

CISLEITHANIAN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE
GERMAN BOHEMIAN QUESTION: THE STATE AND
NON-STATE SPHERES WITH REGARD TO NATIONAL
AND SOCIAL IDEOLOGY

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The historiography of the Danube monarchy has heretofore confined itself mainly to the evolution of administrative institutions and foreign policy. Transformations in the social structure and their impact have for the most part been completely ignored. This is a particularly unsatisfactory and disturbing state of affairs for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, because it was precisely here that a strong degree of horizontal and vertical social mobility can be ascertained. The Bohemian lands represent a near classic case of change in social and economic structures.

The conception of state and society upheld by the so-called constitutional loyalists within the Danube monarchy had a profound impact on the thought of the bourgeoisie, which identified itself with state and nation and therefore viewed the play of social forces and interests as inimical to the state. In full accord with their Liberal ideology, the "constitutional loyalists" virtually eradicated all national impulses. This officially ignored national component of social development thus emerges only from pronouncements stemming from oppositional quarters. In the Bohemian lands, unhindered, as they were, by the state apparatus, Czech society could shape itself into a complete state within the state, in the social sphere.

The maintenance of limited suffrage for electing the Bohemian diet was attacked by the Young Czechs as early as the 1880's. Characteristic for Cisleithania was the fact that the hitherto bourgeois strata sought to conserve their fundamental conception of society by propagating the Liberal ideology. Their view of social advancement remained unchanged until the end of the old monarchy; up to 1918 the political organization of Bohemia continued on the foundations created by neo-absolutism. From this point of view, the attempts of bourgeois politicians to reorganize the state sphere in the Bohemian lands without paying any attention to the lower strata — and their national and social ideology — appear all the more dubious.