

**For a lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!**

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**For the Complete Victory of the People's Democracy.**

[From the speech of KLEMENT GOTTWALD to the Congress of Peasant Committee]

[Chairman, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]

On February 16, 1948 we opened a new chapter in the history of our Republic. On that historic date there was formed the government of the new, regenerated National Front. Czechoslovak and foreign reaction, which had joined forces, were defeated. The history of the reactionary conspiracy against our people's democratic republic is known. This conspiracy had been prepared long in advance by the capitalist and landlords who had been deprived by the revolution of May 1945 of political power and the nationalised part of their property. The conspiracy had been plotted by people who united with the enemies of the Republic abroad, primarily with those who ten years ago bartered our Republic to Hitler. The object of the conspiracy of the Czechoslovak and foreign Munich men was to overthrow the National Front Government at all costs, to set up a new reactionary government, which would gradually destroy the gains won by our people starting with May 1945, that is from the day when the valiant Soviet Army, under the leadership of Generalissimo Stalin (cries of "Long Live Stalin!") liberated our Republic and completed the debacle of Hitler Germany.

The members of this reactionary conspiracy wanted the land received by our peasants in the central areas of the country and the border regions, to be returned to the landlords. They opposed the law on the new agrarian reform according to which all estates exceeding 125 acres are to be divided up among the small peasant households. They were out to restore our nationalised industry and bank to the Czechoslovak and foreign capitalist. In a word, they wanted the people of the town and country to be harnessed once again to the yoke of political and economic bondage. A hundred years after the abolition of serfdom they tried to shackle our party with chains of capitalist slavery. Such was the meaning and purpose of the attempted coup d'état.

Today we can declare with satisfaction that the reactionary conspirators suffered defeat, that the people, the Republic, and truth, have triumphed!

I won't be exaggerating if I say that the past week was a test of the ability of our people to govern the state. And our people-both Czechs and Slovaks-have come through with flying colours, winning the admiration of our allies and throwing our enemies into a fury. Let the enemy rave and fume, we shall continue along the path have outlined.

The people, the Republic and truth have triumphed in this battle with reaction. However, we are not accustomed to resting on our laurels. What is needed to secure the victory of the people and prevent the possibility of a new conspiracy of reactionary forces?

The first step is to uproot that from which grew the weeds of reaction. The capitalists and landlords were the principal inspirers of the reactionary conspiracy. They were not content with the fact that the people and the Republic left them in peace after the May revolution. While other

people were toiling in the factories and the fields to heal the wounds of war and enemy occupation, the exploiters and speculators were accumulating millions, and wherever possible, were robbing the people and the Republic. They were out to get more -- they wanted to bring back the old times when the masters held unrestricted sway over the people and when the people's only right was to serve in silence.

The experience of the past few days teaches us that the blow must be struck at the most vulnerable point of these gentlemen, that your demand, the demand of the working people of the countryside, to revise the first agrarian reform must be put into effect. It is imperative to enact a law, and thus comply with your demand, that the land shall become the property of those who till it and that all private estates exceeding 125 acres be divided among the peasants.

We fully support the demand of the congress of factory councils and trade union organisations that wholesale trade be nationalised and imports and exports be a state monopoly. We support the demand for the nationalisation of all capitalist enterprises employing more than 50 workers. Simultaneously, we shall demand that the new Constitution contain the provision that private enterprises employing less than 50 workers shall not be nationalised. We want an end put to the reactionary whispering that somebody is out to nationalise small trade and handicraftsmen will be property of our peasants, small tradesmen and handicraftsmen will be guaranteed by the constitution; our peasants and handicraftsmen will, once and for all, be rid of the danger of bankruptcy arising from the competition of capital, the banks and taxation.

The experience of the last few days has also shown that it is necessary to distinguish between the existing legal political parties and all other legal organisations and the illegal agents of home and foreign reaction. One of the reasons for the crisis is that in May 1945 the defeated but not routed, reaction, gradually infiltrated into the different legal political parties and organisations.

From this it follows that all agents of home and foreign reaction must immediately be expelled from these parties and organisations. If anybody think that it is enough simply to remove a few people, operating behind the scenes and leave everything else intact, he is very much mistaken. I say in all seriousness that we shall be most firm in purging the legal parties and organisations of illegal reactionary agents, for none of us wants the crisis of the past few days to repeat itself several months hence for the same reasons. We want the purge to be carried out also in our administrative apparatus so that our Republic should no longer harbour a snake in its bosom and so that it can have the utmost confidence in its office employees and workers in everything and everywhere.

The conspiracy has been crushed and the Government crisis has been solved by democratic, parliamentary means. The new government is a government of the regenerated National Front, which bases itself on all the healthy forces of the people in the political parties and organisations. We shall continue our advance along the constitutional, democratic and parliamentary path even if we drive our own reactionaries and their foreign patrons with helpless rage.

The government will likewise take the necessary steps to see that the new Constitution is drafted and approved. The Government will submit this programme to Parliament shortly, and will demand that the programme be carried out, that new laws are enacted without delay and that a new democratic election be held on the date fixed by law.

Great tasks face us. We must secure at all costs the fulfillment of the Two Year Plan in industry and agriculture and in construction works, not to mention the other branches of our economy. Yours is the honourable task of supplying the factories with provisions (cries of "we shall"). Thanks to the generous aid of the Soviet Union (cries of "Long Live the Soviet Union") our grain supplies are, in the main secured. However, there are still difficulties in the supply of meat. I appeal you with the call -- do everything in your power to raise livestock breeding, do everything to help the countryside carry out the plan of food deliveries: cattle, milk, eggs and other agricultural produce (cries of: "we shall").

The unity of the people of town and country was brilliantly demonstrated during the crisis. The reactionary conspiracy which, incidentally, speculated on our people being disunited, ended in a fiasco precisely because of the unity of the people. The National Front, has been born. National Front Action Committees are being formed in the localities, districts and regions.

The constructive initiative of our people during the recent critical days is worthy of administration. Through their respective organs the people immediately took the necessary measures; they acted correctly when, in accordance with the law, they directed national administrators to the factories where production and public interests were threatened. Also the Action Committees set up in the factories and the countryside, are acting correctly in recalling leaders who have not justified the confidence of the people, and replacing them with able and loyal persons. The victory reaction must be such as will make it impossible for reaction ever again to plot another counter-revolutionary conspiracy.

We have lived through truly historic days when reactionary plotters wanted to turn back the wheel of history. Just a week ago, speaking on Staromet Square I said: be united and resolute and truth will triumph. Truth has triumphed. (Applause) Today I say: close ranks, be as one and more resolute and your will, the will of the people will be law in this country! (Stormy applause).