

CZECH HISTORY

LECTURE 11

Spiritual and political crisis of old Austria. New ideal of DEMOCRACY and HUMANITY, seen as a counterbalance to authoritarian monarchies. The victorious Allies, Britain, France, USA - models of parliamentary democracy.

US president Woodrow Wilson: 8th January 1918, 14 points: war aims of the Allies: permanent moral principles of democratic politics, openness of diplomatic negotiations, economic and political freedom, peaceful solution to international conflicts, right of nations to self-determination, the observance of the ethnic principle when setting borders of countries.

Czech resistance both at home and abroad allied itself with the Western democracies.

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, leader of the Czechs, saw the ideal of humanity as the basic moral fundament of Czech democratic politics. Everyday petty work. Education for democracy, moral education on a religious basis without religious intolerance. "Democracy is based on the enlightenment and science, critical thinking, openness of politics."

Originally, Czechs wanted to democratise Austria - Hungary, but during the war, Masaryk decided to go for an independent Czechoslovak national state. He managed to persuade Wilson about the need of a new organisation of Central Europe. The Czechoslovak state was to be a barrier between Russia and Germany. (Karel Kramář wanted a Czech monarchy associated with tsarist Russia.)

Masaryk believed like Havlíček and Palacký that Czechs and Slovaks were naturally related.

18th October 1918 - Washington Declaration: (published in Paris) basic democratic principles and foreign policy of the new Czechoslovak State.

Problems of Czechoslovakism appeared later.

The Czechoslovak Republic did not manage to realise the humanist and democratic ideal fully, but it has adhered to it the longest of all Central European countries. From its inception, Czechoslovakia was confronted with totalitarian ideologies of fascism and communism and eventually succumbed to them. Power games. Similarities between fascism and communism.

1st world war: incredible material destruction and hugely negative moral impact. Demagogues: "All the evil has been caused by liberalism, by freedom of speech, by ruthless drive for profit".

Yet totalitarianism first arose in Russia. Messianic feeling (Russian saved Europe from Tartar subjugation) adopted marxism -> ideology of communism and a bolshevik system. Traditional Russian antisemitism against Western liberalism. Education and entrepreneurship are harmful for eternal salvation. Pride of being a miserable, human creature.

Fascism first appeared in October 1922 in Italy, grew of 19th century radical nationalist and socialist ideas. Less strident egalitarianism, only a disciplined citizen.

Authoritarian regimes of Horthy in Hungary and Chancellor Dolfuss in Austria close to fascism. German National Socialism was much more chauvinistically intolerant and filled with racial hatred. Serious economic crisis in Germany. German Nazism played on the "injustices" of the Versailles peace after 1918.

After Hitler's accession to power in 1933, one-party state in Germany. (The German National Socialist Workers Party). Never abolished private ownership. Concentration camps were secret, most of the eradication of the Jews during Second World War.

Totalitarian systems used the ancient human desire to belong a to group. All failures were caused by the enemy. No need to look for causes. The regime was the end of historical development.

The interest of the Class, Race or Nation is above all. Propaganda machinery, run by the leadership, could say something different every day. Only adherents or enemies. Constant purges. Insecurity, obedience.

Fuehrer principle. Party and state structure. Regional rulers. Struggle of all against everyone. The Party is interested in Power for its own sake (George Orwell, 1948)

FROM VERSAILLES TO MUNICH

In the autumn 1918, the Allies managed fully to paralyse the military resistance of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Emperors of both countries, Wilhelm I and Charles I had to accept peace terms from Woodrow Wilson. Reforms. Austria-Hungary had to give political autonomy to all nations and federalise the state structures.

Germany: November 1918, revolution, proclamation of a democratic Weimar Republic. Austria-Hungary disintegrated into Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), the remaining parts joined re-created Rumania, Poland.

October 1918 - the Czechoslovak National Council was recognised as a provisional government. on the basis of the Washington Declaration.

28th October 1918, spontaneous proclamation of the Republic, on hearing of the capitulation of Austria-Hungary.

On 28th October 1918 in the morning, the agrarian Antonín Švehla and social democrat František Soukup took over the War Cereals Institute, to control the distribution of food.

Afternoon: demonstration on Wenceslas Square in Prague, in the evening, the National Council published its first law. The taking over of power continued on 29th October.

On 30th October 1918, Slovaks joined the Czechs in the Martin Declaration. Slovak National Council met in Turčianský Svatý Martin.

PEACE CONFERENCE IN PARIS from 18th January 1919. The Supreme Council, US president Woodrow Wilson, French Premier Georges Clemenceau and British Prime Minister Lloyd George. Greatest support for the Czechs from France, which was interested in weakening Germany. US and Britain had reservations about how to determine the borders in ethnically difficult regions.

Czechoslovakia's frontiers were guaranteed in the historical form of the Lands of the Czech Crown by the Versailles Peace Treaty with Germany (28.6.1919) and Saint-Germain treaty with Austria. (10.9.1919). Slovakia and Ruthenia joined Czechoslovakia through the Trianon Treaty with Hungary (4.6.1920)

THE CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONAL COUNCIL had legislative and executive powers as a temporary government. Masaryk was in the US until November 1918, Beneš was in Paris, etc. The Council extended itself into a Czechoslovak National Assembly (254 members) in November 1918. Masaryk was elected President of the Republic.

SLOVAKIA remained under Hungarian rule. The National Council decided to occupy Slovakia militarily. Hungarians tried to stop this, but France protested.

Vavro Šrobár - minister for Slovakia.

Catastrophic situation of Slovakia: there was no Slovak secondary school or university, only 344 elementary Slovak schools in 1913 (3500 Hungarian ones).

On 21st March, 1919 a Soviet Republic was proclaimed in Hungary. Soviet-style dictatorship, led by Béla Kun. Šrobár: a curfew in Slovakia on 25th March and on 7th April, Czechoslovak troops occupied all territory of Slovakia, up to a new demarcation line 50 - 80 kilometres within Hungary. Hungarian Red Army counterattacked, occupied two thirds of Slovakia. 16th June 1919, Prešov: Soviet Slovak Republic. But on 13th June, a peace conference determined a definitive border between Hungary and Slovakia.

SUDETEN GERMANS

Bohemian Germans started calling themselves Sudeten Germans before the 1st World War and wanted to create an independent German province in Northern Bohemia, called Deutschboehmen. and other similar regions in South Bohemia and South Moravia. This was approved by the Austrian parliament.

The Czechoslovak National Council did not recognise these and occupied these territories by military force. The German inhabitants submitted themselves, but involuntarily. Loss of life, when Sudeten German

demonstrations on 4th March 1919, when the Austrian parliament met.

THE ACQUISITION OF RUTHENIA

Used to be a part of Hungary before the war. Most Ruthenians living in the US wanted to join Czechoslovakia. Political views in Ruthenia were fragmented, a backward place. Rumanians, fighting communist Hungary, occupied Ruthenia until August 1919.

Ruthenians used six dialects, so it was difficult to set an official language for schools. Hungarians, Jews, Rumanians, Germans.

STRUGGLE ABOUT THE TĚŠÍN REGION

with Poland. In November 1918, Poland occupied the Těšín region, Orava and Spiš. Seven day military conflict in January 1919. Division of the Těšín region in July 1920.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEGIONS

had contributed to the war effort in France, Italy, Russia. In France, 9600 Czech legionnaires, in Italy 20 000, in Russia 55 000, 4000 of which died.

In Siberia, although they wanted to be neutral, the Czech legions fought the Red Army. In 1919-1920 they were evacuated from Vladivostok.

CZECHOSLOVAK INDEPENDENCE

had some negative economic consequences, but Czech Lands had 60 - 70 per cent of Austria's industrial production. Slovakia and Ruthenia were backward and agrarian.

Return to peace production - economic problems, unemployment, culminated in February 1919. Lack of food. Serious consequences of war - 420 000 dead, 246 000 disabled, this affected their families.

FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENTS

first government by Karel Kramář - nationwide coalition. Czechoslovak agrarian party was the strongest. Interior minister - moderate Antonín Švehla, head of the Party, mastered all demonstrations, etc.

National Democratic Party held Finance Ministry
Social Democrats held Education Ministry and Justice Ministry
National Socialists held Defence Ministry
Edvard Beneš was Foreign Minister

Masaryk returned in triumph to Prague on 21st December 1919.

June 1919: local elections, social democrats got 30 per cent, agrarians 21 per cent, national socialists 16 per cent.

New government led by social democrat Vlastimil Tusar, also agrarians and national socialists.

February 1919 - currency reform, separation of currency from Austrian currency 1:1 Stop to inflation. "Nostrification" law: foreign joint stock companies operating in Czechoslovakia had to have their headquarters in Czechoslovakia.

LAND REFORM: redistribution of land of large farms over 250 hectares. From 1920.

Advanced social policies. Eight-hour working day, social security, extensive health and injury insurance, workers councils in firms.

NEW CONSTITUTION adopted on 29th February 1920, adopted as a revolutionary act by Parliament, named by the National Council.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS took place on 18th April 1920. Centrist parties gained 52,5 per cent, socialist parties 47,5 per cent.

NATIONAL STRUCTURE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The idea of a unified Czechoslovak NATION. All Slovaks did not accept this. Minorities were put on the defensive.

In 1921, Czechoslovakia had 13,6 million inhabitants, 6,8 million Czechs (51 per cent) , 1,9 million Slovaks (14,5 per cent) 3,1 million Germans (23,4 per cent), 745 000 Hungarians, 461000 Ruthenians, Ukrainians and Russians, 75 000 Poles.

Language law: Czech and Slovak - official languages. In districts with more than 20 per cent of minorities they had the right to use their language in official use.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Free association of politicians around Masaryk. Foreign policy influence via Edvard Beneš. THE PRAGUE CASTLE GROUP. Supporters among agrarians, in the people's party, social democrats and national socialists.

PĚTKA - THE FIVE - five most important politicians of the ruling coalition: Antonín Švehla, Alois Rašín, Rudolf Bechyně, Jiří Stříbrný, Jan Šrámek). No individual party was able to form a government. Hence cooperation of these five politicians. Large financial groups were also influential.

Proportional representation. Equal voting rights for women, but members of the army and the police were not allowed to vote from 1927.

The Agrarian Party was the most influential. Supported by country people, used to the system of self-help cooperatives.

Numerically the strongest were the SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, until the split, caused by the Communists. Strong influence in the trade unions.

Czech national socialist party supported the Castle.

The Czechoslovak People's Party was supported by Catholics.

The strongest German party was first the German SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. From the mid 1930s, the SUDETENGERMAN PARTY (Karl Henlein, K.H. Frank) helped Nazi Germany to acquire Czech border regions during the Munich crisis in 1938.

Parliamentary Deputies were strongly dependent on political parties. Party discipline. Voters voted for parties, not for personalities.

The PRESIDENT had few powers.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC SPLIT

The Left wing of the social democratic party set up the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1921, run by the Komintern from Moscow.

CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY was based on the Versailles system, on an alliance with France. Little Entente - agreements with Yugoslavia and with Rumania. No treaty with Poland. Correct neighbourly relations with Germany and Austria.

STABILISED POLITICAL SCENE after 1922.

1921 - liberalisation of economic life, war restrictions lifted.

Antonín Švehla - head of the government of NATIONAL COALITION from 1922. 1921- 1923 - European economic crisis. Finance minister Rašín - deflationary policies. High rates of the Czechoslovak crown, but economic boom in the second half of the 1920s. Rašín assassinated in 1923 by a communist. Introduction of a Law for the protection of the Republic.

No radicalism in Czechoslovakia. Czech fascism - irrelevant. But German fascism in Bohemia and Slovak People's Party - autonomy (Vladimír Tuka)

November 1925: parliamentary elections: social democrats lost to communists. Third Švehla government, three centrist parties and two German centrist parties.

After 1929 elections: a broad government coalition, which also included socialist parties.

1925 - 1929 - CZECHOSLOVAK ECONOMIC BOOM, in the Czech Lands. Czechoslovakia belonged to the middle category of industrially developed countries. Larger GNP than Austria, Hungary, Italy.

But boom was based on protectionism. 1928 - Agrarian crisis. 1929: world economic crisis: Hit Czechoslovakia and culminated in 1933. Sharp growth in unemployment, in 1933, almost a million unemployed.

State interference in the economy. Increase in agrarian taxes, export-import monopoly, state unemployment support, but it did not solve the causes of the crisis.

GROWTH OF NATIONALISM. Czech fascists: anti-Jewish and anti-German riots, 1930, against German sound films!! The National Fascist Association attempted a botched up coup in Brno in 1933, put down without problems.

1934- the Communist Party: Campaign: not Masaryk, but Lenin.

German national socialists: listened to accusations of Czech government that it "deliberately did not deal with the economic crisis"

The government banned anti-government newspapers and anti-state activities of civil servants. Fascist parties were banned in October 1933.

THE LOCARNO TREATY - 1925, meant the return of Germany as a Great Power. Guarantees for the western borders of Germany, no guarantees for Germany's eastern neighbours.

Hitler managed to break down the French international defence system by isolating Poland, with which he concluded a non-aggression pact in 1934. France, Czechoslovakia, concluded a treaty with the Soviet Union, but this was not accepted by the Little Entente. Britain was disinterested and used APPEASEMENT.

A RIGHT WING BLOC - 1935, before the elections, created a NATIONAL UNITY BLOC, but failed in the elections in May 1935. But the Sudeten German party became the strongest political party in Czechoslovakia. Contacts with Hitler. Two thirds of the Germans supported Henlein's party.

In the autumn of 1935, Masaryk resigned as president at the age of 85. Edvard Beneš was elected president. Foreign Minister Kamil Krofta.

Czechoslovakia became a refuge of political emigration from Austria and Germany. Prague - centre of anti-fascist German and Jewish culture and journalism.

Hitler occupied Rhineland in spring 1936, Italy attacked Abyssinia. In the civil war in Spain, Italy and Germany helped Franco. Czechoslovakia tried to activate Little Entente, without success.

After the Anschluss of Austria to Germany in March 1938. Britain and France unwilling to intercede against Hitler.

24th April 1938 Konrad Henlein - eight demands: full equality of Sudeten Germans with the Czech nation, the creation of an independent German area with German self-government, full freedom to adopt the "German world view", i.e. Nazism. Minimal programme. Henlein wanted to annex the German territories to the German Reich.

Riots in the border regions. Partial mobilisation on 20th May, 1938, this stopped German plans of attack.

August 1938, British Lord Runciman - a fact finding mission in Czechoslovakia. On 12th September, the Sudeten German Party attempted a coup in the border regions, failed, they escaped to Germany. Runciman:

Czechs and Germans cannot go on living in the same state. Neville Chamberlain: Czechoslovak border regions must be given to Germany.

MUNICH

Hitler told Chamberlain in Berchtesgaden on 15th Sept. 1938 what he wanted. British and French government prepared a plan for the giving over of all regions with more than 50 per cent Germans to Germany. Ultimatum to the Czechs on 19th September. Czech government refused it, strong pressure from Britain, France, accepted the plan on 21st September. Huge demonstrations in Prague and elsewhere.

New government of general Jan Syrový: would the Republic fight?

Chamberlain met Hitler in Bad Godesberg on 22nd September for the second time. Hitler was not satisfied, wanted more. Syrový's government rejected Hitler's conditions and called a general mobilisation. Hitler said that if Czechoslovakia does not accept his conditions, he will declare a war against Czechoslovakia.

On British and US initiative, 29th September 1938, MUNICH conference: Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain, Daladier. NO CZECHS. Czechoslovakia was forced by the dictate of European power to give up its fortified border regions to Germany. Poland occupied some Czech territories and Hungary occupied southern Slovakia.

Czechoslovakia subjugated itself. Could not wage a lonely war against Germany.

CZECH CULTURE 1918 - 1938

Modernism, good education. Czech university in Prague, universities in Brno and Bratislava. Philosophical positivism. Slovak culture, Ruthenian culture, German culture. Rainer Maria Rilke, Franz Werfel, Franz Kafka, Max Brod.

Czech literature: Karel Čapek, literary scholarship: structuralism: Jan Mukařovský. Left-wing avant-garde - Devětsil. Jiří Wolker, Jaroslav Seifert, Josef Hora. Poetism, surrealism. Vítězslav Nezval, Vladislav Vančura. Catholic authors Jaroslav Durych, Jakub Deml, Jan Zahradníček

Radio broadcast from 1923. Liberated theatre of Voskovec and Werich. Music: Leoš Janáček, Bohuslav Martinů, jazz: Jaroslav Ježek. Fine Arts: expressionism., cubism, surrealism. Alfons Mucha, Emil Filla, Jindřich Štýrský, Toyen.

Architecture: modernism, constructivism, cubism, functionalism.

#