

COMMUNIST LANDSCAPES OF MORAVIA AND SILESIA (1925-1992)

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SUMMARY

The paper deals with development of the voting support of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) on the territory of Moravia and Silesia. Spatial differentiation of the CPC voting support in the 1925, 1929, 1935, 1946, and 1992 elections is approached by means of regional variability and territorial concentration of its voters. Conditioning of the CPC voting support by socioeconomic and sociocultural variables, representing potential social cleavages, is investigated by using multiple regression analysis. Regions with high long-term stability and/or variability of the voting support are delimited in the final part of the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writings of André Siegfried and Carl Sauer dating back to the 1910s are usually considered to be the beginnings of the geography of elections. But a quick development of the discipline started only by the end of the 1960s in connection with the onset of quantitative methods (Taylor, 1989). In the Czech Republic it is quite a new discipline whose beginning is dated exactly by the day of the 1990 parliamentary elections. Delayed origin of the first geographical studies of elections in the Czech Republic has a very simple reason: under the absence of free elections and 99.9 % of votes cast for the unified list of candidates of the National Front there was no subject for the geography of elections before 1990.

The 1990 elections - first free elections since 1946 - were characterized by a high participation and accompanied by a great interest of the public. Soon after the announcement of the results the first studies appeared mapping their spatial differentiation (Institute of Geography, 1990) and analyzing the conditioning of this differentiation by the social environment (Blažek, Kostecký, 1990, 1991; Kostecký, 1993). In those studies a conspicuous similarity was found of the distribution of votes cast in favour of some political parties in 1990 with the elections of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1939) (Jehlička, Sýkora, 1991). A long-term territorial stability is a typical feature of the voting behaviour in democratic countries. But its finding in the Czech Republic is surprising because it indicates the survival of traditional values and identities even after decades of the totalitarian regime,

intentionally suppressing those identities as hostile to its ideology. The voting behaviour (and to a considerable extent also the whole society) seems to develop again from the state in which it remained frozen by the onset of totality. However, the process of preserving the traditional values as the defence against communist propaganda was spatially differentiated. It is not possible to neglect the changes occurring due to the operation of totalitarian ideology as well as to the social and economic development.

The subject of the present paper is to describe development of the spatial differentiation of the voting behaviour in the studied period on example of a single political party: the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC). The reasons for selecting this very party are several:

(1) The role of the CPC in modern Czech history. The consequences of a long-term leading role of this party represent a burden the Czech society must still square up with. At the same time, the CPC remains an important political power.

(2) A practical reason is a limited number of the so-called traditional political parties - i.e. parties which kept their continuity in the course of the studied period or linked up directly to old traditions after 1989. The CPC is one of only three parties in which it is possible to study for a long time the development of their voting support. (Two other parties are the Czechoslovak People's Party and the Social Democratic Party).

(3) A theoretical and methodological reason is the verification of the statement about the exceptional position of the Communist Party in the political spectrum. Whereas the majority of other political parties are built up along the social cleavages existing in the given society (see Rokkan, 1970; Taylor, 1989; Lane, Ersson, 1991), the Communist Party declares itself to be a universalist party "of all working people", thus neglecting the dependence on social cleavages. This statement is supported by some empirical evidence. Blažek and Kostelecký (1991), for example, found a low regional variability of the share of the CPC votes in the 1990 elections, as well as a low index of determination of regression models explaining this variability. The verification of this statement in a long-term perspective is one of the objectives of this paper.

The main objective of the study is to describe the development of the spatial differentiation of the CPC voting support on the territory of Moravia and Silesia on the basis of the results of parliamentary elections in 1925, 1929, 1935, 1946 and 1992, and to characterize the social environment typical for the successful rooting of communist ideas and ideologies. After the following recapitulation of the role of the CPC in the individual elections, in the third part of the study the development of the spatial differentiation of the voting support to that party is approached by means of the regional variability and territorial concentration of its voters. The fourth chapter is devoted to the interrelations of the spatial differentiation of the CPC voters and

selected characteristics of the population structure. Finally the fifth part delimits the areas with a long-term stability of the CPC voting support.

2. BRIEF ELECTION PORTRAIT OF THE CPC

The CPC was founded in 1921, and as early as the first parliamentary elections it contested (1925) it reached a considerable success. In whole of Czechoslovakia it gained 13.1% of votes, thus becoming the second strongest political party with the loss of only 0.5% to the winning Republican Party of Agricultural and Peasant People. (Some basic information about the individual elections is shown in Table 1). In Moravia and the Czech part of Silesia the popularity of the CPC was mildly below average, but even there 11.1% and the third place represented a considerable political force. Its campaign withdrew the voters of the traditional left-wing parties, above all of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party. Areas of the traditional support of the Social Democratic Party were split in several cases into two parts: one which remained social democratic, and the communist one. This splitting of left-wing votes remained preserved also in the following elections and it is visible even at present (Jehlička, Sýkora, 1991).

In the period before World War II the voting support of the CPC declined perceptibly (Table 1). Part of its voters inclined back to other left-wing parties, part of the German voters were attracted by German parties - particularly the Sudeten German Party. The CPC was becoming a marginal part of the political spectrum and it seemed that this development would continue.

Table 1. Brief characterization of the individual elections

Indicator	1925	1929	1935	1946	1992
Number of registered electors (thousands)	1.896	2.000	2.192	1.967	3.011
Turnout (%)	92.0	92.2	93.0	94.9	85.6
Number of competing parties	20	15	15	4	19
Number of parties which entered parliament	13	15	14	4	8
Strongest party (its share in %)	PP(21.3)	PP(17.7)	PP(15.6)	CP(34.5)	CD(25.8)
Strongest party on the terr. of Czech Rep.	RP(12.7)	SD(14.1)	SG(19.4)	CP(40.2)	CD(33.9)
Rank of the CPC	3	5	6	1	3
Share of votes cast for the CPC (%)	11.1	8.9	8.6	34.5	14.4

All indicators are related to the territory of Moravia and Silesia except the 6th line which is given for the whole territory of the Czech Lands.

PP - Czechoslovak People's Party

CP - Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC)

RP - Republican Party of Agricultural and Peasant People

SD - Social Democratic Party

SG - Sudeten German Party

CD - coalition of Civic Democratic Party and Christian Democratic Party

However, the war and the post-war events (the transfer of Germans) resulted in a dramatic change of the political situation. The results of the 1946 elections yield a picture dissimilar in almost all aspects to the pre-war situation. First of all, the structure of the political spectrum was considerably deformed - only four political parties were allowed to candidate. (Particularly the ban of the Republican Party of Agricultural and Peasant People - the strongest political party in the pre-war period - had helped to strengthen the position of the CPC in the countryside.) The structure of electorate changed conspicuously, too. Their number dropped due to the transfer of Germans, a number of people were deprived of the right to vote due to actual or alleged collaboration with the Nazis. All people of non-Slavonic origin were excluded by law from the suffrage. That decrease was partly compensated by lowering the age limit from 21 to 18 years and by extending the voting right to the members of the army and police. Those facts - some of them casting doubt on the statement about the democratic character of that elections - stand behind the victory of the CPC in the 1946 elections. Another reason was the atmosphere of the post-war enthusiasm in combination with the idea of "happy tomorrows" promised in the election campaign of the CPC. The CPC reached a persuasive victory with 40.2% of votes in the Czech Lands (34.5 % in Moravia and Silesia), thus obtaining the power utilized for the coup d'état in February, 1948. That was the end of a short period of the post-war democracy.

The communist coup d'état was, however, the consequence of not only the interior political situation, but also of the contemporary geopolitical distribution of power in Europe. It is probable that the enthronement of totalitarian rule in Czechoslovakia would have occurred even under a different ratio of votes in the 1946 elections. But these questions are outside the scope of this study.

One of many consequences of decades of communist totality is the relative strengthening of the CPC position in the early 1990s in comparison with the situation before World War II. Whereas the other traditional political parties were not able to defend their pre-war position in the strongly competitive political climate the CPC gained the second highest share of votes in its history. In the Czech Lands it became the second strongest political party with 14.0% of votes. This success can be considered to be a cumulated effect of two sources of the voting support: A. traditional votes in areas of a high pre-totalitarian support, and B. "new" votes from among the nomenclature and party structures formed in the period of the leading role of the CPC.

3. REGIONAL VARIABILITY AND TERRITORIAL CONCENTRATION OF THE CPC VOTING SUPPORT

The spatial differentiation of CPC voters is observed in this study according to the former judicial districts - small nodal regions that were administrative (and statistical) units in the period of 1850-1948. For the 1990s the corresponding data were obtained

by summing the values of the municipalities situated on the territory of the respective judicial district. In several cases, where the built-up area of a large town exceeded the borders of a narrowly delimited judicial district, the neighbouring districts were put

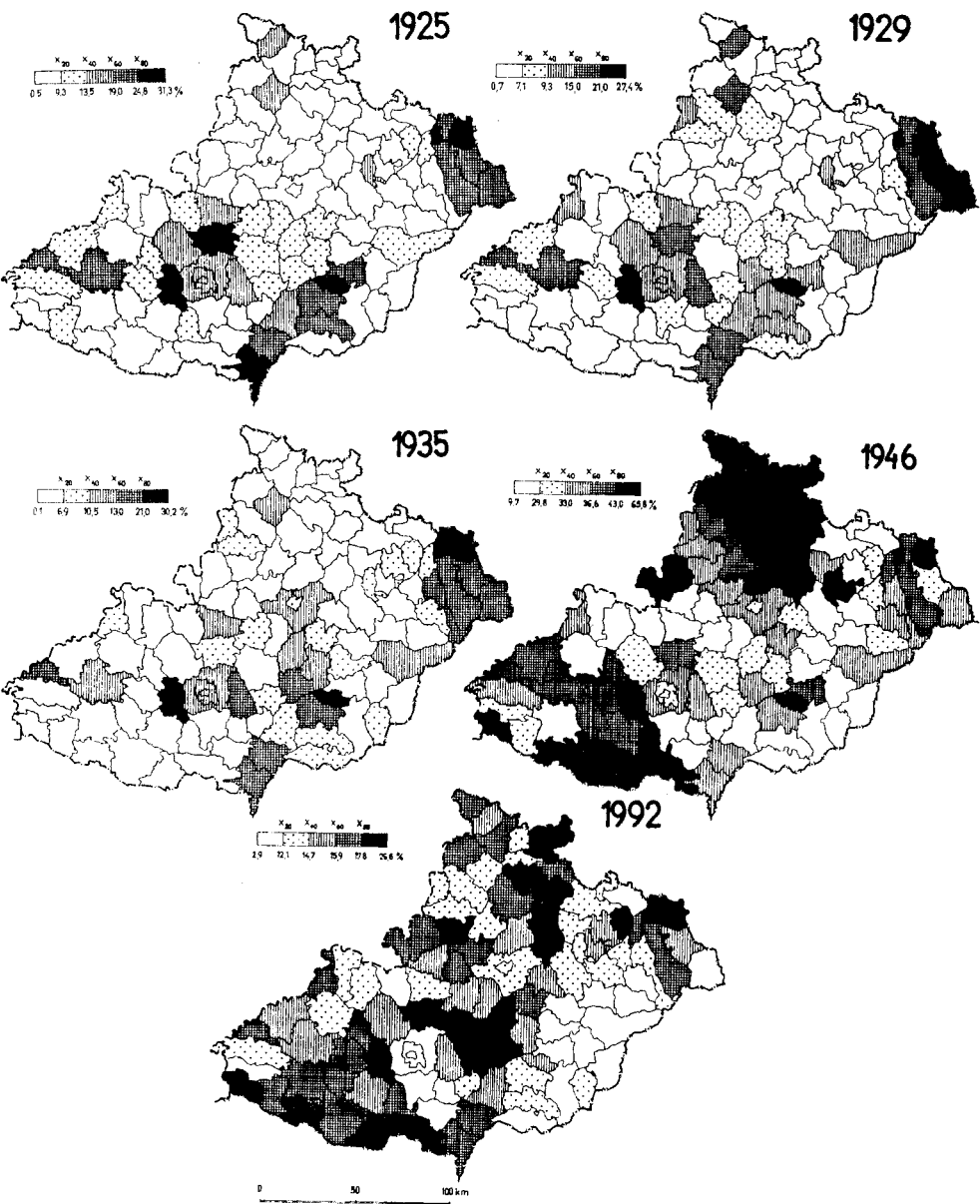


Fig. 1. The share of votes cast for the CPC in 1925 - 1992 (for legend construction see text)

together to form one unit. After this adaptation the number of districts is 105 with average area of 255 km².

The spatial differentiation of the CPC voting support in 1925, 1929, 1935, 1946 and 1992 elections is expressed in Fig. 1. The legend to the cartograms was compiled in such a way as to concentrate just one fifth of votes for the CPC in each of the five intervals. This way makes possible to express besides spatial differentiation also the territorial concentration of the phenomenon.

The development of the regional variability of the CPC voting support was evaluated by the variation coefficient of the share of votes for the CPC (V_x) (Table 2). High values in the pre-war period refer to a great differentiation of districts from the point of view of the CPC voting support, this differentiation having an increasing trend in the period of 1925-1935. In 1946, the differences among the districts were reduced markedly simultaneously with the general increase in the voting support of the CPC. The penetration of communist ideas through the society was much more even in comparison with the pre-war situation. In the following period up to 1989 the planned building of the CPC structure resulted in further reduction of the interdistrict variability. In 1992 the individual districts differ only little from the average for the territory of Moravia and Silesia.

The unevenness in the distribution of communist votes with respect to the distribution of population - i.e. the evenness of the spread of communist ideas in the society - can be measured by means of the territorial concentration. The territorial concentration was expressed by indices H_v and H_c expressing the share of the smallest possible area (in %) on which 50 % of all cast votes are concentrated (H_v), or 50 % of votes for the CPC (H_c). Thus the smaller the value of H_v (H_c) the greater the territorial concentration of the phenomenon (Table 2).

With respect to a similar distribution of voters and the population as a whole and to a low election non-participation, index H_v indicates to a considerable extent the concentration of population. Decline in its value in the studied period is thus a confirmation of general ideas about the increase of the territorial concentration of the population in the course of the processes of urbanization and modernization of society (Hampl, 1971; Hampl et al., 1987). Territorial concentration of communist voters should therefore be evaluated in comparison with territorial concentration of all voters: the difference $H_v - H_c$ indicates by how much the votes for the CPC are more concentrated than votes (population) as a whole.

A high concentration of communist votes (a high difference $H_v - H_c$) in the period of the First Republic witnesses their limitation within several districts with a much above-average support - the traditional strongholds of the party. In that period the CPC did not differ markedly from other political parties - at least from the point of view of the territorial concentration of its voters. The highest territorial concentration was

Table 2. Regional variability of the CPC votes (V_x) and spatial concentration of total votes (H_v) and votes for the CPC (H_c)

	1925	1929	1935	1946	1992
V_x (%)	79.6	81.4	88.8	31.4	26.8
H_v	28.3	27.5	26.5	22.0	18.8
H_c	12.7	13.6	10.3	20.2	18.1
$H_v - H_c$	15.6	13.9	16.2	1.8	0.7

reached in 1935 when the polarization of the political spectrum to the Czech and the German parts culminated (and when the CPC won the lowest share of votes in its history).

The drop in the territorial concentration of communist votes in 1946 points again to the key role of that elections in the history of both the party and the country. The evenness of distribution of its supporters was conditioned by the penetration of the CPC into the area where it had gained only minimum support before - into the re-settled borderland (Fig. 1). Districts with the pre-war German majority became - after expulsion of Germans - almost without exception new strongholds of the CPC.

In the period of 1946-1992 the territorial concentration of CPC voters became yet more even. It is the consequence of a purposeful building and strengthening of the party structures in all layers of the society and in all localities in the period when it was the holder of totalitarian power. Thus the territorial concentration of communist votes in 1992 is almost identical with the territorial concentration of the voters (population) as a whole.

4. CONDITIONING OF THE CPC VOTING SUPPORT BY THE STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY

a) Starting points

The objective of this part is to characterize the social environment in which communist ideas are accepted and take their roots and to verify the hypothesis about the independence of the CPC on existing social cleavages. The dependence of the spatial differentiation of communist votes on the distribution of different social groups was evaluated by the method of multiple linear regression with stepwise variable selection. The share of votes for the CPC was considered to be the dependent variable

Table 3. List of variables employed in the regression models

Independent variable	Abbreviation
Share of working population employed in agriculture and forestry	AGRICxx
Share of working population employed in mining	MININGxx
Share of working population employed in industry	INDUSTxx
Share of working population employed in trade and services	TRADExx
Share of population living in towns	URBANxx
Share of population without religious affiliation	NCREEDx
Share of believers of other than Roman-Catholic church	EVANGxx
Share of Germans (1930)	GERMAN3
Share of minority ethnic groups (except Czech, Moravian and Silesian nationalities - 1991)	ETHMIN91

whose variability is explained by a set of independent variables, characterizing the social environment. These variables were selected in such a way as to represent the potential social cleavages along which political parties are often constituted: ethnic cleavage, religious cleavage, cleavage between agriculture and industry, and between town and countryside. The selection of social cleavages is in no case complete, but its limitation was necessitated by the available database. The list of independent variables used in the regression analysis is given in Table 3.

The source of data about the socio-economic structure was the population censuses. Census acts were carried out in the Czech Lands approximately every ten years. But the time difference between the date of census and the date of election may be neglected due to a short-term relative stability of the socio-economic structure. The results of the 1925, 1929, and 1935 elections were related to the structure of population found in the 1930 census, the 1946 elections with the 1947 census and the 1992 elections with the 1991 census.

In each regression model the independent variables with respective standardized regression coefficients are given, increase in the index of determination expressing individual contribution of the independent variable, and the index of determination (R^2) evaluating the percentage of total variability explained by the model. Significance level for all variables in the regression models does not exceed 0.05.

Nevertheless, the voting behaviour is influenced besides different aspects of the social structure also by a number of specific factors that can be termed the local

political climate (traditions, historical experience, subjective expectations of individuals, influence of the candidate, etc.). These factors are usually unquantifiable and stand at the background of residual variability unexplained by the employed regression model.

b) The period of the First Republic

The spatial differentiation of the CPC voting support was very stable in the pre-war period. The Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation for the districts between 1925 and 1929 was 0.93, between 1929 and 1935 it was 0.84. It is therefore not surprising to see that the same variables entered the regression models in all three years. It allows to characterize only the 1935 model (Table 4).

Table 4. Basic characteristics of the regression model for 1935

Independent variable	Standardized regression coefficient	Increase in R square (%)
MINING30	0.322	31.9
GERMAN30	-0.462	14.1
AGRIC30	-0.289	4.3
		R ² = 50.3 %

The most important variable entering the model in all three years is the share of working population employed in mining (MINING30). In 1935 this single variable explains 31.9% of the variability of communist votes. In this period the CPC voters were concentrated above all in the coal-mining districts - in Ostrava-Karviná and Rosice-Oslavany basins and to a smaller extent also in the districts of Hodonín and Vidnava. The way of life connected with risks brought by sub-surface coal mining is a source of a specific sociocultural environment of those regions. Typical features of that environment is a greater inclination to atheism and a tendency to vote communist.

The second variable from the point of view of the explained variability is the share of inhabitants of German nationality (GERMAN30). It witnesses a more successful acceptance of communist ideas among the Czechs than among the Germans. The CPC ran for election as a “supranational” party with the attribute “Section of the Third International”. As one of the few political parties in that time it was not divided into the Czech and the German parts. Despite that its popularity in the Czech speaking regions was considerably higher. Moreover, the ethnic cleavage deepened with time. While in the predominantly Czech districts (with share of Germans below 10 %) 11.0 % of voters cast their votes for the CPC in 1929 and 10.2 % in 1935, in districts with the share of Germans over 90 % the election support of the CPC dropped from 6.0 % to 2.5 % at the same time.

The third variable (AGRIC30) refers to a lower popularity of the CPC in agricultural regions. But its contribution is small, in individual years it accounts for only 4-8 % of the variability of the dependent variable.

Neither the urbanization level nor the religious structure of population conditioned the probability to vote communist in that period. Remarkable is the nonexistence of relation to industrial regions outside the coal-mining districts: both high and low CPC election support is found in the industrialized districts. The district of Zlín is specific. Despite a quick development of industry (Bata works) the share of communist votes dropped from 20 % to 5 % in that district between 1925 and 1935.

c) The 1946 elections

Territorial distribution of communist votes in 1946 differs considerably from the pre-war situation. The coefficient of rank correlation between 1935 and 1946 (-0.16) shows a conspicuous change occurring in that period. That change is the expansion of the CPC into the re-settled borderland. The only variable entering the regression model in 1946 is GERMAN30 (Table 5). This variable explains more than 60% of the variability of the dependent variable. It confirms the fact that the expulsion of Germans after the end of World War II was a key moment for the spread of communism in the Czech Lands with the subsequent effect on the development of the political system as well as the whole society. Ethnic cleavage existing in pre-war period between the Czechs and the Germans remained preserved in the voting behaviour even after the transfer, but turned inside out and at the same time stressed.

Table 5. Basic characteristics of the regression model for 1946

Independent variable	Standardized regression coefficient	Index of determination
GERMAN30	0.776	$R^2 = 60.3\%$

In a continually populated “interior” the spatial differentiation of communist votes remained similar to the pre-war situation. If a regression model is compiled only for districts with the pre-war Czech majority the “traditional” variables get in indicating the firm roots of communism in mining districts and its lower popularity in agricultural areas. In the districts where the pre-war development resulted in the suppression of communism (Zlín, Blansko, etc.), the share of CPC votes quickly returned to the former high level.

d) The 1992 elections

Three political take-overs and considerable changes in the social structure took place during the period of 1946-1992. In spite of that a number of features similar to the 1946 elections can be found in the spatial differentiation of the CPC voters in 1992. The coefficient of rank correlation for these elections is 0.67.

From among the variables employed for the historical comparison the share of unbelievers (NCREED91) and the share of population employed in agriculture (AGRIC91) got in the regression model. These two variables explain 59.1% of the variability of votes for the CPC. On extending the set of variables by further characteristics of the population structure from the 1991 census also the share of population in the postproductive age (POSTP91) and the share of population with secondary and university education (HIGHED91) entered the model (Table 6).

Table 6. Basic characteristics of the regression model for 1992

Independent variable	Standardized regression coefficient	Increase in R square (%)
NCREED91	0.641	41.1
AGRIC91	0.432	18.0
POSTP91	0.183	2.6
HIGHED91	-0.224	2.1 R ² = 63.8%

The most important variable in the model is NCREED91 (41 % of the total variability). Mass secularization was one of the typical processes of the totalitarian period: the share of population without religious affiliation in the Czech Lands increased from 7.8% in 1930 to 55.9% in 1991. Atheist propaganda of the communist regime was the most successful in the re-settled territories with the "rootless" population (and a high support of the CPC), whereas in the continually populated interior it met with the traditional values of the civic society (Daněk, Štěpánek, 1992; Hudečková, 1992). Cleavage between the interior and the Sudeten thus remained preserved in the voting behaviour even in the 1990s, only ethnic cleavage was in ethnically homogeneous country replaced by religious cleavage. The high share of population without religious affiliation is typical both of the "new" communist strongholds in the borderland and of the traditional regions with high CPC support in the coal-mining basins where atheism has older roots.

Other variables in the regression model point to a higher popularity of the CPC in agricultural districts with a relatively old and little educated population - i.e. in relatively peripheral regions. Greater inertia of thinking and reluctance to accept sudden changes brought by the process of post-totalitarian transition - typical features of peripheral countryside - represents an environment suitable for successful survival

of communist ideas. Voters in faster developing districts with younger and more educated population preferred other political parties. That can be considered an expression of the present decline of the party that for 40 years had the leading role in the Czech society.

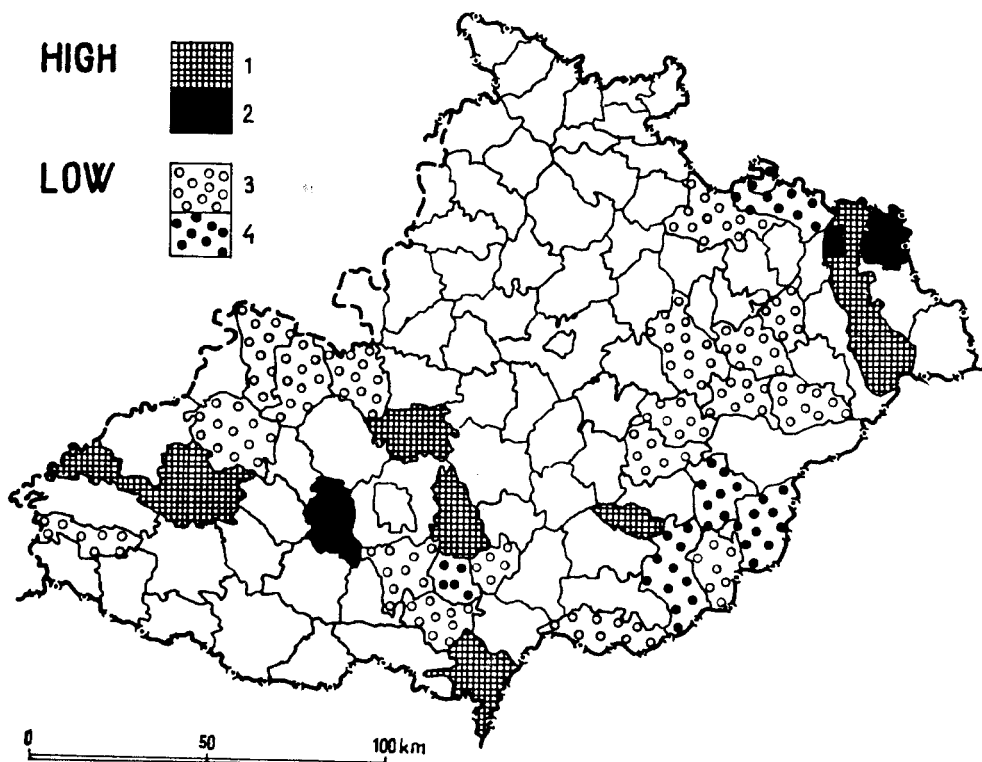


Fig. 2. Regions of the long-term stable support of the CPC.

- A) High: 1 - more than average in all elections,
 2 - more than 1.25-multiple of average in all elections,
 B) Low: 3 - less than average in all elections,
 4 - less than 0.75-multiple of average in all elections.

5. REGIONS WITH LONG-TERM STABILITY OF THE VOTING SUPPORT

The evaluation of long-term territorial stability of the voting support of traditional political parties in the Czech Lands was the objective of the article by Jehlička and Sýkora (1991). This part is a supplement of their findings, which makes it possible to abridge the text.

Long-term stability and/or variability of the CPC election support is expressed in two complementary ways in Figs. 2 and 3. In Fig. 2 those districts were considered to be regions of stable voting support whose share of votes cast in favour of the CPC exceeded the country average (or 1.25-multiple of the average) in all five elections

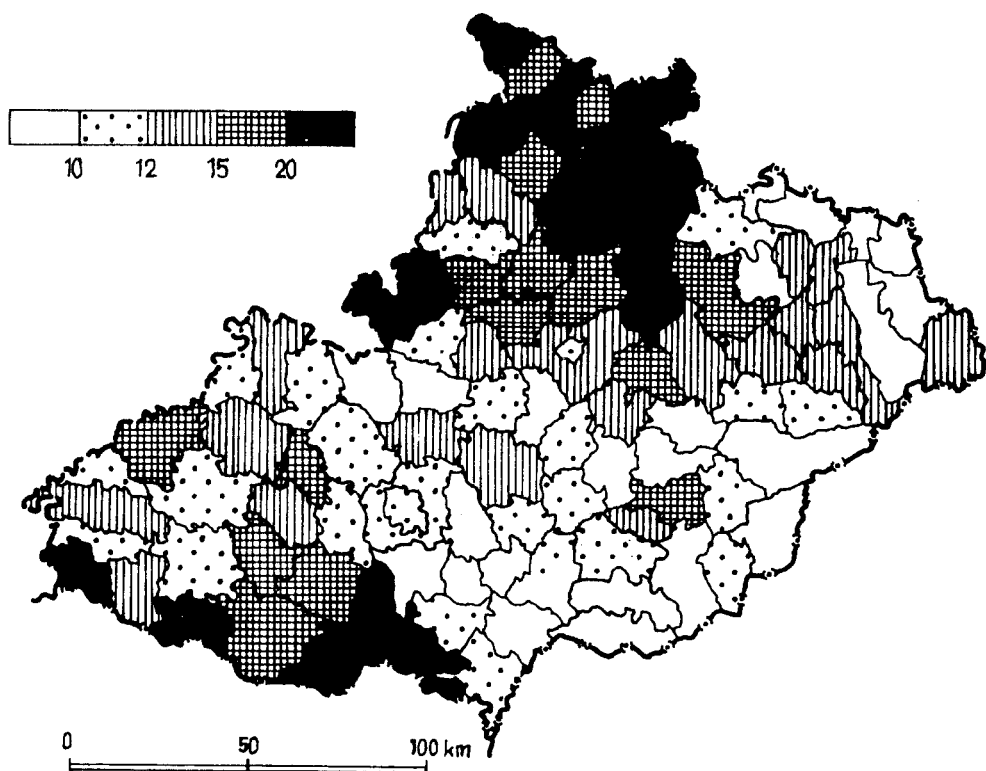


Fig. 3. Variability of the voting support of the CPC (first mean difference of the share of votes in 1925, 1929, 1935, 1946, and 1992).

studied. Similarly, the regions of stable “non-support” were considered to be districts with the share always less than the country average (or 0.75-multiple of the average). In that way the traditional communist strongholds are stressed, as well as those regions in which communist propaganda never found a marked response. It is remarkable that these contrasting districts are often situated in close neighbourhood. An extreme case is the difference of a strongly communist Těšín region from a conspicuously non-communist Hlučín region, conditioned by different historical experience. Some

examples of extreme neighbourhood can be found in south Moravia: near Brno the red strongholds of Ivančice, Blansko and Slavkov contrast with the non-communist region of Židlochovice - Klobouky - Ždánice. Similar contradictions are the pairs of Velké Meziříčí - Třebíč or Břeclav - Hustopeče. Those cases cannot be explained quite satisfactorily by the employed variables. In their background there can be individual factors which in the past inclined the voters to a certain political party, and this voting behaviour has remained encoded in the region even in the case when the original impulse has stopped acting.

It is typical that none of the regions with stable election support can be found on territory of the Sudeten. Also large towns have a perceptible trend to moderate extreme views.

Fig. 3 completes this information by the time variability of the voting support. The variability was measured by the first mean difference (the average deviation of all values from one another), which makes it independent on any mean value. The cartogram thus differentiates districts whose voters experimented with communism from regions with long-term stable support (either low or high). The highest values are reached in the Sudeten where the exchange of population led to the replacement of one extreme by the opposite one. Districts with stable population exhibit also relatively stable voting behaviour. This is documented by a low variability of "typically Moravian" districts in the south and east of Moravia. Deviations from this trend (such as Zlín, Velká Bíteš, Hrotovice) then stress the influence of specific local factors whose "exposition" would require a more detailed sociological study at the place.

6. CONCLUSION

In the pre-war period the CPC did not differ in principle from other political parties from the geographical point of view. Its support was concentrated in Czech speaking areas, particularly in the coal-mining districts. After World War II it managed to utilize favourable political situation for the expansion into the re-settled borderland. The territorial concentration of its voters was thus considerably lowered. By a purposive building of the party structures the CPC succeeded in achieving an almost regular penetration through the Czech society. This fact supports the introductory hypothesis about the universalistic character of the party.

However, the results of the regression analysis confirmed that the voting support of the CPC was considerably differentiated throughout the period depending on the social structure. More important roles in that differentiation were played by the sociocultural characteristics (ethnicity, religion, education) than the socioeconomic ones. Marked differentiation of the voting support indicates the existence of the social cleavage. In the pre-war period it had the form of ethnic cleavage between the Czech speaking inland and the German borderland. This splitting line remained preserved in

the social environment and voting behaviour even after the transfer of Germans, but in the totalitarian period it acquired the form of religious cleavage.

Prevailing quantitative orientation of the paper did not permit a deeper analysis of the local political climate standing behind the residual variability unexplained by the employed regression models. But it suggested some questions about interrelations between the social environment and voting behaviour, and their development, for whose answers it will be necessary to use more sociologically oriented methods. I hope that this paper will contribute to the formulation of starting points of such studies.

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