-economic reconstruction was linked intimately to national political reconstruction. Their weaknesses on the ground, after all, were replicated in the national arena. Through the prism of post-war reconstruction, we can thus formulate an alternative explanation for the rapid decline in the fortunes of the four parties under review in this thesis. Contrary to what many socialists believed at the moment of liberation, and to what most historians have suggested, their position was never that strong to begin with. Far from the Cold War intervening in a decisive manner in their fate, hence, that fate was sealed in large part by the social, economic, and political consequences of the interwar and war years.

That is of course not to argue that the coming of the Cold War had no part whatsoever in the post-war trajectories of the four parties. Especially for Czechoslovakia and Poland, we cannot completely disregard the role played by the Soviet Union. Even if the Prague Coup was mostly the work of the Czechoslovakian communists themselves, they only really abandoned the idea of a ‘national road to socialism’ after being told so by their Soviet overlords at the founding conference of the Cominform. In post-war Poland, moreover, Soviet security forces were a constant presence that intervened directly in the ‘civil war’ between the government and the remnants of the wartime underground. It is impossible to imagine Poland going communist without this Soviet intervention. If the American role in France and Italy was nowhere near as direct or decisive, it certainly figured in socialist considerations. SFIO leaders were perfectly aware that it would be easier for France to secure vital American economic assistance if the communists were out

14 Rada Naczelnna [31 March 1946], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalizacyjna, 2032/1, 235/II-6, fo. 14.
of the government.\textsuperscript{15} Nenni, for his part, argued that the socialists had always known that the United States were seeking ‘hegemony’ in Europe, going so far as to cast the dubious claim that ‘American meddling’ had ‘prevented the materialisation of a popular revolution’ in post-war Italy.\textsuperscript{16}

The influence that the two emerging superpowers wielded in their respective ‘blocs’, however peripheral to the ultimate party-political positioning of the four parties, highlights some of the limitations to the East-West comparisons undertaken in this thesis. To be sure, the ČSSD and the SFIO responded in much the same manner to the increasingly authoritarian behaviour of the communists. But the fact that the French socialists were able and the Czechoslovakian social democrats were unable to remove the communists from government had everything to do with their geo-political location. For whereas the United States had insisted that the PCF would dissolve its (armed) resistance organisations in the wake of the liberation of France, the Soviet liberators of Czechoslovakia had allowed the KSČ to entrench its position in the state and security apparatus. If, moreover, the PPS and the PSIUP raised similar objections to ‘bourgeois’ democracy in principle, their different geo-political positions prompted the two parties to take very different attitudes towards the maintenance of ‘bourgeois’ legalism in practice. Whereas the Polish socialists knew they would be guaranteed of Soviet backing if they overstepped the confines of constitutionalism in their struggles with the ‘reaction’, after all, the Italian socialists feared that any departure from a strict legalism and constitutionalism

\textsuperscript{15} In what was one of the few mentions of the United States in SFIO Executive sessions during the May 1947 crisis of tripartisme, Jules Moch explained that he was ‘convinced that ravitaillement would be better assured by the United States if the communists disappeared from the government’. ‘Comité Directeur’ [2 May 1947], OURS, ‘Réunions du Comité Directeur du 4 septembre 1946 à 30 juillet 1947’, p. 345.

\textsuperscript{16} ‘Riunione della Direzione’ [18 October 1947], ISRT, Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 21, fo. 74.
would plunge their country in a civil war that could only be won by the US-backed Right.\(^{17}\)

To a large extent, then, this thesis has dealt with the perceptions informing socialist decisions rather than with the actual validity of these perceptions. That begs the question of how relevant, beyond demonstrating that there were remarkable differences within and parallels across the two purported blocs, its findings are. For, despite the post-war ČSSD and PPS adopting widely divergent attitudes towards their communist coalition partners, both parties would be forced into a merger with the communists in 1948. Similarly, much as the PSIUP and SFIO found themselves in opposite positions from May 1947 onwards, both parties would remain well behind the communists in electoral terms for at least the following two decades. Did the opposite courses that the two sets of parties embarked upon during the first post-war years, therefore, have any longer-term impact?

There is reason to believe that this is indeed the case. For the Italian and Polish socialists, one of the foremost rationales for the communist-socialist united front was to keep the communists from reverting to their interwar extremism and sectarianism. The Unity of Action Pact, Nenni explained in June 1945, offered ‘the possibility to strongly bind to democracy [...] a very strong current in the country, [but] a current which can have the tendency to turn its back upon the democratic method’.\(^{18}\) To abandon the Pact, he warned his intra-party opponents later that year, ‘would make a part of the working class revert to extremist positions’.\(^{19}\) Insofar as the Polish PZPR and the PCI became the most moderate communist parties in Cold War Eastern and Western Europe respectively, the

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\(^{17}\) This seems to have been one further point upon which the Italian and Polish socialists agreed. In his report of the January 1948 PSIUP congress, Hochfeld expressed doubts as to whether the Italian Popular Front would obtain a majority in the April 1948 parliamentary elections. If communists and socialists would indeed be unable to form a government, he continued, the only way for them to prevent ‘the liquidation of parliamentary democracy in Italy’ was to take up ‘the role of a responsible opposition’. See: ‘Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu na XXVI kongres Włoskiej Partii Socjalistycznej’ [January 1948], AAN, Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Wydz. Zagraniczny, 2244/1, 235/XIX-7, fo. 43.

\(^{18}\) ‘Relazione sul convegno socialista – democratico cristiano’ [1 June 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2188, p. 10.

\(^{19}\) ‘Comitato Centrale’ [17 October 1945], ACS, Carteggio Nenni, Busta 87, Fasc. 2189, p. 21.
Italian and Polish socialists may well have succeeded in these designs to temper communist extremism. The extent of the socialist role, therefore, in making sure that Poland would be the only country in the Soviet bloc not to go through the horrors of Stalinist totalitarianism\textsuperscript{20} or in putting the PCI on the road towards Eurocommunism\textsuperscript{21} merits further scholarly attention.

In the longer run, and especially in post-1989 Europe, though, a legacy of wilful and longer-term cooperation with the discredited communists would not work to the advantage of socialist parties. For that reason, it is perhaps not surprising that today, out of the four countries under review in this thesis, a direct successor of the post-war socialist party remains a major player in national politics only in the Czech Republic and France. In fact, the ČSSD – which was re-established under the same name in 1989 – is unique in post-communist Europe for being the sole dominant centre-left party that is not a communist successor party.

The long-term impact of the decisions the four parties made between the liberation and the onset of the Cold War in 1947/48 thus constitutes one theme that warrants more research. On the basis of this thesis, two further avenues for future research can be identified. The first is socialist moralism. It is truly striking how prejudiced and moralistic post-war socialist leaders, who were, after all, still leading nominally progressive organisations, often tended to be. Whether it was their deeply dismissive attitudes towards women, their obsession with the ‘moral decay’ amongst youngsters, or their general assumption that their populations needed to be re-educated, there was frequently very little indeed separating socialist leaders from their conservative counterparts on socio-cultural issues. A comparative study of the post-war European socialist parties and the question of

\textsuperscript{20} On how communist Poland, unlike all its Eastern European neighbours, never became a totalitarian state, see e.g.: Andrzej Walicki, \textit{Polskie zmagania z wolnością: widziane z boku}, (Cracow: Universitas, 2000).

‘moral reconstruction’ – a theme thus far associated chiefly with Christian parties and politicians as we have seen – would therefore certainly be welcome. The second promising avenue for future research is the comparative social history of post-war Europe. It is not that no research has been conducted on the post-war history of labour and everyday life, but much of it has a narrow national focus and remains rooted within the equally narrow ‘window of opportunity’ narrative. By analysing some of the post-war social phenomena with a pan-European scope – spiralling inflation, the black market, and wildcat strikes – this thesis has raised serious doubts about the existence of a ‘window of opportunity’. But further comparative research into such social phenomena is required to fully explain how an essentially restorationist Europe, communist in the East and bourgeois in the West, emerged from the stormy post-war years.
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Fondo Lelio Basso

Fondazione Nenni, Rome (FN)
Carteggio Nenni

Istituto Nazionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia, Milano (INSMLI)
Fondo CLN Regionale Lombardia
Fondo Lia Bellora

Istituto Storico della Resistenza in Toscana, Florence (ISRT)
Fondo Foscolo Lombardi

Netherlands
International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (IISH)
Archief Partij van de Arbeid

Poland
Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw (AAN)
Akta Stanisława Szwalbego
Fonds Henryk Wachowicz
Polska Partia Socjalistyczna

Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, Łódź (APŁ)
DK PPS Czerwona
DK PPS Fabryczna
DK PPS Górna
DK PPS Ruda Pabianicka
DK PPS Śródmieście Lewa
DK PPS Śródmieście Prawa
B: Published Documents


C: Newspapers and Periodicals

Avanti!
Avanti! (Milanese edition)
Bollettino dell’Istituto di Studii Socialisti
Cil
Il Giornale dell’Emilia
La Revue Socialiste
Le Marteau Piqueur: Feuille de propagande du Groupe socialiste des Mines de Ledoux
Nový Den
Orientamenti: Bollettino di Commento e Indirizzo Politico
Právo Lidu
Przegląd Socjalistyczny
Quarto Stato
Sesto Proletaria
Socialismo
Tribune

D: Online Resources

URL: http://www.lours.org/defaultacae.html?pid=373

‘Discours de Léon Blum sur les devoirs et les tâches du socialisme’ [20 May 1945].
E: Literature


Nehring, Holger, ‘What was the Cold War?’, The English Historical Review, 127 (2012), pp. 920-949.


Walicki, Andrzej, Polskie zmagania z wolnością: widziane z boku, (Cracow: Universitas, 2000).


Wilford, Hugh, The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?, (London: Frank Cass, 2003).


# Appendix 1: UPR16 Form

## FORM UPR16

### Research Ethics Review Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information</th>
<th>Student ID:</th>
<th>UP632577</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Name:</td>
<td>Jan-Arend De Graaf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department: SSHLS, FHSS</td>
<td>First Supervisor: Professor Wolfram Kaiser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date: 1 October 2011 (or progression date for Prof Doc students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Mode and Route</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>MPhil</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>Integrated Doctorate (NewRoute)</th>
<th>Prof Doc (PD)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title of Thesis:</th>
<th>Across the Iron Curtain: European Socialism between World War and Cold War, 1943-1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study.

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:
(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Candidate Statement:**

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):</th>
<th>N.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signed: Jan-Arend de Graaf</th>
<th>Date: 2 April 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Student)</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If you have *not* submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered ‘No’ to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain why this is so:

Historical project; research operates exclusively with publicly accessible written archival sources; no interviews or any other research methods that could raise ethical issues; see also email exchange between Wolfram Kaiser and David Carpenter, 18 May 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signed: Jan-Arend de Graaf</th>
<th>Date: 2 April 2015</th>
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