

# SUMMARY

## Life and work of Petr Cingr (1850–1920)

Petr Cingr was an illegitimate son of a poor widow. He was orphaned early and he had to muddle through life by himself. He experienced a very hard life marked by the persecution of the 70s and the 80s when he was not only imprisoned several times but he even could not find work and his family literally had to eke out a living. We suppose that this situation had a fatal influence on a high mortality of the children from Cingr's first marriage and may also be the reason behind the death of his first wife Františka. Inside the workers movement he encountered numerous enemies who made his life difficult too. He experienced probably the worst moments in the clash with the Vágner brothers and with Tomáš Kaše in the middle of the 90s. Rudolf Lukaščík was a huge opponent of the social democrats, including Cingr, during his activities in the Ostrava region. However, this inventory is still not complete. I suppose that also a nationalist rift amongst social democrats during the period immediately before the war caused a lot of worries for Petr Cingr.

He entered the workers movement as early as at the 70s and he worked there tirelessly until his death. He was at the birth of the first workers organisations initially in North and Central Bohemia and later in the underdeveloped Ostrava region which became his second home and which considers him as its own. He managed to establish the Prokop Association and after that the powerful Miners Union (Unie horníků). He worked hard as an editor in the workers press. Such titles as *Odborné listy*, *Prokop*, *Na zdar*, *Svornost*, *Górník*, *Robotník Šlaski* are connected with him personally since he was their editor at various times. Also Polish workers in Silesia and Galicia benefited from his work. The votes of Polish workers supported "their Piotr" in all elections, mainly in 1911 when, following the nationalist rift inside the social democratic party into autonomists and centralists, he was elected the only MP for the latter mentioned. Although he felt more as a trade unionist and workers leader, he also left a significant mark in politics. From 1897 until his death, he was continuously a member of the Imperial Council in Vienna; in the newly established republic he was a member of the National Assembly and a senator. Undoubtedly, it is a big success that he was elected in two different electoral systems. Firstly it was in the curia system under the so called fifth general curia in 1897 and in 1901 and then of course in the general elections of 1907, 1911 and 1920. In the parliament, he strived to enforce laws improving workers life, mainly the eight – hour long working day, establishing mining inspectorates, general insurance instead of fraternal insurance offices and weekly paid wages. He was a famous personality not only in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy but also all over Europe. He participated at a whole

range of international miners congresses (in Berlin and repeatedly in London).

He played an important role in the times of war where he was often the last instance that advocated the rights of workers and their families. Thanks to his authority and reputation, at least some of the most burning injustice (mainly physical punishment), which the war-time machinery caused to miners, was rectified. He enjoyed wide-spread popularity in the Ostrava region which organised a magnificent celebration of his 70th birthday and, following his sudden death, probably the biggest funeral in the history of the city which could bear comparison only with presidential honours.

Petr Cingr's activities should not be seen either as radical or should he be placed into the left wing of social democracy as we can often see. He directed his efforts towards parliamentarism and gradual improvements through legislation. His attitudes were best demonstrated after the ČSR was established and when he took part in re-unification of the social democratic party: he condemned bolshevism in his public speeches, he asked for respect towards the newly founded state and he promoted an evolutionary way of socialism. Although he repeatedly endorsed nationalisation of industry within the intentions of the Marxist ideology, he expected the process to be prolonged and gradual. We cannot identify anything which might place him amongst predecessors or supporters of the communist party as this happened in the past and sometimes happens even nowadays.

Translated by Marie Sandersová