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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

COMMUNIST PARTY
Personalities

THE RISE OF GOTTWALD

SOURCE STOCKHOLM : NEURATH Alois, one of the founders of the Czech Communist Party, who himself used GOTTWALD and sponsored his first positions within the Party, For further personalia on NEURATH please see 00-1.229, sent Jan.23.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : From 1920 onwards.

EVAL. COMMENT I. : As this is the personal viewpoint and observation of the subsource, this report is not evaluated.

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GOTTWALD's most outstanding gift is his instinct to always choose the side which will emerge the strongest, says NEURATH Alois, one of the founders of the Czech Communist Party. NEURATH, who was first secretary of the Czech Communist Party 1921-26, was himself responsible for introducing the young carpenter apprentice /GOTTWALD/ into the ranks of Party activists. GOTTWALD was then as incapable of independent acting as he is now, says NEURATH who is now living in Sweden. Communist efforts to make GOTTWALD the "historical leader" of the Czech party appear ridiculous in view of the fact that he was allowed to play a role only as a stooge to men of greater importance and capabilities. The men who directed GOTTWALD were mainly NEURATH, FREJKA - who used to write most of his speeches for him - and SLANSKY. Now that NEURATH is a refugee in Sweden and FREJKA and SLANSKY hanged, GOTTWALD obediently acts on MOSCOW's instructions.

GOTTWALD left NEURATH in the lurch in exactly the right moment. In 1926, when NEURATH definitely

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refused to join the STALIN-group and had told STALIN so in a three hour interview arranged by KUUSINEN, GOTTWALD attached himself to the STALIN-fraction, which then appeared the strongest.

"To understand the situation in 1926, a little background must be given", NEURATH says in an RFE-interview. "The Czech Communist Party was born in 1921, when the Czech and German Communist fraction of the social democratic party, announced their amalgamation. They had left the social democrats in 1920."

"Right from the start, the central committee had to fight against the opposition of its members ŠMERAL, ZAPOTOCKÝ and NOSEK. The trio was dissatisfied with the policies of the central committee and particularly annoyed at the fact that there were too many Jews and Germans in leading positions. They also criticized our strong Comintern-allegiance. Today they would be called anti-Semitic nationalists."

"The ŠMERAL-group was in the minority in the central committee and could do nothing to change the policies pursued by the leaders of the "majority" who were, i.e. JÍLEK, Dr. HAUSER and myself. We were supported by the COMINTERN-leader ZINOWIEW."

"Since the ŠMERAL-group had actually succeeded in causing some wild rows with "majority"-men in the local provincial organizations, I decided to engage a number of new men in these organizations. They were to keep the "majority"-men in check. The best of them would be allowed to come to work in PRAGUE."

To find these new men, NEURATH in 1924 ordered the local party secretaries loyal to him and the "majority" to dig up in their districts young Czech workmen. Those considered adequate for their task to oppose the ŠMERAL-opposition, were sent to him to party headquarters in PRAGUE.

"At the beginning of 1925, the secretary of the Mährisch-Ostrau group reported that one member of the group was a young carpenter apprentice, who had at several occasion spoken against the

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ŠMERAL-"minority", NEURATH continues. "I got a bit interested and asked the young man to be sent to me. That was GOTTWALD Clement, whose entré was a bit of a failure, because he was no Czech but a Slovak, who could not even write Czech decently. His German was not very good either."

"But talking to the young man, whose only remarkable features were his extremely bourgeois clothes, I gained the impression that GOTTWALD was a very obedient tool. I was convinced that he would be true to the interests of our "majority"-fraction. However, he could not be entrusted with any responsible job, because neither his intelligence nor his education would permit it. Therefore I decided to send GOTTWALD to BRATISLAVA. He was to work for the BRATISLAVA communist weekly as a local reporter. The magazine received all political material from headquarters in PRAGUE and GOTTWALD as local reporter had not much to do, neither much to mess up."

The stock-taking of party resources then brought men like KOPECKÝ, DOLANSKÝ and the two SLANSKY-brothers to PRAGUE. They were considered intelligent enough to be kept by the party headquarters.

However, towards the end of 1925, the differences between NEURATH and the ŠMERAL people within party committee and secretariat, reached a climax. NEURATH was therefore compelled to call on a lot of second-rate men whose only merit was their loyalty. Hence the reappearance of the BRATISLAVA-reporter GOTTWALD. He was called to PRAGUE. His task became to act as a kind of liaison officer to the local groups in Slovakia.

"It was the simplest kind of work. All he had to do was to answer incoming letters and to arrange for the Slovaks to get some lecturers or propaganda material. Yet he was incapable of coping with it alone. He called upon the central committee - and mostly upon me - to answer the most basic questions. He also forced the central committee to OK every letter he had written. But he was very diligent, always polite and modest and demonstrated unconditional submission. I suppose he was quite pleased with himself. After all, the job he held now was much better paid than the one he had held as a carpenter apprentice in Mährisch Ostrau.

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He was grateful and he was fully aware of the fact that he had to thank the "majority" for his improved conditions. In general it can be said about GOTTWALD that he is always grateful - but to his superiors only."

"In those days I used to invite the younger men working in the party central to my home now and then. We spent many evenings and Sunday afternoons discussing political problems, the aims of the Czech Communist party, Cominter-policies, various ideologies, etc. My aim was to let such discussions reveal the abilities of my younger collaborators and, also, to influence them politically."

"During such discussions, GOTTWALD strengthened the impression he had made upon me at our first meeting. He did not really seem interested in politics at all, ideological problems seemed not to exist for him and I do not believe that he had ever read a book on ideological communism. At our small parties, where men like SLANSKY, FREJKA and KOPECKY were present, GOTTWALD was the mute audience. However, we knew that this inconspicuous little party official belonged to the "majority" and we thought that we could rely upon. And so we kept him around."

In the meantime, the ŠMERAL-opposition was determined to conquer the "majority" group at the next party congress and all of 1926 was devoted to avoid this. The "majority" sent hosts of lecturers to all parts of Czechoslovakia in an effort to keep down the opposition. GOTTWALD was also sent out to address some party meetings in Slovakia. According to reports sent to NEURATH by the various party secretaries he proved a weak speaker. But the contents of his speeches were alright, because Ludvík FREJKA used to write them for him or at least correct GOTTWALD's own writings.

In 1926, NEURATH went to MOSCOW to participate in the Comintern meeting /March/ where the differences between STALIN on the one hand and ZINOWIEV and KAMENIEV on the other, were the main subject of debate. NEURATH was with ZINOWIEV. In PRAGUE, ŠMERAL and his collaborators, were with STALIN.

"During my absence, ŠMERAL summoned all employees of the party headquarters to tell them, one by one,

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that I was finished because of my siding with ZINOWIEW," NEURATH says. "ŠMERAL warned everybody that they would fall together with me unless they changed over to his "minority" at once. The outcome of his talk with GOTTWALD was that GOTTWALD switched over to become one of the most obedient tools of the "minority" STALIN-supporting group. The former embittered enemy of ŠMERAL and my "loyal" supporter, performed an easy right-about turn and became my embittered enemy. He demonstrated his obedience to his new master at the very first opportunity. After my return from MOSCOW, the central committee of the Czech party proposed a resolution against me. GOTTWALD was one of the most ardent supporters of this resolution. And when KUUSINEN, then representative of the Comintern, tried to get me nominated as candidate for the central committee, GOTTWALD again was amongst those who opposed this nomination most violently. I am convinced that he did not have the slightest understanding of the Comintern-problems, no notion what the fights within the Russian party were about, nor do I believe that he knew anything about STALIN, ZINOWIEW or KAMENIEW. All he knew, and all he knows today, is that he wants to be with the stronger party."

Having once and for all displayed his loyalty to ŠMERAL, GOTTWALD was in a bad spot when NEURATH's comrade JÍLEK succeeded him as party secretary in 1926. He kept rather quiet, went on asking everybody what to answer the Slovakian groups whose letters he continued to receive and tried to balance between the "majority" and the "minority". Sometimes he would vote for the NEURATH-JÍLEK-line, then again, frightened of ŠMERAL, he would cast his vote for him.

In 1927, JÍLEK also fell and the "minority" at last came in with ZÁPOTOCKÝ as first party secretary. His position was, however, a bit precarious, since STALIN had never forgiven the anti-Comintern attitude of the "minority". STALIN never accepted ZÁPOTOCKÝ as the leader of the Czech party, but gave all his instructions to Rudolf SLÁNSKÝ. SLÁNSKÝ, who was now the leader of the "majority", also upheld relations with the Comintern. He did not, however, want to be party secretary. He was

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no worker, but an intellectual and, moreover, a Jew and felt that his appointment as party secretary would have been misused by the more or less anti-Semitic "minority". He therefore looked around for a stooge. And he found GOTTWALD. GOTTWALD, who had been a worker, who was no intellectual, who was no Jew and he had kept rather silent during the struggles between the two factions within the party. He was good enough for SLANSKY's purpose.

And so the renegade from the "majority", GOTTWALD, now hurried back to the "majority" as fast as he could. He had found out that SLANSKY was supported by MOSCOW and that MOSCOW was stronger than the "minority". SLANSKY took him because he was adequate and because he knew that he would be perfectly satisfied with the fiction of importance since he was too unable a man to be really important. They worked very well together. GOTTWALD grew conspicuously more active: he made speeches and wrote articles and he submitted resolutions to the central committee. All on SLANSKY's orders which he carried out like a slave.

"Now and then, however, there occurred some embarrassing and revealing episodes", NEURATH recalls. "GOTTWALD's first appearance in parliament, in 1930, e.g., was a complete failure. For some reason or other PREJKA was absent and SLANSKY too busy and GOTTWALD had written his speech quite alone. The subject of the speech was some unimportant domestic issue which I have forgotten. But his speech consisted of nothing but rehearsed clichés put together foolishly and his square, bourgeois attired apparation was so irresistably comical, that the whole house began to laugh at him. Even the communist MP:s rocked with laughter and finally GOTTWALD himself laughed at himself. His was, as the papers wrote, the funniest speech ever held by a Communist MP."

"The grotesque situation within the party lasted until the outbreak of the war ZÁPOTOCKY was the secretary, but SLANSKY was the most powerful man. And GOTTWALD acted on his behalf. The SLANSKY-GOTTWALD arrangement was not even broken by the war years and SLANSKY continued to order GOTTWALD about. Whenever GOTTWALD tried to act on his own there was some disaster. As in 1947 when GOTTWALD

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wanted to accept the MARSHALL plan during SLÁNSKÝ's absence.

"Actually the first action GOTTWALD did without a SLÁNSKÝ order was to arrest SLÁNSKÝ. He sacrificed him without hesitation, probably as soon as he found out that MOSCOW had retracted their support of the man thanks to whom he, GOTTWALD, had emerged from the gray rank-and-file of the party. He also sacrificed FREJKA, who had been his "source of inspiration" throughout the years, and who had written almost all his speeches. It is impossible to know who the present director of GOTTWALD is, who has been sent to replace SLÁNSKÝ and FREJKA, who had kept him running for such a long time. Maybe ČEPICKA has been ordered to do so."

"GOTTWALD himself probably does not care much from whom he receives his orders. He relies blindly upon his instinct to tell him when time is ripe for another betrayal. He will then unwaveringly choose the strongest, whether MALENKOVISTS, BERLISTS, TITOISTS or anything else. Because he is a GOTTWALDIST and nothing else."

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