CHAPTER 1

The National Road to Socialism

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

[1] The sincerity of the communist outreach has often been measured by national communist leaders' willingness to uphold the concept of 'the national road to socialism' after it fell out of favour with Stalin. In this respect, if we confine ourselves to the four countries under review in this book, scholarship tends to portray Italian and Polish communist leaders as rather more sincere and Czechoslovakian and French communist leaders as rather less sincere in their advocacy of a national road to socialism: e.g. Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti: A Biography* (Oxford/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Inessa Iazhborovskaia, 'The Gomułka Alternative: The Untravelled Road', in Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (eds.), *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944–1949* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 123–38; Jiří Pernes, *Takoví nám vládli: komunističtí prezidenti Československa a doba, v níž žili* (Prague: Brana, 2003); Jean-Paul Scot, 'Contradictions d'une tentative de "voie française"', *Nouvelles FondationS*, 3/3–4 (2006), pp. 104–9.

[2] Bradley Abrams, for example, points out how many 'democratic socialist intellectuals … applauded the "Czechoslovak road" and largely accepted the patriotism and democratic instincts of the Communist Party': 'Who Lost Czechoslovakia? Reconsidering the Communist Takeover 50 Years Later', *Intermarium Online Journal*, 3/3 (1999), pp. 1–13, 9. www.columbia.edu/cu/ece/research/intermarium/vol3no3/abrams.pdf (last consulted: 27 June 2018).

[3] At a December 1946 international conference of socialist and social democratic parties from Central and Eastern Europe, the Polish delegate insisted that 'the road to be followed should be Polish for

This chapter provides the necessary context for the seven analytical chapters by exploring the various national circumstances in which socialists and social democrats in post-war Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, and Poland operated. In the first place, it addresses post-war political developments within the four countries and the four parties. Starting from the formation of the post-war coalition governments, it identifies the key issues, debates, and turning points for each of the four countries and elaborates on the socialist attitudes towards these. Subsequently, the chapter places these attitudes in a broader context by briefly delving into the pre-war histories of the four countries and parties. From the nineteenth-century political and socio-economic climate in which the four parties came into being right to the moment of their countries' liberation, it reconstructs the experiences and traditions that shaped the socialists' responses to their post-war challenges. For it is only from the perspective of their pre-war vicissitudes that we can begin to make sense of what drove the four parties in opposite directions after the Second World War.

The Rise and Fall of the Post-War Coalition

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

Poland, Czechoslovak for Czechoslovakia etc.' See 'Bericht über die Konferenz der sozialistischen Parteien Zentral- und Osteuropas in Prag vom 7.–9. Dezember 1946', in Peter Heumos (ed.), *Die Konferenzen der sozialistischen Parteien Zentral- und Osteuropas in Prag und Budapest 1946 und 1947* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985), p. 71. Similar sentiments were expressed by leading Western European socialists. See e.g. Lelio Basso, 'La via italiana del socialismo', *Avanti!*, 26 November 1947. www.leliobasso.it/documento.aspx?id=fc1fe3ea2c5115d51c21338b2360bb67 (last consulted: 27 June 2018).

The Provisional Governments

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

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

All of this changed, however, when communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, upon his return to Italy in April 1944, announced that the PCI would be setting aside its objections to the monarchy for the duration of the war and would seek to join the Badoglio government. This announcement came as a 'cold shower' to the socialists, who, in spite of a Unity of Action Pact with the communists, had not been informed of the pending volte-face beforehand.[5] Yet the PSIUP grudgingly followed the PCI into government and, for a brief period, it appeared that things were moving in the Resistance's direction.

Upon the liberation of Rome in June 1944, Badoglio was replaced by Ivanoe Bonomi (PDL), the president of the CLN, as a new government including all of the six CLN parties took office. As it turned out, though, the liberal Bonomi was opposed to any socio-economic radicalism and set about restoring the unreformed and unpurged fascist bureaucratic

[4] Silvio Pons, 'Stalin and the Italian Communists', in Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter (eds.), *Origins of the Cold War: An International History* (New York/London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 205–20, 207.
[5] Paolo Mattera, *Storia del PSI: 1892–1994* (Rome: Carocci, 2010), pp. 126–7.

apparatus.[6] Exasperated by the near-complete lack of administrative purges and the police's heavy-handed crackdown on peasant land occupations in the southern Italian countryside, the PSIUP provoked a governmental crisis. In late November 1944, the CLN passed a socialist motion of no confidence in the prime minister. But Bonomi refused to even meet with the CLN and instead tendered his resignation to the king. Outraged by this snubbing of the Resistance, the PSIUP refused to join any government that would not explicitly recognise the institutional role of the CLN.[7] Once again, however, the communists left their official partners in the cold and joined the second Bonomi government alongside the three moderate parties (the DC, the PDL, and the PLI).

The liberation of northern Italy in the spring of 1945 offered the PSIUP fresh hopes. In the aftermath of the partisan insurrections in several of the north's large cities, demands for far-reaching socio-economic reforms and a thorough purge returned with a vengeance. This more radical 'wind from the north'[8] made Bonomi's position untenable and, in June, a six-party 'government of the resistance' under former partisan commander Ferrucio Parri (PdA) came into being. Yet the programme that Parri drew up – which included 'a serious purge' and such 'socialist-influenced economic proposals' as wealth redistribution and currency reform – found little favour with the Allies and the Italian liberals.[9] By November, the PLI withdrew from the government. The socialists still tried to save Parri by suggesting that the liberal ministers would be replaced in a new five-party government. But as the DC and the PDL rejected this outright and the PCI remained non-committal, Parri resigned.[10]

The demise of Parri spelt the end of the more radical aspirations of the liberation. Under the new six-party government led by Alcide De Gasperi (DC), in which the liberals 'obtained a stranglehold over economic policy'[11]

[6] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943–1988* (London/New York: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 53.

[7] For a more detailed account of the socialist demeanour during the crisis of the first Bonomi government, see Simone Neri Serneri, *Resistenza e democrazia dei partiti: I socialisti nell'Italia del 1943–1945* (Manduria/Bari/Rome: Piero Lacaita, 1995), pp. 440–7.

[8] It was with reference to this *vento del Nord* that PSIUP leader Pietro Nenni initially demanded the position of prime minister for the socialists: Francesco Malgeri, *La stagione del centrismo: politica e società nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra (1945–1960)* (Soveria Manelli: Rubbettino, 2002), p. 14.

[9] Spencer Di Scala, *Renewing Italian Socialism: Nenni to Craxi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1988), p. 29.

[10] A succinct summary of the collapse of the Parri government can be found in Gabriella Fanello Marcucci, *Il primo governo De Gasperi (Dicembre 1945 – Giugno 1946): Sei mesi decisivi per la democrazia in Italia* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004), pp. 24–32.

[11] Di Scala, *Renewing Italian Socialism*, p. 29.

and which saw the anti-fascist purge result in 'a disastrous failure',[12] the PSIUP adopted a strictly defensive stance. Placing all its hopes on the elections to the Constituent Assembly, which, after painstaking governmental negotiations, had finally been scheduled for June 1946, the party primarily sought to avoid further political crises.

If the interlude between the liberation and the first post-war elections was much shorter in France, it was a similarly frustrating period for the French socialists. In the wake of the August 1944 liberation of Paris, General Charles De Gaulle formed a government of 'national unanimity'. It brought together anti-fascist politicians and parties from right across the political spectrum – with the French Communist Party (PCF) and the French Socialist Party (SFIO) on the left, the newly founded (Catholic) Popular Republican Movement (MRP) and the Radical Party (PRS) in the centre, and a series of mostly non-party liberals and moderates on the right.

Much like their Italian counterparts, the French socialists were frequently ill at ease with the countless compromises that 'national unanimity' entailed. As early as January 1945, the SFIO leadership observed 'a malaise within the country and the government', reflected in an insufficient purge, the absence of a governmental programme, sluggish nationalisations, disagreements over the financial politics, the continuation of state subsidies for faith schools, and the 'anti-constitutional' practices of De Gaulle.[13] During the first months of 1945, though, the socialists lacked both the authority and the allies to press their views on these questions.

This was especially true for socio-economic questions. A commitment towards nationalisations was part of the 'action programme' of the umbrella organisation of the French Resistance – the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) – which had been underwritten by all the main parties and by De Gaulle in March 1944.[14] Yet the socialists quickly found the nationalisation drive – after the initial wave of 'punitive' expropriations of collaborationist owners in the immediate aftermath of liberation – wanting. The chief culprit, in the SFIO's view, was De Gaulle, who wanted to postpone any further nationalisations until after elections had

[12] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p. 92.
[13] Martine Pradoux and Gilles Morin, 'Daniel Mayer et la SFIO, 1944–1958', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 51/52 (1998), pp. 24–32, 26.
[14] The programme has been published in Claire Andrieu, *Le programme commun de la Résistance: Des idées dans la guerre* (Paris: Éditions de l'Érudit, 1984), pp. 168–75.

been held. But in reality, as Augustin Laurent pointed out, the socialists were 'isolated', as both the PCF and the MRP supported the general.[15] The SFIO was likewise on the losing side of the debate on economic planning. The socialists supported Pierre Mendès France – the Radical minister of the national economy – in his proposals for a state-directed economy with strong wage and price control.[16] It was the laissez-faire policies advocated by liberal finance minister René Pleven, however, that won the 'all-important backing' of both De Gaulle and the communists[17] – effectively putting on hold socialist aspirations of indicative planning at least until the October 1945 elections.

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

The Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) suffered heavy losses during the war years.[19] The party that took office in the provisional Czechoslovakian government – alongside the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (KSČ), the Czech National Socialist Party (ČSNS), the (Catholic) Czech People's Party (ČSL), and the Slovakian Democratic Party (DS) – was

[15] Office Universitaire de Recherche Socialiste, Paris (hereafter OURS), Archives du Parti Socialiste SFIO, Compte rendu des débats du Comité Directeur, 1944–1969 (hereafter: CD SFIO), 26 February 1945.

[16] On Mendès France's plans: Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Post-War Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 103.

[17] Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic 1944–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 64–6.

[18] Anita Prazmowska, 'The Polish Socialist Party, 1945–1948', *East European Quarterly*, 34/3 (2000), pp. 337–59, 340; Karel Kaplan, 'Tschechoslowakische Sozialdemokratie und tschechoslowakische Kommunisten 1944–1948', in Dieter Staritz and Herman Weber (eds.), *Einheitsfront Einheitspartei. Kommunisten und Sozialdemokraten in Ost- und Westeuropa 1944–1948* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1989), pp. 280–304, 283.

[19] Whereas Bradley Abrams argues that much of the ČSSD's pre-war leadership was 'too old to continue', Jiří Pernes notes how 'the German occupiers took the life of many of its functionaries'. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul*, p. 59; Jiří Pernes, 'Vztahy ČSSD a KSČ v době třetí republiky', in Hynek Fajmon, Stanislav Balík, and Kateřina Hloušková (eds.), *Dusivé objetí: historické a politologické pohledy na spolupráci sociálních demokratů a komunistů* (Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultury, 2006), pp. 25–33, 26.

in many ways unrecognisable compared with the interwar ČSSD. Its incoming chairman and the provisional government's prime minister, Zdeněk Fierlinger, had never even held a position within the party. As the former Czechoslovakian ambassador to the Soviet Union, however, he did command the trust both of the communists and of President Edvard Beneš (ČSNS).[20]

In fact, the communists had shown a strong preference for representatives of the ČSSD's pre-war left wing during crucial wartime talks in Moscow, propelling such relatively unknown social democrats as Bohumil Laušman and Evžen Erban – the new minister of industry and the secretary general of the united trade union movement, respectively – to positions of real power.[21] If the new ČSSD leadership was initially very close to the communists, though, it was not necessarily out of touch with the party grassroots. The October 1945 ČSSD congress confirmed several pro-communists in leading positions and the principle of cooperation with the communists was shared right across the party.[22]

The post-liberation leadership of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) experienced far greater difficulties in establishing its legitimacy. These difficulties had their origins in the dispute over the rightful Polish government. In February 1943, the Kremlin had severed diplomatic relations with the Polish government in London exile over the controversy surrounding the Soviet massacre of Polish officers in the Katyń forests.[23] Moscow then proceeded quickly to set up what was effectively a rival government in exile – the heavily communist-dominated Polish National Liberation Committee (PKWN). The PKWN formed the provisional Polish government that took office in Soviet-liberated Lublin in August 1944. The Lublin government was notionally a coalition – of the newly founded (communist) Polish Workers' Party (PPR) as well as three left-wing and centre-left parties with roots in interwar Poland: the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the Democratic Party (SD), and the People's Party (SL). In

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

[21] Kaplan, *Das verhängnisvolle Bündnis*, pp. 36–43.

[22] Ibid., pp. 61–2.

[23] The Soviet Union was particularly outraged by the exiled government's efforts to carry out an investigation into the matter on German-occupied territory. See Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943–1948* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 14–15.

reality, though, the leaders of the three non-communist parties had often been hand-picked by the PPR and were completely subservient to the communists and the Soviet Union.

This was certainly true for the Lublin PPS. Its leader – Edward Osóbka-Morawski – had been part of a left-wing splinter group of the mainstream PPS underground organisation Freedom, Equality, Independence (WRN). He was among the very few Polish resisters who were willing to work with the communists in the first place. In May 1944, as part of a communist-socialist delegation, he made his way to the territories liberated by the Red Army. Visiting Moscow that same month, he joined forces with pro-communist Polish socialists who had spent the war in the Soviet Union and was promptly appointed as prime minister of the PKWN by Stalin.[24] Dominated by fellow-travellers who had been on the radical left of interwar socialism, then, the Lublin PPS initially bore little resemblance to the pre-war PPS. Small wonder that its legitimacy was fiercely contested by both the London PPS and the WRN, which denounced the Lublin PPS leadership as usurpers of the Polish socialist tradition and branded the party the 'false' or 'concessionary' PPS.[25]

Towards the end of 1944, though, things began looking up both for the Lublin PPS and for the Lublin government. In November, Stanisław Mikołajczyk – the prime minister of the London government – resigned his post in frustration over his fellow ministers' reluctance to compromise with the Lublin government and the Soviet Union. Several London socialists followed in his footsteps and together they entered into negotiations with the Lublin parties. In June 1945, these negotiations led to the creation of a new government – the Provisional Government of National Unity – in which Mikołajczyk became deputy prime minister, leading London socialist Jan Stańczyk became minister of labour, and two further interwar political heavyweights took up ministerial roles. Even if the communists and their partners very much remained in control, the new government was sufficiently representative for the Western Allies to recognise it as the legitimate government of Poland – effectively ending any hopes the London government might still have enjoyed of returning to Poland.

The legitimacy of the Lublin PPS, meanwhile, was strengthened considerably by the inclusion of former Londoners. What is more, the WRN dissolved itself in February 1945.[26] Much of the WRN's rank and file

[24] Robert Spałek, 'Między pragmatyzmem a zdradą', pp. 145–242, 145–7.
[25] Prazmowska, 'The Polish Socialist Party', p. 340.
[26] Ibid., p. 341.

seems to have subsequently decided to join the Lublin PPS, which saw its membership rise spectacularly in the first half of 1945. Whatever the origins of the membership surge, it was certainly accompanied by a more independence-minded mood within the Lublin PPS.[27] This became very clear at the party's July–August 1945 congress, where the party leadership failed in its attempt to push through a new party programme and former WRN member Józef Cyrankiewicz replaced former Muscovite Stefan Matuszewski as the party's secretary general.[28] Unlike the two other non-communist parties that had been part of the PKWN, then, the Lublin PPS managed to wrest itself from complete dependency upon the communists. Together with the PPR and Mikołajczyk's new Polish Peasant Party (PSL), it was to become one of the three key forces in post-war Polish politics.

First Electoral Tests

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

Almost three years after Allied troops first set feet on Italian soil, national elections were finally organised. In certain respects, these elections, which took place on 2 June 1946, were a success story for the Italian socialists. The PSIUP became the largest force on the left in the freshly elected Constituent Assembly, winning 20.7 per cent of the popular vote and 115 seats to the PCI's 18.9 per cent and 104 seats. The socialists were likewise on the victorious side of the institutional referendum, held on the same day as the parliamentary elections, in which more than 54 per cent of the electorate voted to replace the monarchy with a republic. At the same

[27] Spałek, 'Między pragmatyzmem a zdradą', pp. 152–3.
[28] Ibid., p. 154; Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule*, p. 179.

time, however, the elections were a major defeat for the Italian Left. The combined Left – even if we include such centre-left parties as the Action Party and the Italian Republican Party (PRI) – fell well short of a parliamentary majority. Both the PSIUP and the PCI, moreover, were dwarfed by the Christian democrats – the DC winning 35.2 per cent of the vote and 207 seats.

In the new De Gasperi government that was formed in the aftermath of the elections – a four-party coalition of the PCI, the PSIUP, the DC, and the PRI – the Christian democrats thus remained very much in charge. The PSIUP's new minister of industry – Rodolfo Morandi – experienced this first-hand. By contemporary European standards, his proposals were far from radical. Widespread nationalisation programmes, by that time well underway in a string of countries in East and West, were not on the table in post-war Italy to begin with. Yet even Morandi's moderate agenda – which included the legal recognition of factory councils and a modicum of state intervention in industrial financing and planning – was consistently voted down by the centre-right parliamentary majority. The 'fourteen points' – a series of planning measures and economic controls to combat rampant inflation and speculation, which Morandi presented to the Council of Ministers in March 1947 – did not even make it that far.[29] '[W]ithin fifteen days', Morandi lamented to the PSIUP Directorate, De Gasperi had created a situation in which the fourteen points 'no longer have value'.[30]

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

[29] Aldo Agosti, *Rodolfo Morandi: Il pensiero e l'azione politica* (Bari: Laterza, 1971), pp. 421–3.
[30] 'Riunione Direzione' (8 May 1947), Istituto Storico della Resistenza in Toscana, Florence (hereafter ISRT), Fondo Foscolo Lombardi, Partito Socialista Italiano, Direzione Nazionale, Busta 4, Fasc. 20.
[31] The pact has been published in *Orientamenti: Bollettino di Commento e di Indirizzo Politico*, 2/1–2 (1948), pp. 35–7.
[32] Francesca Taddei, *Il socialismo italiano nel dopoguerra: Correnti ideologiche e scelte politiche, 1943–1947* (Milano: Franco Agneli, 1984), p. 305.