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Klement Gottwald, Some Principles of the New Constitution, 1946

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Source: Czechoslovak Ministry of Information. *Statement of policy of the third Government of the National Front of the Czechs and Slovaks, made by the Premier, Klement Gottwald, in the Constituent National Assembly, Prague, July 8, 1946*, pp. 9-12.

SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION
(1946)

The Government considers it its duty to propose to the Constituent National Assembly such a new constitution as will guarantee that the people really are the source of all power. The new Constitution must, therefore, following the democratic principles of the present Constitution, take into account above all the results of the struggle against the occupationists, the main burden of which was borne by our people, and the conditions as they have developed in the reconstruction of our liberated Republic up to now, in which the people have been the main pillars of this work.

The new Constitution must ensure the popular, genuinely democratic character of our public administration on the basis of National Committees. This means that the principle of universal, direct, equal and secret voting and proportional representation in all representative bodies will be constitutionally ensured. The bureaucratic and police system of State administration must disappear from our public life for ever.

This constitutional framework for the system of National Committees must be accompanied by reconstruction, decentralization, modernization, simplification and economization of our whole civil service-beginning from the Ministries and ending with the local National Committees. The Government desires an extension and an exact delimitation of the competence of National Committees of all degrees, so that they will be able in accordance with the valid legal regulations to solve within their competence all material and personal problems quickly and efficiently as far as they do not concern the interests of superior administrative bodies and are not reserved for them. The Civil Service-from the National Committees to Government departments-must be administered in such a way that the population will see and feel in practice that the Civil Service is here to serve them and not vice versa.

The new Constitution must also embody the great complex of decrees on the nationalization of banking, mines, mineral resources, power and the big and key industries. The new Constitution must disappoint the hopes of all those who believe that the nationalized economic enterprises will be returned to a handful of big capitalists. On the other hand, the Constitution must give protection to small and medium-sized private enterprise, and especially the legitimately acquired property of our farmers, tradesmen, shopkeepers and all other persons and corporations must be safeguarded.

The new Constitution will express the principle that every citizen has the right to work, to a fair reward for his work, the right to education, recreation and to maintenance if he is incapable of working. In return every citizen is required to contribute by his work to the prosperity of the community.

The new Constitution will emphasize that the Republic is a national state of the Czechs and Slovaks. The transfer of Germans and Hungarians and the resettlement of the border districts by Czechs and Slovaks must culminate in a constitutional guarantee that only the Czech and Slovak nations will in future decide in all public and national affairs; the civic rights of other Slav nationals will be safeguarded.

It is obvious that the new Constitution must embody a new settlement of the relationship between the Czech and Slovak nations. This will be based on the Kosice Government Programme, and the experiences gained in its application will be taken into account. In any case, the new Constitution must recognize the Slovaks as a separate nation, as expressed by their legislative and executive organs-the Slovak National Council and the Committee of Delegates-and equal rights with the Czech nation, while maintaining the unity of the Czechoslovak Republic, must be ensured to the Slovaks; indeed, this unity must be further strengthened. This means among other things that just as the Government will fight against the enemies of the Republic, anywhere it will not tolerate any separatist, anti-Czech, anti-Soviet, Fascist elements and followers of Tiso and Tuka wherever their present abode might be, who would try to take advantage of the democratic liberties in order to disrupt the Republic and to prepare a new March 14,1939.

Finally, the new Constitution must guarantee full equality of women, personal and civil liberties, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, of speech, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of scientific research, freedom of artistic expression as well as all other personal and political freedoms guaranteed by the present Constitution. The judicature will be exercised by independent law-courts.

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