

ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MEMBERSHIP BASE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST PARTY IN THE PERIOD FROM 1948 TO 1989

Pavel Marek¹

Doctor of Philosophy and Pedagogy; Professor; Professor Emeritus, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University, Czech Republic

Email: pavel.marek@upol.cz

Scopus Author ID: 35178301400

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7578-0783>

The Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS) emerged during the political coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 as the successor to the Czech National Social Party, whose roots date back to 1897. At that time, it defined itself in opposition to internationalist social democracy, and alongside the working class, its membership base included members of the middle strata – craftsmen, small business owners, tradesmen, employees, clerks, and the intelligentsia. Until February 1948, its programmatic focus pursued the idea of building Czech national socialism, by which it meant the creation of a socially-oriented and democratic state through social reforms. After the communist coup, when the party faced possible dissolution, it was forced to abandon this program line and, as a satellite of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) – a so-called «shadow party» – it took part in building socialism. The party's transformation naturally affected the composition of its membership base. From a mass political party, it became a selective and small organization, whose size was determined by the ruling communists through a permitted membership quota. The core of the party's members in the 1950s and 1960s consisted of former members of the national socialist party, who accepted not only its new program and role within the political system of the country, but also the radical transformation of internal party life. The party's daily activity lay in the ideological re-education of its members in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and within the framework set by the KSČ. As part of this socialist upbringing, members were obliged to participate in socialist competition at work and in their communities. They accepted so-called socialist commitments, took part in voluntary work activities in agriculture, in collecting waste materials, and in developing civic infrastructure (such as building kindergartens, maintaining parks, protecting the environment, etc.), especially in areas where state administration failed and was unable to fulfill its role. Besides this work-related contribution to building socialism, the core of internal party life were meetings and organizing celebrations and commemorations motivated by communist traditions. Along its relatively small size, the ČSS membership base was characterized by a certain degree of stability. Over the years, it underwent a natural turnover of its members. The party leadership mostly parted ways with older and passive members, who were gradually replaced by more pragmatically oriented individuals – those who wished to be politically active but did not want to do so within the ranks of the Communist Party. The development of the party's membership base (its growth and decline) was closely tied to changes in politics during the building of socialism in the country. People responded to the appearance or disappearance of hope for a change in the political regime and the entire system.

Keywords: Czechoslovak Socialist Party, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, socialism, everyday life, membership base.

Formulation of the issue. A comprehensive view of the history of Czech political parties active in the territory of Czech lands during the 19th and 20th centuries – or in the territory of Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1992 [Balík, Hloušek, Holzer, Šedo] – shows that from a quantitative perspective, the party-political system underwent four distinct stages, each differing in terms of either expansion or reduction in the number of political parties. From the 1890s, their number grew in connection with the political differentiation of society and the completion of national and political emancipation of the Czech ethnic group [Kořalka; Urban; Malíř, 1996; Harna, 2005].

After the signing of the Four-Power Agreement in Munich in September 1938 [Zaruski, Zückert], which led to destruction of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the multiparty democratic system ceased to exist [Gebhart, Kuklík, 1992, 1993, 2004; Holzer]. After World War II, there was a partial restoration of the party system, but this

process was brought to an end by the communist coup in February 1948 [Kocian, 2005; Hanzlík; Kaplan, 1996], which resulted in a one-party dictatorship and reduced other political parties to so-called shadow organizations. The fourth turning point can be identified with the «Velvet Revolution» of 1989, which once again paved the way for the development of a democratic political and party system, as civil society began to create conditions for the functioning of various political parties and movements [Fiala, Strmiska; Fiala, Mareš, Pšejá; Balík, Hloušek].

One of the political parties that passed through all of these stages – and continues to exist today, albeit in transformed form and under different names – is the political group uniting advocates of Czech national socialism. In the history of Czech party politics, this party trend is most firmly anchored under the names Czech National Social Party, Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, and Czechoslovak Socialist Party [Klátil; Harna,

¹ © Marek P.

1978; Harna, 1998; Harna, 2000; Harna, 2005; Paroubek, Duchoslav].

Study objectives. The subject of our research is the membership base of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS) – under that name from 1948 to 1989 – and its transformation. We aim to determine whether, and to what extent, voluntary entry into and exit from the party could have been influenced by the everyday life [Highmore; Sedlák; Petrusek] of the organization. We work with the hypothesis that for most party members, its politics and tactics were, at least in general terms, acceptable and digestible, and that the factor more significantly affecting the size of the party's membership base was the course of socialist society-building.

People working within the party or interacting with it either gained or lost hope that political crises would result in a change in the existing system or would transform the party's position within the political structure and allow it to realize its own agenda.

Analysis of sources and literature. This paper essentially represents the first attempt to summarize findings in this area. The topic has only been partially addressed in contributions dealing with specific stages of the party's history [Pernes; Petera; Pejskar, 1993]. Our conclusions are based on the study of archival primary sources and on the review of articles published in period journals and newspapers.

First and foremost, we made use of documents stored in the former ČSS archive, now deposited in the National Archives in Prague (NA) in the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party Archive (AČSNS) collection and in the personal archives of party chairmen Emanuel Šlechta, Alois Neumann, and Bohuslav Kučera. Printed sources include articles and analyses published in the party's monthly journal *Socialistický směr* and the daily *Svobodné slovo* during the period 1949 – 1989. Some documents include anthologies of sources published by the ČSS on the occasion of its national conferences or in edited collections produced by the party's publishing house for propaganda and agitation purposes.

Research results. The research has essentially two dimensions. In the first part, we focus on identifying the basic features of everyday life within the ČSS in its historical context. The second part evokes the fluctuations in the party's membership base during the years 1948 – 1987.

On the Everyday Life of the Party

The Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS) was an integral part of the so-called National Front (NF). Through its interventions, directives, and orders, the NF modulated the internal life of the party. In practice, the NF functioned as a system that conveyed the directives of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) to its members, initially to the four permitted political parties and, over time, also to various so-called mass organizations (trade unions, women's and youth organizations, association of friends of the Soviet Union, etc.) [Kaplan, 2012].

The Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (ČSNS), after the war in the years 1945–1948, although it was part of the so-called socialist bloc (together with the communists and social democrats), very quickly emerged during this period as the loudest opponent of KSC policy

[Kocian, 2002]. The communist concept of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and building socialism and communism according to the Soviet model [Kalvoda] was rejected, and its ultimate ideal remained the construction of a democratic and socially just society based on the ideology of Czech national socialism—a model refined since the 1890s. The party's ranks not only concentrated like-minded workers but also included private farmers, small entrepreneurs (artisans and tradespeople), a significant segment of clerks and employees, and the intelligentsia. In terms of social stratification, it essentially represented a political party of the «old» and «new» middle classes. Therefore, it is understandable that after the communist coup in February 1948, when the communists seized power in the country, the room for the existence of ČSNS narrowed considerably, or rather, it ceased to exist.

Czech national socialists found themselves in a crisis. They saw only two ways to overcome it: Either 1) to liquidate the party and cease its activities –resigning from everything they had been striving for since the 1890s; or 2) to adapt to the new situation, that is, to fundamentally change their party program and tactics and, alongside the communists, engage in building a new political system of people's democracy and assist in establishing socialism and communism in Czechoslovakia. Under dramatic circumstances, in the final days of February 1948, a small group of individuals involved in the party leadership decided to resolve this internal crisis by means of an internal coup. They took over the management of the party and, under the patronage of the communists, transformed the organization and reconstituted it under the name Czechoslovak Socialist Party. They chose to implement the second of the aforementioned alternatives [Marek, 2023].

Although the faction of the new leaders of the socialist party, concentrated around Emanuel Šlechta (1895 – 1960) and Alois Neumann (1901 – 1977), cooperated with the communists over a longer time horizon – and had already betrayed the national socialists before February 1948 – Gottwald's leadership of the KSC did not have much trust in them. The possibility that the ČSS might play a more significant role, for example, in setting the programmatic line for the construction of socialism in the country, was rejected. Likewise, the communists did not wish to concede that a socialist party could have any relevant influence on the management of society. On the other hand, they silenced voices calling for the prohibition of its activities. They concluded that it would be more beneficial for the communists if the ČSS were to be controlled through tactical means and used for their own purposes. The existence of non-communist parties was intended to support the fiction of a pluralistic political and party system. The communists were also aware that the ČSS could be useful due to its aforementioned social profile of the party's membership base. Although the post-February political «purges» transformed the former mass political party of national socialists into essentially a «personnel or honorary» organization with a small and limited number of members, members of the middle class still remained in it (at least until the end of the 1950s) – a segment of the population that the communists found difficult to penetrate. Consequently, the leadership of the ČSS received, from the KSC as its main directive, the task of influencing its membership base and the circle of people

moving in its vicinity, educating and re-educating them so as to win them over to the idea of building socialism. The primary purpose of the ČSS's existence – and simultaneously the precondition for its survival – became the comprehensive education and re-education of people toward a positive attitude to socialism, carried out according to KSČ instructions and under its patronage [Marek, 2024a].

The everyday life of the ČSS consisted, in addition to regular setting up meetings, in the development of various forms of ideological work, dominated by the organization of training sessions for the party membership across all organizational levels. The success of political-educational and training activities within the party was assessed based on the extent and quality of the party members' engagement in the building of socialism – both professionally, in their workplaces, and outside of work, in their free-time activities and voluntary brigades – especially in areas where deficits in the construction of the socialist society were emerging and state (i.e., responsible) authorities were not fully capable of addressing them with their own resources.

Party members were encouraged to undertake work commitments aimed at increasing labor productivity, reducing production cost, and raising output in all sectors of the national economy, going beyond the duties specified in their employment contracts. These so-called «gifts to the republic» were not limited to the production sector but emerged in all workplaces, including offices, public services, education, culture, etc. [Gifts to the Republic] Appeals by the ČSS Presidium urging members to display exemplary and devoted work engagement at their own workplaces can be traced back to the very first days of the party's existence. Calls to involve the party membership in the shock-worker movement, in innovation initiatives, and in socialist competition, as well as the promotion and monitoring of these efforts, were regular features in the agendas of both party leadership and its lower organizational units [NA Prague, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-6, box 30 – shock-worker movement in the ČSS] [Mátl, 1950].

The conclusion of work commitments in the ČSS was a coordinated action carried out in accordance with regularly evaluated plans, and the achieved results were summarized not only by the party presidium but above all by the central bodies of the National Front. Although the initial enthusiasm diminished over time, the agenda became decentralized and was transferred to regional building commissions. From the 1960s onward, we can observe a simplification of record-keeping and the end of the «race» to accumulate volunteer hours. Nevertheless, participation in voluntary labor for the benefit of society,

in the form of adopting so-called socialist commitments, accompanied the party until 1989.

Socialist commitments of party organizations and individuals were typically undertaken on the occasion of significant anniversaries or events, such as the congresses of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), nationwide conferences of the ČSS, anniversaries of the so-called Victorious February 1948, support for the peace movement, International Women's Day and International Children's Day, anniversaries of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, during the Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, as part of campaigns like the Jirásek and Lány actions,¹ anniversaries of the birthdays of V. I. Lenin, K. Gottwald, and the ČSS chairman E. Šlechta, and so forth. The range of areas in which ČSS members fulfilled their voluntary brigade commitments and hours was quite diverse: involvement in seasonal agricultural work, assistance in establishing unified agricultural cooperatives (JZD), activities within socialist labor brigades, forestry work—clearing stands and planting new trees, collecting medicinal herbs, unpaid blood donation, taking patronage over JZDs,² and later schools, nurseries, kindergartens, retirement homes, as well as participation in fulfilling electoral programs of the National Front and unified cultural-educational activity plans.

Particularly notable was the regular collection of raw materials (iron, paper, textiles), motivated by a shortage of financial resources for importing raw materials and their scarcity in the development of the engineering superpower concept [Kaplan, 1991, p. 94], which party members engaged in until the late 1980s. Environmental care, which dominated within the party in the 1980s, also deserves special mention.

Especially in the 1950s, the level of work pledges and numbers of brigade hours were directly imposed on party organizations by higher authorities. Reports on fulfillment typically showed that commitments were exceeded by dozens of percent.

Development of the ČSS Membership Base

As the successor organization to the ČSNS, the ČSS had to gradually build its own membership base after the February 1948 coup. The vast majority of pre-February national socialists did not want to have anything to do with the new party and showed no interest in joining it. Some members emigrated abroad or became victims of the regime's oppression and ended up in prisons [Pejskar]. A significant portion of party members waited to see how the situation would develop. About 120,000 members changed their party affiliation and were enticed to join the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). Between February 1948 and June 1949, the official members of ČSS

¹ The aim of the Jirásek Action, announced on November 10, 1948 by Minister Zdeněk Nejedlý, was to widely disseminate knowledge of the works of writer Alois Jirásek (1851 – 1930). The official circles used his novels to distort the interpretation of Czech history, especially the Hussite movement.

The Lány Action, declared in July 1949 by Klement Gottwald, aimed to increase the workforce, particularly young people, in heavy industry.

² The proposal aimed to ensure a stable group of brigadiers who would provide long-term assistance to a specific agricultural cooperative (JZD) throughout the agricultural cycle. If needed, the agricultural enterprise could directly contact its patron, saving the effort and risks associated

with organizing recruitment. The patron—whether an industrial enterprise or a social organization – would secure brigadiers from its own ranks through socialist commitments.

The establishment of ČSS organizations' patronage over JZDs did not remain merely a proposal but was implemented in practice during the 1950s. The party apparatus attached great importance to it. For example, in 1951 the General Secretariat issued instructions to regional organizations not to limit their assistance to the material sphere only but also to provide political support to JZDs:

«It will be necessary that patronages serve as practical political leadership of the cooperatives.»

were only self-appointed, vetted members of action committees at national, regional, district, and local levels [Kapitola, p. 28], as well as officials working in the state administration by the party leadership's authorization.

The situation began to change in January 1949, when the elites, based on consultations with the Central Action Committee (ÚAV) of the National Front (NF), concluded that the current situation allowed the party to open up to other people interested in participating in building the socialist society [NA Prague, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – minutes of the ČSS Presidium meeting, 24 January 1949]. During the first half of 1949, new applicants for party membership underwent political training and held the status of provisional members or candidates without an official membership card [NA Prague, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – minutes of Presidium meetings on 24 January, 21 March, and 23 May 1949].

The actual recruitment campaign could start only after the adoption of the party's organizational statute in June 1949, as this document for the first time formulated the party's programmatic visions and the members committed to fulfilling them. Following the statute and based on agreements with the KSČ and NF, the leadership issued guidelines for accepting new members [NA Prague, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – Recruitment of members and

establishing local organizations, 22 June 1949]. Although party chairman Emanuel Šlechta reportedly agreed during talks with top KSČ official and Klement Gottwald's son-in-law Alexej Čepička (1910 – 1990) on admitting up to 30,000 members [Pejskar, 1993, p. 22], the KSČ set a maximum limit of 16,000 members for ČSS in June 1949 [NA Prague, f. KSČ – ÚV 1945–1989. Politbyro 1954–1962, aj. 170, politburo meeting 26 February 1957].

The guidelines recommended conducting recruitment primarily through personal agitation by vetted members of the party's action committees, targeting former ČSNS members and non-party individuals. People with «reactionary views» and those who „did not guarantee cooperation in the reconstruction of the order“ were excluded. There was no interest in former members of other political parties or NF components, nor in citizens excluded from public life. Applicants underwent a personnel screening process at the level of the local organization's presidium, composed of former members of the local action committee, and at the level of the National Front's Action Committees.

The development of the ČSS membership numbers is documented in a table prepared by party officials for delegates to the 9th National Party Conference in 1987.

Number of members of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSNS) from 1945 to 1986

Year	Number of Members	Year	Number of Members	Year	Number of Members
1945	313 316	1960	13 597	1975	17 012
1946	593 982	1961	12 517	1976	16 336
1947	850 000	1962	11 918	1977	15 784
1948	1 109	1963	11 379	1978	15 673
1949	10 749	1964	10 719	1979	15 194
1950	15 389	1965	10 373	1980	15 013
1951	15 506	1966	10 373	1981	15 149
1952	15 186	1967	10 661	1982	15 151
1953	14 472	1968	10 705	1983	15 247
1954	14 276	1969	28 463	1984	15 021
1955	13 810/14276	1970	21 458	1985	14 972
1956	13 457	1971	21 038	1986	14 911
1957	13 423	1972	21 032	1987	
1958	13 919	1973	18 029	1988	
1959	13 668	1974	17 484	1989	

Source: National Archives Prague, AČSNS collection, box 603 A

However, the values presented in the table should be understood as indicative only, since data collected from other party materials provide different figures. The initial decline in membership in 1953 was a reaction to the crisis that the building of socialism in Czechoslovakia had reached after 1948 [Pernes, 2008, pp. 41–128]. The reported number of members in 1955 does not reflect reality; other sources correct it to 14,276 members. The decrease in party membership in 1956 and 1957 was the result of another round of membership card renewals, which took place in 1955 [National Archives Prague,

AČSNS collection, box 478 – CSS Presidium guidelines for regional party committees, 31 Oct. 1956]; the party rid itself of inactive members and cleaned up its membership records. At the same time, part of the membership base reacted to the political events of 1956, which also had an impact [Blaive]. Given the fact that the membership trend had been declining since 1950, the party leadership's response to the loss of members in the second half of the 1950s can be described as troubling. In 1956 and 1957, the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS), after consultations with the National Front and Prime Minister

Viliam Široký (1902 – 1971)¹, adopted several directives aimed at increasing the number of party members to the level recorded on 1 January 1955 [National Archives Prague, AČSNS collection, box 478 – commentary on the discussion].

The doors were to be opened to former members of the ČSNS, provided they expressed agreement with the ČSS policy since 1948; the instructions recommended seeking new members among the wives of party officials and members; exceptionally and on a case-by-case basis, former members of the Agrarian, National Democratic, and Tradesmen's Parties (a proposal by Viliam Široký) could also be admitted, provided they had not held leading positions and met the conditions «expected of a conscientious citizen» – fulfilling compulsory deliveries, being employed in the socialist sector, achieving good work performance, etc.

On the other hand, former members and candidates of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), Social Democrats², and members of the People's Party³ were not allowed to join, nor were kulaks⁴ or individuals with «reactionary views». Each year, the regional party committees received from the party headquarters target numbers for new member recruitment, and the fulfillment of these quotas was subject to monitoring and consequences. In mid-1957, the then-secretary of the party presidium, Vladimír Hnilica, responded to the situation with the following words: «Maintaining the membership base at least at the level the party had on 1 January 1955 must be viewed as a matter of the party's very existence, which is justified only if it has membership cadres it can rely on and to whom it can speak» [National Archives Prague, ČSNS collection, box 478 – report by V. Hnilica on party membership, 12 July 1957].

The largest membership losses occurred in the regions of Ústí nad Labem, Gottwaldov, and České Budějovice, while the situation was considered critical in the Ostrava and Pardubice regions. On the other hand, it should be noted that apart from the Prague region, all of the above-mentioned regional organizations were among the party's most populous ones [National Archives Prague, AČSNS collection, box 478 – Organizational structure and party membership base].

From a broader perspective, the loss of approximately two thousand members between 1950 and 1957 might not appear overly dramatic, as about a quarter of the cases involved the natural attrition of members through death. However, it is a fact that recruitment efforts failed and the target numbers remained unmet until 1968. Although the ČSS had declared itself a selective party from its founding,

it had not, by that date, succeeded in recruiting even as many members as the Communist Party had permitted it to take on in 1949.

The reasons were attributed to the lax attitudes of regional officials toward this issue. On one hand, they reportedly let members leave without explanation. Instead of persuading them or working with them, they were mechanically removed from membership lists without consulting the National Front [National Archives Prague, ČSNS collection, box 480 – Evaluation of activities]. On the other hand, suitable candidates were neither systematically sought out nor engaged with over the long term.

The admission procedure also proved inappropriate: applicants were first screened by the National Front, and only then by the ČSS. This practice was perceived as «digging into people's past» and discouraged potential members from joining [National Archives Prague, AČSNS collection, box 478 – report for the ČSS presidium meeting, 6 June 1957].

In 1957, the situation regarding declining membership was also addressed by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which assessed the loss of members as a result of disagreement with the policies of the ČSS and the National Front, as well as the fact that the ČSS failed to offer its members full political and organizational engagement. It concluded that for young people, joining the ČSS would be a disadvantage, as the party did not provide «good opportunities for success in life» nor the chance to gain necessary experience [National Archives Prague, KSČ – Central Committee 1945–1989, Politburo 1954 – 1962, file 170].

The sharp numerical increase in the membership base of the ČSS in 1968 was extraordinary and related to the political movement in society, with hopes for changes triggered by the «Prague Spring» [Novák], both among former members of the ČSNS and among non-party individuals, mostly young people. After 1970, a downward trend resumed as a reaction to normalization [Otáhal] and disillusionment with political developments. During the exchange of membership cards in 1972, about 75 % of members received their new cards [NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 602B – 7th National Conference of ČSS 1977, ČSS since the 6th National Conference]. The call to increase the party's membership base was formulated by the resolution of the 7th National Conference of the ČSS in 1977.

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the party managed to accept predominantly younger generation members, but the increase was unable to compensate for natural attrition

¹ All three parties – the Agrarian Party (Republican Party of Agricultural and Smallholder People), the Czechoslovak National Democracy, and the Czechoslovak Tradesmen's and Shopkeepers' Party of the Middle Class – were part of governing (coalition) parties during the First Czechoslovak Republic. The first two were even considered key players. However, during the Moscow negotiations in the spring of 1945, which dealt with the postwar arrangement of the republic, they were labeled undesirable due to alleged collaboration with the German Nazi occupation authorities and were excluded from the National Front. Their re-establishment after the war was effectively banned.

² The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party, founded in 1878, was also one of the key political actors in the party-political system of the First Republic. Although it was re-established after the Second World War, it soon succumbed to pressure from the Communists after the February 1948 coup and, much to the dissatisfaction of a significant part

of its membership, was forced into a merger with them on 27 June 1948. By early January 1949, approximately one-third of the Social Democrats had joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) [Fajmon, Balík, Hloušková, 2006].

³ The Czechoslovak People's Party, founded in 1919, continued the legacy of the prewar political parties of Czech Catholics and remains to this day the most important bearer of the traditions of Czech political Catholicism. [Fiala, Foral, Konečný, Marek, Pehr, Trapl, 2008].

⁴ The totalitarian regime referred to „kulaks“ as middle or sometimes wealthy peasants and took a harsh stance against them (up to physical elimination), considering them an obstacle to the establishment of collective agricultural cooperatives. [https://www.ustrcr.cz/uvod/citanka-kolektivizace/obrazy-propagandy/pojem-kulak-a-vesnicky-bohac/ - cited 12 May 2025].

and departures, so the total number of party members declined. On the other hand, the leadership was satisfied that these new members began to change the social structure of the organization. The number of pensioners and farmers decreased, and the core of the party came to be formed by qualified workers from various production sectors, technical intelligentsia, and workers from the tertiary sector. The educational level of the membership base increased [NA Praha, AČSNS, k. 603B – 8th National Conference of ČSS 1982].

This trend continued during the 1980s. The 8th National Conference of the party in 1982 issued another call for recruitment of new members, and in 1982 and 1986, the party leadership issued guidelines on how to proceed, which anticipated an annual gain of 850 new young members. This target was not achieved. A new problem emerged concerning the instability of the membership base – up to 5 % of new members either resigned shortly after joining, were struck off, or even expelled [NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 603A – 9th National Conference of ČSS 1987].

Social Composition of the ČSS Membership Base in 1949–1985 (in %)

	1949	1954	1958	1960	1979	1981	1983	1984	1985
Manual workers	27,7	23,7	26,9	27,0	23,5	24,9	26,0	26,6	26,9
Office Workers	25,3	27,3	27,4	26,2	10,8	11,2	11,6	11,4	11,4
Agricultural Workers	15,2	11,1	9,7	10,0	6,0	6,3	6,1	6,3	6,5
Other professions	15,2	19,1	16,0	17,3	14,9	15,4	16,0	15,8	15,8
Women Homemakers	8,2	7,2	11,0	12,5	2,1	2,1	1,8	1,5	1,3
Retirees	8,4	11,6	9,0	7,0	42,7	40,1	38,5	38,4	38,1

Source: National Archives Prague, f. AČSNS collection, box 603 A

Also, regarding the statistics related to the social composition of the party's membership base, the presented values should be regarded as illustrative. The party's membership base was heterogeneous, and classification into individual social categories largely depended on the subjective assessment of the table's compiler.

Research conclusions. The research focused on analyzing the membership base of the ČSS confirmed that the hypothesis we worked with was essentially correct. At least during the first 20 years of the party's existence, those former national socialists entered the party who perceived membership as loyalty to the national-socialist historical tradition, its development, and as fulfilling a commitment stemming from their long-term familial and friendly political habits. This bond was so strong and alive that they could rise above the real fact that by joining the party they became mocked and belittled political outsiders in the eyes of many orthodox communists, especially among lower-level functionaries, whose position was in a certain sense even more problematic than that of non-party members. Therefore, they were able to accept that the ČSS lost the character of a classic political party and accepted the everyday reality of its existence as a necessity. They comforted themselves with the hope that the party's position and nature of work would change sooner or later.

However, over time, the number of pragmatists in the party grew. These were individuals who saw membership

as an opportunity to better assert themselves in life and «needed» engagement in public and political affairs for their lives. At the same time, they did not want to satisfy this need within the Communist Party. This category also includes individuals who, figuratively speaking, used the party as a «political elevator», an easier path to improve their existential status. For many members, joining the socialist party was an expression of seeking life securities. They believed and relied on the party to be their patron and protector in difficult life situations and to help them if necessary so that they would not be left alone.

The ČSS membership base was relatively small, limited by the KSČ, but despite great effort and over a longer period, even this target number was not achieved by the elites. Another characteristic of the membership base was its relative stability. It existed without major fluctuations or changes. Only in the 1980s have an evidence that people left the party after a short period of membership, expressing their disappointment with its politics. A key factor influencing movements in the membership base were crisis moments accompanying the building of socialism in the country. People sensitively reacted to alternating hopes for societal change and their collapse.

We consider the issue of motivation for individuals joining non-socialist parties during the years of building socialism to be a significant but still under-researched topic.

References

- Balík, S., Hloušek, V., Holzer, J., Šedo, J., 2003. *Politický systém českých zemí 1848 – 1989*, Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 180 s.
- Balík, S., Hloušek, V., 2016. *The development and transformation of the Czech party system after 1989*, Acta Politologica, r. 8, č. 2, s. 103–117.
- Blaive, M., 2001. *Promarněná příležitost: Československo a rok 1956*, Praha: Prostor, 481 s.
- Celostátní konference Čs. strany socialistické. Praha říjen 1966, 1967*, Praha: ČSS, 72 s.
- Dary republičky. Práci se projevuje ryzí vlastenectví, 1949, *Svobodné slovo*, r. 5, č. 89, 15. dubna, s. 3.
- IX. sjezd KSČ a úkoly lidově demokratické československé armády. Projevy delegátů na IX. sjezdu a na krajských konferencích KSČ*, 1949, Praha: Naše vojsko, 54 s.
- Dokumenty 8. celostátní konference ČSS*, 1982, Praha: ČSS, s. 52–53.
- Fajmon, H., Balík, S., Hloušková, K. (eds.), 2006. *Dusivé objetí. Historické a politologické pohledy na spolupráci sociálních demokratů a komunistů*, Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 151 s.
- Fiala, P., Foral, J., Konečný, K., Marek, P., Pehr, M., Trapl, M., 2008. *Český politický katolicismus 1848 – 2005*, Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 535 s.
- Fiala, P., Mareš, M., Pšejka, P., 2001. *Formation of the System of Political Parties in the Czech Republic*. Studia politiczne, 2001, č. 12, s. 145–162.
- Fiala, P., Strmiska, M., 2011. *Kontinuita a diskontinuita českých stranicko-politických systémů*. Metodologická východiska a dilemata komparativního výzkumu transformace soustav politických stran v českých zemích. Středoevropské politické studie, 2011, č. 1, s. 1–7.
- Gebhart, J., Kuklík, J., 2004. *Druhá republika 1938 – 1939. Svár demokracie a totality v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě*, Praha: Paseka, 2004, 315 s.
- Gebhart, J., Kuklík, J., 1992. Pomnichovská krize a vznik Strany národní jednoty, *Československý časopis historický* r. 90, č. 3, s. 365–393.
- Gebhart, J., Kuklík, J., 1993. Strana národní jednoty – strana vládní a vládnoucí, *Moderní dějiny* r. 1, s. 219–258.
- Hanzlík, F., 1997. *Únor 1948: výsledek nerovného zápasu*, Praha: Prewon, 255 s.
- Harna, J., 2005. Česká strana národně sociální. Český národní socialismus, Malíř, J., Marek, P. a kol., *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861 – 2004*. 1. Období 1861 – 1938, Brno: Doplněk, s. 395–412, 763–780.
- Harna, J., 2000. Český národní socialismus. (Do roku 1938). Marek, P. a kol., *Přehled politického stranictví na území českých zemí a Československa v letech 1861 – 1998*, Olomouc: Katedra politologie a evropských studií Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Palackého, s. 119–131.
- Harna, J., 1978. *Kritika ideologie a programu českého národního socialismu*. Praha: Academia, 132 s.
- Harna, J., 1998. *Politické programy českého národního socialismu 1897 – 1948*, Praha: Historický ústav, 291 s. Edice politických programů; sv. 1.
- Harna, J., 2005. Stranickopolitický systém v Československu v letech 1918 – 1938. Malíř, J., Marek, P. a kol., *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861 – 2004*. 1. Období 1861 – 1938, Brno: Doplněk, s. 535–552.
- Highmore, B., 2002. *The Everyday Life Reader*, London: Routledge, s. 4–5.
- Holzer, J., 2005. *Stranický systém druhé republiky*. Malíř, J., Marek, P. a kol., *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861 – 2004*. 2. Období 1938 – 2004, Brno: Doplněk, s. 1037–1056.
- Jiráskova akce. <https://www.ustrcr.cz/uvod/antologie-ideologicky-textu/jiraskovska-akce/> - cit. 12. 5. 2025.
- Jůva, V., 1981. *Vysoká škola a výchova*, Brno: Universita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, 162 s.
- Kalvoda, J., 2022. *Sověťizace Československa: příčiny a důsledky*. Sv. 1, Kladno: Dílo, 677 s.
- Kapitola, L., 1984. *Třicet pět let Československé strany socialistické. Zamyšlení nad vznikem, posláním a činností strany*, Praha: Československá strana socialistická, 139 s.
- Kaplan, K., 1991. *Československo v letech 1948 – 1953*, 2. Část, Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 146 s.
- Kaplan, K., 1996. *Pět kapitol o únoru*, Brno: Doplněk, 557 s.
- Kaplan, K., 2012. *Národní fronta 1948 – 1960*, Praha: Academia, 907 s.
- Kocian, J., 2002. *Československá strana národně socialistická v letech 1945 – 1948. Organizace, program, politika*, Brno: Doplněk, 262 s.
- Kocian, J., 2005. *Politický systém v letech 1945 – 1948*. Malíř, J., Marek, P. a kol., *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861 – 2004*. 2. Období 1938 – 2004, Brno: Doplněk, s. 1125–1130.
- Kořalka, J., 1996. *Češi v habsburské říši a v Evropě 1815 – 1914. Sociálněhistorické souvislosti vytváření novodobého národa a národnostní otázky v českých zemích*, Praha: Argo, 1996, 354 s.
- Kubec, M., 1950. Organizujeme Lánskou akci, *Socialistický směr*, r. 2, č. 4, 15. února, s. 143.
- Kulak - <https://www.ustrcr.cz/uvod/citanka-kolektivizace/obrazy-propagandy/pojem-kulak-a-vesnicky-bohac/> - cit. 12. 5. 2025.
- Machač, B., 1952. Lánská akce – první krok socialistické orientace k povolání, s. 47–60. file:///C:/Users/notebook/Downloads/Pedag_1952_1-2_05_Lanska-akce_47_60.pdf - cit. 12. 5. 2025.
- Malíř, J., 1996. *Od spolků k moderním politickým stranám. Vývoj politických stran na Moravě v letech 1848 – 1914*, Brno: Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity, s. 81–224.
- Marek, P., 2024a. Ideologically Educational work of Czechoslovak socialists. Probing life within the Czechoslovak Socialist Party between 1948 and 1989, *Науковий вісник Ужгородського університету, серія Історія*, вип. 2 (51), 2024, s. 73–80.
- Marek, P., 2024b. *Programmatic documents of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party from 1948 to 1989*, *Науковий вісник Ужгородського університету, серія Історія*, вип. 1 (50), 2024, s. 94–102.
- Marek, P., 2023. The Establishment of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party in 1948, *Науковий вісник Ужгородського університету, серія Історія*, вип. 2 (49), 2023, s. 78–87.
- Mátl, J., 1950. Soutěží a údernictvím k rozvoji výroby, *Socialistický směr*, r. 2, č. 9, 1. května, s. 341–344.
- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 478 – směrnice předsednictva ČSS pro krajské výbory strany k přijímání nových členů strany, 31.10.1956.
- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 478 – komentář k rozpravě o členské základně strany na zasedání předsednictva ÚV ČSS, 22. 5. 1957.
- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 478 – Organizační struktura a členská základna strany 1948–1955, stav k 1. 1. 1951.
- NA Praha, f. ČSNS, k. 478 – zpráva V. Hnilici o členské základně, 12. 7. 1957.

- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 478 – zpráva pro jednání předsednictva ČSS, 6. 6. 1957.
- NA Praha, f. ČSNS, k. 480 – Zhodnocení činnosti orgánů a organizací ČSS na úseku organizačním za 1. čtvrtletí 1962.
- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 602B – 7. celostátní konference ČSS 1977 – ČSS od 6. celostátní konference.
- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 603B – 8. celostátní konference ČSS 1982 – Přehled činnosti ČSS od 7. celostátní konference.
- NA Praha, f. AČSNS, k. 603A – 9. celostátní konference ČSS 1987 – Přehled činnosti ČSS od 8. do 9. celostátní konference.
- NA Praha, f. KSČ – ÚV 1945–1989. Politické byro 1954–1962, aj. 170, schůze politbyra 26. 2. 1957 – Zpráva o činnosti ČSS.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – zápis z jednání užšího předsednictva ČSS, 24. 1. 1949.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – zápisy ze schůzí užšího předsednictva ČSS, 24. 1. 1949, 21. 3. 1949 a 23. 5. 1949.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-1, k. 30 – dopis ÚAV ČSS poslancům a tajemníkům ČSS, 4. 11. 1948.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – zápis ze schůze užšího předsednictva ČSS, 25. 4. 1949.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – kopie dopisu generálního tajemníka ČSS M. Klingera generálnímu sekretariátu ÚAV NF v Praze, 14. 1. 1949.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-2, k. 30 – dopis budovatelského odboru ČSS generálnímu sekretariátu ÚAV NF, 14. 1. 1949.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, k. 30 – zápisy ze schůzí generálního sekretariátu ČSS, 28. 5. 1951, 11. 6. 1951, 24. 9. 1951, 17. 12. 1951.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, k. 30 – zápis ze schůze předsednictva ČSS, 26. 2. 1951.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-3, k. 30 – zápis ze schůze generálního sekretariátu ČSS, 15. 10. 1951.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-6, k. 30 – údernické hnutí v ČSS.
- NA Praha, f. E. Šlechta, sig. 40-30-6, k. 30 – Celkové zhodnocení činnosti ČSS, 1950.
- NA Praha, f. KSČ – ÚV 1945–1989. Politické byro 1954–1962, aj. 170, schůze politbyra 26. 2. 1957 – Zpráva o činnosti ČSS.
- Novák, M., 2021. *Pražské jaro 1968. Přerušená revoluce?* Praha: Academia, 279 s.
- Otáhal, M., 2008. Česká společnost na počátku tzv. normalizace, *Pět studií k dějinám české společnosti*, Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i., s. 10–68.
- Paroubek, J., Duchoslav, P., 2011. *Stručné dějiny národních socialistů*, Praha: Columbus, 134 s.
- Pavlíček, V., 1966. *Politické strany po Únoru. Příspěvek k problematice Národní fronty*, Praha: Svobodné slovo, 322 s.
- Pejskar, J., 1993. *Od boje (proti KSČ) ke kolaboraci. O činnosti ČSS 1948–1989*, Fallbrook – Praha: vlastním nákladem, 94 s.
- Pejskar, J., 1987. *Pronásledování vlastenci. Persekuce československých národních socialistů 1897–1980*, [New York]: Ústředí čs. strany národně sociální v exilu, 278 s.
- Pernes, J., 2008. *Krise komunistického režimu v Československu v 50. letech 20. století*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 199 s.
- Pernes, J., 1999. *Od demokratického socialismu k demokracii. Nekomunistická socialistická opozice v Brně v letech 1968–1972*, Brno: Barrister & Principal, 215 s.
- Petera, J., 2004. Československá strana socialistická a rok 1968, *Historie 2003. Celostátní studentská vědecká konference. Pardubice 4.–5. prosince 2003*, Pardubice: univerzita, s. 269–293.
- Petrusek, M., 2020. Každodennost. <https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/Ka%C5%BEdodennost> – cit. 14. 5. 2025.
- Pětiletka slavnostně vyhlášena, 1948, *Svobodné slovo*, r. 4, č. 253, 30. října, s. 1.
- Povolný, F. (ed.), 1949. *Dar republiky. Brněnský kraj k IX. sjezdu Komunistické strany Československa*, Brno: Rovnost, 157 s.
- Sartori, G., 2005. *Strany a stranické systémy. Schéma pro analýzu*, Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 467 s.
- Sedlák, P., 2013. Každodennost jakožto předmět a koncept dějepisného poznání, *Soudobé dějiny*, r. 20, č. 1–2, s. 120–157.
- Socialismus – odkaz našich dějin. Předseda ČSS ministr prof. dr. inž. Em. Šlechta o významu událostí tohoto roku, 1948, *Svobodné slovo*, r. 4, č. 285, 8. prosince, s. 1.
- Somr, M., 1976. Idea revoluční praxe a socialistická pedagogika, s. 427–435. file:///C:/Users/notebook/Downloads/Pedag_1976_4_04_Idea_427_435.pdf - cit. 10. 5. 2025.
- Šlechta, E., 1950. Splníme svou vlasteneckou povinnost. Pracovní závazky a úkoly ČSS, *Socialistický směr*, r. 2, č. 7, 1. dubna, s. 235–240.
- Urban, O., 1982. *Česká společnost 1848–1918*, Praha: Svoboda, 690 s.
- Úsilí o zlepšené výkony je národním hnutím, 1949, *Svobodné slovo*, r. 5, č. 119, 21. května, s. 2.
- Veber, V., 2008. *Osudové únorové dny 1948*, Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 426 s.
- Zaruski, J., Zückert, M. (eds.), 2013. *Münchener Abkommen von 1938 in europäischen Perspektive*, München: Oldenbourg, 472 s.

Павел Марек

доктор філософії та педагогіки, професор, почесний професор кафедри історії, філософський факультет,
Університет Палацького в Оломоуці, Оломоуц, Чехія

ДО ЗМІН У СКЛАДІ ЧЛЕНСЬКОЇ БАЗИ ЧЕХОСЛОВАЦЬКОЇ СОЦІАЛІСТИЧНОЇ ПАРТІЇ В 1948 – 1989 РОКАХ

Чехословацька соціалістична партія (ЧСП) виникла під час політичного перевороту в Чехословаччині в лютому 1948 року як наступниця партії чеських національних соціалістів, витоки якої сягають 1897 року. Тоді вона протистояла інтернаціональній соціал-демократії, а її членську базу поряд із робітниками складали представники середніх верств – ремісники, дрібні підприємці, торговці, службовці, чиновники та інтелігенція. До лютого 1948 року її програмна концепція була спрямована на побудову чеського національного соціалізму. Під цим терміном розумілося створення соціально орієнтованої та демократичної держави шляхом суспільних реформ. Після комуністичного перевороту, коли партії загрожувало зникнення, вона була змушена відмовитися від цієї програмної лінії та, ставши сателітом Комуністичної партії Чехословаччини (КПЧ), так званою «тіньовою партією», долучилася до побудови соціалізму. Трансформація партії, звісно, вплинула на зміну її

членської бази. Із масової політичної партії вона перетворилася на так звану вибіркову та малочисельну організацію, чисельність якої визначала правляча компартія через встановлену квоту членства. Основу членства у 1950–60-х роках складали колишні представники націонал-соціалістичної партії, які прийняли не лише її нову програму та роль у політичній системі країни, але й радикальні зміни внутрішньопартійного життя. Щоденна діяльність партії полягала в ідеологічному перевихованні членів у дусі марксизму-ленізму та відповідно до вказівок КПЧ. Частиною соціалістичного виховання членів було їх обов'язкове залучення до соціалістичного змагання на робочому місці й за місцем проживання. Вони брали на себе так звані соціалістичні зобов'язання, долучалися до бригадної праці в сільському господарстві, збору вторсировини, а також до будівництва об'єктів громадської інфраструктури (дитячі садки, парки, охорона довкілля тощо) — у тих сферах, де державна адміністрація не справлялася зі своєю роллю. Окрім цієї трудової участі в побудові соціалізму, основу внутрішньопартійного життя складала участь у зборах, організація святкувань і заходів, пов'язаних із комуністичними традиціями. Попри порівняно невеликі масштаби, членську базу ЧСП характеризувала відносна стабільність. З роками відбувалося природне оновлення її складу. Керівництво партії насамперед розлучалося зі старшими за віком та пасивними членами, яких поступово замінювали люди прагматичної орієнтації, що прагнули політичної активності, але не бажали вступати до КПЧ. Розвиток членської бази партії (її розширення або зменшення) був тісно пов'язаний зі змінами політичного курсу під час будівництва соціалізму в країні. Люди реагували на те, як виникали або зникали надії на зміну політичного режиму та всієї системи.

Ключові слова: Чехословацька соціалістична партія, Комуністична партія Чехословаччини, соціалізм, членська база, тоталітаризм.

Статус статті:

Отримано: 24.07.2025 Прийнято: 15.09.2025 Опубліковано: 01.11.2025

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY-4.0)

ISSN 2523-4498 (Print) ISSN 2786-6513 (Online)