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**From the Czechoslovak National Democracy to the National Unity :
summary**

In: Mařica, Jan. *Od Āeskoslovenské národní demokracie k Národnímu sjednocení*. Vydání první Brno: Filozofická fakulta, Masarykova univerzita, 2018, pp. 241-243

ISBN 978-80-210-9092-7; ISBN 978-80-210-9093-4 (online : pdf)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/138902>

Access Date: 17. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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SUMMARY

From the Czechoslovak National Democracy to the National Unity

This book is a result of authors' successful doctoral studies at the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno. The book focuses on the first-republic political party called the Czechoslovak National Democracy which merged with other political subjects to create the National Unity party in 1935.

The main aim of the book is to answer the defined questions. The book deals with contacts of the Czechoslovak National Democracy with far-right political parties, especially with fascist. The research raises the question of whether it was really fascist party or whether it kept its democratic roots. The research also analyzes crucial impacts and mechanisms for determination of party politics. The research was based on the systematic survey in the archives of the Czech Republic.

The book is divided into several chapters. The first chapter describes crystalizing period of the Czechoslovak National Democracy (1918–1925), which is essential for understanding the whole issue. The situation in this period was shown as utterly forming for the following years.

The second chapter is dedicated to the years 1926 to 1929, when The Czechoslovak National Democracy mostly cooperated with an apolitical movement which later transformed to fascist party. The research examines their close collaboration.

The third chapter is devoted to the period from 1930 to 1935 and a formation of the National Unity. At the beginning of the thirties, the Czechoslovak National Democracy appeared to be in a calmer and more constructive period. F. X. Hodáč, who closely cooperated with a head of Živnostenská banka Jaroslav Preiss, gained the main influence in the party. That lasted until the spring of 1934. At that time it fully showed that its role in the coalition government was very small indeed. The party decided to leave the government with a firm

conviction that it would yield better election results. In the period of the early establishment of the Czechoslovak State – in the revolutionary time (1918), the agreement of the political parties was needed. The problem showed up later when involved political parties parceled out the state. Party secretariats acted as gear levers and the Parliament rather as a voting machine. During the summer of 1934, a year before the upcoming parliamentary elections, the main representative of the domestic financial sector Jaroslav Preiss, and basically also the industry, came up with a proposal for the creation of a mass-based party. It was supposed to become a determining factor on the domestic political scene. It was assumed that several electoral blocs which could simplify the political system in Czechoslovakia would emerge. The united Czechoslovak array should have guaranteed the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia a stronger position, particularly when dealing with Nazi Germany.

Soon, however, the implementation of the project turned out to be a problem. Above all, a public form of expression aroused confusion. The newly-emerged National Unity party was far from originally intended respectable, predominantly urban and liberal-right movement. There were several reasons for this, often resulting from the mentality and the environment of the Czechs themselves, apart from the political scene, where the interest nature of political parties dominated completely. The Czechoslovak National Democracy became the main representative of the right-wing on the political scene of the first Czechoslovak Republic. It represented a small stagnant party of elites, which often had more influence than it could correspond to the number of their lawmakers. The Czechoslovak National Democracy considered itself to be a solid urban party standing on national interest that worked for all segments of the society. Permanent electoral setbacks meant experimenting with radical nationalist policies. It detracted its respectability and never led to good election results.

The Czechoslovak National Democracy should have formed an essential element in the constitution of the mass-based party of the National Unity. It had ambitions for a decided outcome in the parliamentary elections scheduled for May 1935. Infeasibility of the original intention was quickly revealed. None of respectable and established political parties had any interest to join the National Unity. The Czechoslovak National Democracy managed to gain only doubtful allies for this project. These were mainly right-wing fringe elements, a small part of fascists, political adventurers and the fraction of former National Socialists. Some allies in the east of the Republic had even requirements that undermined the unity of the state in their programme. Particularly, the National Democracy allies, who had extensive experience applying political demagoguery in the streets, gave the National Unity its external characteristics. The absence of the (real) programme proved symptomatic and it was replaced by promises of the general fight against social evils.

There were several reasons why the mass-based, right-wing oriented party failed in the elections in 1935. Above all, it was a conglomerate of parties past their zenith and ephemeral movements, which itself did not inspire too much confidence. The name “National Unity” urged for unity, but it did not exist even among allies. Appeals for the unity of the nation were also quite problematic. The emergence of the Czechoslovak Republic asserted

fictional political construct about a nation of Czechs and Slovaks. Its purpose was to gain a majority in the national state with a strong representation of minorities (Czech Germans accounted for almost one third of the population). In reality, it could only target concentrated party voters in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, and only those who belonged to the Czech nation. Just for this reason, the National Unity was not able to become a mass party, which could attack a prominent place in the elections. Likewise a couple of the biggest subjects in the National Unity caused a considerable lack of credibility. The Czechoslovak National Democratic Party represented the capital, and it was close to more affluent social classes, whereas the second major ally – the National League targeted at citizens of the lower social environment, especially the workers, who were interested in the national idea. In fact, the established political partnership worked only until the elections, because many members of the National Unity were lured by the vision of functionary chair profits. The programme of the National Unity did not promise much to the voters. The National Unity promised welfare to the whole nation in theory, but in practice, it offered a minimum to individuals. The party lacked a demagogue bringing at least some semblance of respectability. Inter-war Czechoslovakia can be described as a country where left-wing politics played first fiddle. In Czechoslovakia, mainly due to the ruling establishment, which President T. G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš set the tone, this trend continued for twenty years. Right-wing politics, or its more radical form never performed well in elections in Czechoslovakia. It was considered to be loud, but weak and sterile. Czechs never excelled in excessive radicalism, and so it is not surprising that the demand for the empty National Unity was poor. Episodic marches and theatrical ostentation aroused the feeling of resemblance to the events in Germany and they were always alien to the Czech mentality.

The parliamentary elections were held on 19 May 1935, and they meant a total failure for the mass-based party of the National Unity. The original ambitions towards the first place were not achieved and the National Unity took up only the eighth place. It gained 5.5% of the votes, which the Czechoslovak National Democracy could have received without its allies. In fact, the seamy side of the alliance showed up soon. Allies proclaiming the nation's unity immediately started tearing into each other. This situation gradually sharpened within two years and got the character of the struggle for the entire party.

The fourth chapter describes an era of the National Unity (1935 – 1937), when The Czechoslovak National Democracy, after two years of fights inside the National Unity, managed to defend their political party. Election defeat and fractional fight over the party led to secession of concentration project called the National Unity. National Democrats managed to overcome their disputes and consolidate the National Unity which succeeded in return to its roots in a congress in June 1937.

The National Unity did not abandon democratic principles, which was the main incrimination from the ruling communist regime after World War II. Respectable party members, especially those from the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party, who were in the majority, kept its strictly democratic past. Programme theses were mainly of nationalist and anti-Bolshevik character. The programme of the National Unity did not involve antisemitism.