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A STRUGGLE FOR HEGEMONY IN CZECH POLITICS

The Rise of the Czech Agrarian Movement in Bohemia and its Relationship to Liberalism and Nationalism, 1870s-1890s

The rise of various mass political movements at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be regarded as a milestone in political development within the Habsburg Monarchy. Bohemian rural society was not isolated from this development: Agricultural depression facilitated the rise of agrarian movements, which led to the establishment of the Czech Agrarian Party (*Česká strana agrární*) in 1899 and played a major role in the rearrangement of the Czech political landscape.[1]

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[1] On the rearranging of the Czech political camps at the turn of the century, see *Tobolka,* Zdeněk Václav: Politické dějiny československého národa od r. 1848 až do dnešní doby [Political History of the Czechoslovak Nation from 1848 to the Present]. Vol. 3, No. 1, 2. Praha 1934, 1936; *Urban,* Otto: Česká společnost 1848-1918. Praha 1982. I refer to the German version in this article. *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft 1848 bis 1918. 2 vols. Wien, Köln, Weimar 1994, chapter 7, 8; *Garver,* Bruce M.: The Young Czech Party 1874-1901 and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System. New Haven 1978. – When exploring the political activities in rural Bohemia during this period, it is necessary to examine the development of both Czech and German agrarian movements and their interactions. However, the development of the German agrarian movement before the First World War has not been adequately investigated; it is mostly mentioned only as a prehistory of the German agrarian movement during the interwar period. *Hübl,* Karl: Bauerntum und Landbau der Sudetendeutschen. München 1963; *Lemberg,* Hans: Die agrarischen Parteien in den böhmischen Ländern und in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik. In: *Gollwitzer,* Heinz (ed.): Europäische Bauernparteien im 20. Jahrhundert. Stuttgart 1977, 326-327; *Linz,* Norbert: Der Bund der Landwirte in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik. München 1982; *Malíř,* Jiří/*Marek,* Pavel et al.: Politické strany [Political Parties]. Vol. 1. Brno 2005, 475-476; *Mikušek,* Eduard: Agrární politik Franz Křepek v období habsburské monarchie [Agrarian Politician Franz Křepek during the Habsburg Monarchy]. In: *Rašticová,* Blanka (ed.): Osobnosti agrární politiky 19. a 20. století [Personalities of Agrarian Politics in the 19th and 20th Centuries]. Uherské Hradiště 2006, 75-79; *Kubů,* Eduard/*Šouša,* Jiří: Der deutsch-böhmische Agrarismus. In: *Kubů,* Eduard/*Lorenz,* Torsten/*Müller,* Uwe/*Šouša,* Jiří (eds.): Agrarismus und Agrareliten in Ostmitteleuropa. Praha, Berlin 2013, 471-523; *Balcarová,* Jitka: Bund der (deutschen) Landwirte Schlesiens. In: Historica 9 (2018) 2, 175-185. – Although the following comprehensive work was published in 2023, considering the status of previous research, this study focuses on the Czech agrarian movement and attempts to provide a framework for further synthetical work. *Kubů,* Eduard/*Šouša,* Jiří/*Štolleová,* Barbora: Za německou hroudu a zrno. Agrární hnutí Němců v českých zemích období habsburské monarchie [For German Soil and Grain. The Agrarian Movement of Germans in the Bohemian Lands during the Habsburg Monarchy]. Pelhřimov 2023. – Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the development of the Czech agrarian movement in Moravia and Silesia.

Most existing studies on the Czech agrarian movement are centred on the estate (*stavovský*) aspect of the movement, emphasising its "agrarian" character.[2] They seek to clarify how farmers established independent political organisations to assert their specific interests, thus breaking away from the Czech liberals.[3] However, it is inappropriate to assume a fundamental "anti-liberal" character of the Czech agrarian movement and focus exclusively on this confrontation.[4]

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[2] The word "*stavovský*" is translated as "estate" or "estates" in this paper.

[3] While it was common among Czech intellectuals of the time to equate the word "liberalism" with the German liberalism, it is well known that "there were quite a few convinced liberals among Czech politicians who valued the basic principles of a free civil society above all others". *Havránek,* Jan: Český liberalismus na přelomu 19. a 20. století [Czech Liberalism at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries]. In: Němci, Češi, Slováci. Souběžné a rozdílné tendence jejich společenského vývoje 1815-1918 [Germans, Czechs, Slovaks. Parallel and Divergent Tendencies of Their Social Development 1815-1918]. Praha 1992, 101, 112-113, 121. – In the Czech political milieu, the National Party (*Národní strana*) and the National Liberal Party (*Národní strana svobodomyslná*) – with the latter having separated from the former – are generally considered liberal parties, and their members liberals. Cf. e.g. *Lemberg,* Hans: Das Erbe des Liberalismus in der ČSR und die Nationaldemokratische Partei. In: *Bosl,* Karl (ed.): Die Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik als multinationaler Parteienstaat. München, Wien 1979, 61-62. This paper follows this practice.

[4] Studies on the Czech agrarian movement already began during the interwar period, when the Agrarian (Republican) Party wielded great political influence. Studies from this period reflect the party's ideology centred on an estate-based understanding of society, and their priority was placed on praising the achievements of the leaders of the agrarian movement. *Šťastný,* Alfons Ferdinand/*Traub,* Hugo: Ze života Alf. Šťastného [From the Life of Alf. Šťastný]. Praha 1928; *Frankenberger,* Otakar: Antonín Švehla v dějinách Československé strany agrární [Antonín Švehla in the History of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party]. Praha 1931; *Chundela,* Václav: Stanislav Kubr, zakladatel české strany agrární, sedlák a politik [Stanislav Kubr, a Founder of the Czech Agrarian Party, Farmer and Politician]. Praha 1933; *Michálek,* Mořic: Zemědělští buditelé [Agricultural Awakeners]. Praha 1937; *Nožička,* Josef: Jan Antonín Prokůpek, apoštol hospodářského pokroku a národní svornosti [Jan Antonín Prokůpek, Apostle of Agricultural Progress and National Unity]. Praha 1939. – While research in the interwar period thus examined the Czech agrarian movement mainly from a political viewpoint focusing on its leaders, studies from a socio-economical perspective dominated during the socialist period. They considered the agrarian movement not as an accomplishment of its leaders, instead trying to explain its development by investigating the economic situation and social structure of Bohemian villages at the time. Although research on this topic was limited, its significant achievement was to reveal the movement's modernity and class character which had previously been concealed by the party's agrarian ideology. Nevertheless, the movement's relationship to the Czech liberals and liberalism was not among the focal points of this research. *Křížek,* Jurij: Krise cukrovarnictví v českých zemích v osmdesátých letech minulého století a její význam pro vzrůst rolnického hnutí [The Crisis of the Sugar Industry in the Bohemian Lands in the 1880s and Its Significance for the Rise of the Farmers' Movement]. In: Československý časopis historický (ČsČH) 4 (1956) No. 2, 270-298; No. 3, 417-447; 5 (1957) No. 3, 473-505; 6 (1958) No. 1, 46-59; *Havránek,* Jan: Die ökonomische und politische Lage der Bauernschaft in den böhmischen Ländern in den letzten Jahrzehnten des 19. Jahrhunderts. In: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte 7 (1966) No. 2, 96-136; *Petráň,* Josef/*Havránek,* Jan: Rolnické hnutí v českých zemích v letech 1775-1918 [The Farmers' Movement in the Bohemian Lands 1775-1918]. In: ČsČH 17 (1969) No. 6, 863-886; *Vojtěch,* Tomáš: Mladočeši a boj o politickou moc v Čechách [The Young Czechs and the Struggle for Political

An important aspect of the agrarian movement was the spreading of agricultural associations.[5] It is well known that the associations which began to be established throughout European countries during the eighteenth century helped to undermine the legitimacy of the estate system and facilitated the emergence of a civic public sphere.[6] *Bürgertum* research since the 1980s in particular has provided a new impetus for studies on associational culture in the Habsburg Monarchy. Recent scholarly efforts have focused on associations as places in which liberal ideals, values and practices developed. Research on associations constitutes a critical part of nationalism studies.[7] Highlighting the role of associations in the development of liberalism

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Power in Bohemia]. Praha 1980. – Even though research on the agrarian movement and the Agrarian (Republican) Party has experienced a boom since the 1990s, it has been focused on the period after 1918, with the estate aspect of the movement remaining the primary interest of most researchers. Consequently, it has still not provided any new perspectives on the relationship to the liberals and liberalism. *Miller,* Daniel E.: Antonín Švehla. Praha 2001; *Hrabik Samal,* Mary/*Šouša,* Jiří/*Miller,* Daniel E. (eds.): K úloze a významu agrárního hnutí v českých a československých dějinách [On the Role and Significance of the Agrarian Movement in Czech and Czechoslovak History]. Praha 2001; *Rašticová* (ed.): Osobnosti agrární politiky 19. a 20. století (cf. fn. 1); *Rašticová,* Blanka (ed.): Agrární strany ve vládních a samosprávných strukturách mezi světovými válkami [Agrarian Parties in Government and Local Government Structures Between the World Wars]. Uherské Hradiště 2008; *Harna,* Josef/*Rašticová,* Blanka (eds.): Agrární strana a její zájmové, družstevní a peněžní organizace [The Agrarian Party and Its Interest, Cooperative and Monetary Organisations]. Uherské Hradiště 2010.

5 Most previous studies on agricultural associations in Bohemia are centred on their institutional development. *Kabeš,* Jaroslav: Počátky hospodářských spolků v Čechách [The Beginnings of the Agricultural Associations in Bohemia]. In: Časopis pro dějiny venkova 23 (1936) 135-143; *Volf,* Miloslav: Organizace a působení Vlasteneckohospodářské společnosti [The Organisation and Activities of the Patriotic-Economic Society]. Praha 1961; *Verbík,* Antonín: Zemědělské instituce v letech 1848-1900 v českých zemích [Agricultural Institutions from 1848 to 1900 in the Bohemian Lands]. In: Vědecké práce Zemědělského muzea 18 (1978) 143-162. – Important contributins by Nožička and Havránek pointed out the significance of agricultural associations for the political activities of farmers. Nevertheless, their works not only lacked concrete examination of the agricultural associations but also disregarded their role in the development of liberalism and nationalism, on which newer association studies place particular importance. *Nožička,* Josef: Počátky rolnického spolčování [The Beginnings of Agricultural Associations]. In: Časopis pro dějiny venkova 26 (1939) 30-42, 82-89; *Havránek:* Die ökonomische und politische Lage der Bauernschaft 96-136 (cf. fn. 4); *Petráň/Havránek:* Rolnické hnutí v českých zemích 863-886 (cf. fn. 4). – A recently published study on the modernisation process in rural Moravia and Silesia during the "long 19th century" examines agricultural associations as significant vehicles of this process: *Cibulka,* Pavel/*Kladiwa,* Pavel/*Pokludová,* Andrea/*Popelka,* Petr/*Řepa,* Milan: Čas změny. Moravský a slezský venkov od zrušení poddanství po Velkou válku [Time of Change. The Moravian and Silesian Countryside from the Abolition of Hereditary Subjection to the Great War]. Praha 2021.

6 *Habermas,* Jürgen: Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Frankfurt am Main 1962; *Hoffmann,* Stefan-Ludwig: Civil Society 1750-1914. Basingstoke 2006.

7 *Judson,* Pieter: The World in the Association. Liberal Practice in 19th-Century Habsburg Central Europe. In: *Dudeková Kováčová,* Gabriela/*Kodajová,* Daniela (eds.): V supermarkete dejín [In the Supermarket of History]. Bratislava 2021, 279-293.

and nationalism, this new trend in association studies raises questions regarding the adequacy of the conventional view of the Czech agrarian movement, which considers it exclusively as an estate movement that "asserted the priority of their [farmers'] partial interests over the interests of the entire nation".[8] This suggests a need to explore the agrarian movement's relationship to liberalism and nationalism.[9]

A recent study on agrarianism in East Central Europe edited by Eduard Kubů, Torsten Lorenz, Uwe Müller and Jiří Šouša also indicates the importance of this issue, noting that agrarianism did not feature a systematic doctrine of fundamental principles and its ideologues often borrowed from other political stances including liberalism. It highlights the need to clarify the role of agrarianism in nationalism and the modernisation process instead of concentrating on its anti-modern aspect.[10]

The present study examines the development of the Czech agrarian movement in Bohemia during its rise from the 1870s to the 1890s, focusing on the agricultural associations. It explores how the latter strove to assert their political influence and came to establish independent political organisations, and attempts to clarify their relationship to liberalism and nationalism.

An investigation of this type will not only provide fresh insights into the transformation of the Czech political scene at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but will also help to illustrate the influence of liberalism in Habsburg Central Europe and lead to a better understanding of its political development. Recent scholarship has considerably modified traditional narratives on the Habsburg

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[8] *Heumos,* Peter: Agrarische Interessen und nationale Politik in Böhmen 1848-1889. Wiesbaden 1979, 3. This study still represents the most comprehensive and detailed research on the Czech agrarian movement during the second half of the 19th century, focusing not only on economic and national-political aspects but also on organisational ones. Assuming that the development of farmers' self-perception concretised in the establishment of agricultural organisations, however, Heumos attached considerable importance to the development from non-political organisations to political ones. In describing the process leading to the foundation of the Peasant Union (*Selská jednota*), he therefore focused on the political clubs led by the farmers' leaders and the confrontations between them and the National Liberal Party. This approach caused him to underestimate the importance of agricultural associations in the development of the agrarian movement and prevented him from examining the role of liberalism and nationalism within it.

[9] Over a long period of time, Czech historiography has been dominated by the concept of the "national revival" whose essence is a primordial understanding of the nation. Since the 1960s, historians have tried to overcome this concept and investigate the emergence of the modern Czech nation in the context of social changes in the modern era. Cf. e.g. *Hroch,* Miroslav: Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Praha 1968; *Urban,* Otto: Kapitalismus a česká společnost [Capitalism and the Czech Society]. Praha 1978. Based on current scholarship on nation and nationalism, this paper analyses the relationship of the Czech agrarian movement to nationalism from a constructivist perspective.

[10] *Kubů,* Eduard/*Lorenz,* Torsten/*Müller,* Uwe/*Šouša,* Jiří: Agrarismus und Agrareliten im östlichen Mitteleuropa. In: *Kubů/Lorenz/Müller/Šouša* (eds.): Agrarismus und Agrareliten in Ostmitteleuropa 15-20 (cf. fn. 1). Significantly, this study argues that Czech agrarians shared the liberal ideas of the Young Czech Party in many respects, which facilitated their participation in the coalition governments of the Czechoslovak Republic. *Ibid.* 58.

Monarchy which emphasise its anachronism and differences to "Western Europe".[11] Pieter Judson's insightful work on the German liberal movement is one of its most significant achievements. It introduced a remarkable change in the evaluation of the role of liberalism in Habsburg Central Europe and offers an effective viewpoint for analysing the rise of various political movements, including radical ones, at the turn of the century. Conventionally, scholars have framed German nationalism – and particularly its more radical varieties – as being fundamentally opposed to liberal principles and practices. According to this perspective, the normalisation of nationalism and anti-Semitism around 1900 marked a decisive rejection of all things liberal, and liberalism left none but the most insignificant mark on society.[12] By analysing the German liberal movement as a social and political practice of the *Bürgertum*, Judson not only demonstrated that nationalism has largely been an ideological component of liberalism. He also revealed that radical nationalism and anti-Semitism incorporated important legacies of liberalism, especially its hierarchical worldview; their rise therefore did not mean a decisive refusal of liberalism.[13]

As Judson's work indicates, a significant feature of the new research trend is to understand liberalism not as a specific political ideology but rather as the broad cultural expression of a local *Bürger* society. The fruitfulness of this approach is evident in his study. Following this trend, the present contribution examines the relationship between the Czech agrarian movement and liberalism respectively nationalism, focusing on social and political practices in and around agricultural associations. It thereby attempts to clarify the role of liberalism and nationalism in the development of the Czech agrarian movement and facilitate the integration of rural Bohemian history into the new narratives of Habsburg Central Europe.

However, this study is subject to several limitations. The Czech agrarian movement in Bohemia is generally considered to have developed in two main areas:

(1) the area from central to eastern Bohemia, with fertile agricultural regions in which farmers with relatively extensive lands cultivated grain crops and sugar beets, and

(2) the area of southern Bohemia, which was not as fertile and dominated by small and medium-sized farmers who mainly grew cereal crops.[14]

Reflecting these differences, agricultural associations began to spread later in the latter region; as a consequence, relevant documentation is more limited. Due to these practical constraints, the following analysis focuses on the development of agricultural associations in the former region.

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[11] For example, *Judson,* Pieter M.: The Habsburg Empire. Cambridge/MA, London 2016.
[12] *Judson,* Pieter M.: Exclusive Revolutionaries. Ann Arbor 1996, ix, 3.
[13] *Ibid.* ix, 262, 269.
[14] *Havránek:* Die ökonomische und politische Lage der Bauernschaft 118-119 (cf. fn. 4); *Franěk,* Rudolf: Základní tendence vývoje zemědělské výroby v Čechách na konci 19. a na počátku 20. století [Basic Tendencies of the Development of Agricultural Production in Bohemia at the End of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Centuries]. In: Sborník historický 20 (1973) 79, 81.

The development of the agricultural associations by the late 1860s

Prior to analysing the activities of agricultural associations from the 1870s to the 1890s, this section outlines their development until the late 1860s.[15]

The abolition of hereditary subjection (*Erbuntertänigkeit*) during the revolution of 1848/49 initiated the spread of agricultural associations in Bohemia. This far-reaching change not only did away with the *corvée*, which was a burden to peasant farmers, but also emancipated them from the subject (*Untertan*) status. As a result, educating farmers became an important item on the political agenda. The Viennese government sought new measures to promote agricultural production under changing circumstances and focused on professional education for the peasantry. In Bohemia, Czech liberals eagerly addressed the issue as well. They envisioned a modern Czech nation comprising equal and independent citizens capable of upholding the *raison d'état*. Part of this platform involved stressing the need for the enlightenment of farmers.[16] To run a successful farming operation based on professional education was considered a necessary prerequisite for being an independent citizen. At the same time, general education including political enlightenment was regarded as indispensable for creating free citizens and members of the nation who could be expected to participate in public life.[17] Although their intentions differed, both the central government and the Czech liberals considered associations a key instrument for achieving their aims and promoted their foundations.[18]

These association's activities were severely restricted following the suppression of the revolution, however. The establishment of agricultural associations by individual initiatives was no longer permitted,[19] and the only ones allowed to persist were the prefectural branches of the Patriotic-Economic Society in the Kingdom of Bohemia (*k. k. Patriotisch-ökonomische Gesellschaft im Königreiche Böhmen*) in Prague.[20]

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[15] On the development of the agricultural associations by the 1860s, see, *Kiryu,* Yuko: Farmers as New Citizens and Members of the Czech Nation. Agricultural Associations and the Transformation of Local Societies in Rural Bohemia. In: *Řepa,* Milan (ed.): Peasants into Citizens. The Politicization of Rural Areas in East Central Europe (1861-1914). Wiesbaden 2020, 61-78.

[16] On the overlap between liberal and Czech national thinking, see *Kutnar,* František: Obrozenské vlastenectví a nacionalismus [Patriotism and Nationalism in the Period of National Revival]. Praha 2003, chapter 7.

[17] According to Judson, the liberal cultural values which gradually gained acceptance in urban Austrian society rested on the belief that the rights of active citizenship were based on an individual's financial and intellectual independence, and the high value liberals placed on education reflected their equation of economic with cultural achievement. *Judson:* Exclusive Revolutionaries 2, 13 (cf. fn. 12). The Czech liberals' discussions indicate they shared such values.

[18] *Kiryu,* Yuko: Kodym's Newspaper and the Creation of a Rural Public Sphere in Bohemia. In: Český časopis historický (ČČH) 115 (2017) No. 2, 413-414; *Nožička:* Počátky rolnického spolčování, 30-34 (cf. fn. 5); *Kabeš:* Počátky hospodářských spolků 135-143 (cf. fn. 5).

[19] Agricultural associations previously established by individual initiatives were disbanded. *Kutnar,* František: Pokusy o sociálně politickou aktivitu rolnictva v Čechách za Bachova absolutismu [Farmers' Attempts at Socio-Political Activity in Bohemia during Bach's Absolutism]. In: Sborník historický 18 (1971) 75.

[20] The Patriotic-Economic Society was founded in 1769 as part of the initiative of the The-

After the failure of neo-absolutism, it became possible to establish district associations as branches of prefectural associations in 1861. This led to a rise in the number of branch associations and their memberships, especially in central, eastern and north-western Bohemia.[21] The increase in member numbers affected the social structure of the associations, which had consisted mainly of nobles, manor employees, intellectuals, and urban elites during the first half of the 1850s. The social composition of the Prague Prefectural Association in 1862 indicates that the participation of farmers grew rapidly, and that they soon began to constitute the core membership. This did not mean that other social groups were completely driven away, however: Agricultural associations created a new type of community transcending the boundaries of occupation, social status, and city or village location at the prefectural or district levels.[22]

It is obvious from the development of the agricultural associations by the late 1860s that Czech liberals along with liberal and national principles played a significant role within them. The Czech liberals not only encouraged such associations through journals but also frequently participated in them.[23] Among the members of the various agricultural associations, we find prominent Czech liberals such as Julius Grégr, Jan Palacký, Antonín Otakar Zeithammer, Rudolf Thurn-Taxis and Karel Mattuš.[24] Reports by the authorities as well as the associations' own meeting records indicate their vigorous involvement.[25] Considering the fact that political associations

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resian regime to encourage agriculture. Initially, the government intended to achieve the enlightenment of farmers newly liberated from hereditary subjection while preventing their political radicalisation by promoting the establishment of branch associations of the Patriotic-Economic Society, in which nobles and their employees maintained influence. According to the draft guidelines developed in 1850, prefectural associations (*Kreisvereine*) were to be established in every prefectural capital and the right to found district associations (*Bezirksvereine*) was also granted. However, the government gradually began to restrict the society's activities. Ultimately, only 13 prefectural associations were permitted to survive, with all other branches being dissolved. Národní archiv [National Archives, hereafter NA], Vlastenecko-hospodářská společnost [Patriotic-Economic Society, hereafter VHS], box 221, Entwurf der Grundzüge für die Errichtung der Kreis- und Bezirksvereine; *Verbík:* Zemědělské instituce 150 (cf. fn. 5). – On the Patriotic-Economic Society, see *Volf:* Organizace a působení Vlasteneckohospodářské společnosti (cf. fn. 5).

21 In 1862, there were already 79 district branches in addition to 13 prefectural branches, and the total number of memberships in the Patriotic-Economic Society was 9.762. Pokrok hospodářský [Agricultural Progress, hereafter PH] 2 (1862-1863) 332. – On the number of branches and members in the 1850s, see *Kiryu:* Farmers as New Citizens and Members of the Czech Nation 65-66 (cf. fn. 15).

22 In 1862 there were 2.251 members, of which 893 were farmers, 66 agriculturalists (*hospodáři*), and 53 farm owners (*statkáři*). *Ibid.* 72-73.

23 E.g. Hospodářské spolky [Agricultural Associations]. In: Národní listy [National Newspaper, hereafter NL] 18.05.1861; Hospodářské noviny 13 (1862) 268-269.

24 NA, Presidium Českého místodržitelství [Presidium of the Bohemian Governor's Office, hereafter PM] 1860-1870, 8/5/11, box 849, Seznam údů hospodářského spolku kraje pražského koncem roku 1862 [List of Members of the Prague Prefectural Agricultural Association at the End of 1862]; PH 1 (1861-1862) 54-56.

25 E.g. NA, PM 1855-59, 8/5/2/9, box 495, Chef der Prager obersten Polizeibehörde an Statthalterei, 10.03.1858; PH 1 (1861-1862) 38-40.

were prohibited and the establishment and activities of other associations remained restricted until 1867 despite the promulgation of the October Diploma and the February Patent, it is reasonable to assume that the agricultural associations offered an important venue for Czech liberals to conduct their activities and expand their power.[26]

The influence of the liberal and national principles promoted by the Czech liberals was evident in the activities of agricultural associations during the 1860s. As the frequent reminder that "our motto is progress" at their meetings demonstrates, their members celebrated "progress" and made it their goal.[27] Convinced that education was an essential means of achieving this objective, they engaged in the following activities: 1) meetings, 2) agricultural exhibitions, 3) library foundations, 4) agricultural school foundations, and 5) establishment of savings banks and agricultural enterprises.[28]

One of the main aims of the agricultural associations was to further the professional education of farmers; discussions and lectures on improving farming operations through fertiliser use, crop rotation, cultivation of industrial crops, establishing model farms and the like formed a major part of their meetings.[29] Education was not only considered a significant instrument for promoting farming based on science and rationality, however: It was also regarded as the primary means of creating a free and independent citizen and member of the nation, as the following statement made at a meeting of the Prague prefectural association illustrates: "[…] education arouses true pride in us and self-confidence in our noble profession; education awakens civic virtue, national awareness, and a love of the public spirit within us […]."[30] The deliberations at association meetings also covered a wide range of topics beyond agriculture, including municipal community administration, financial institutions and general education, and the importance of rule-based discussions was emphasised.[31] Associations were expected to teach their members how to engage in public life as citizens, as the prominent liberal Rudolf Thurn-Taxis expressed at a meeting in Mladá Boleslav: "Agricultural associations became the school for the public life of a farmer, [where] he learns how to act publicly, to speak clearly and without fear and to prepare a better future for our precious fatherland."[32]

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[26] *Kiryu:* Farmers as New Citizens and Members of the Czech Nation 75 (cf. fn. 15).
[27] PH 1 (1861-1862) 39, 414.
[28] Státní okresní archiv Mladá Boleslav [State District Archive Mladá Boleslav], Rodinný archiv Krouských [Family Archive of Krouský], box 1, no. 8 III/3, Jednací řád filiálních spolků spojených s cís. k. vlastenskou hosp. společnosti v král. Českém. Pro hospodářský filiální spolek kraje Boleslavského [Rules of Procedure of the Branch Associations Affiliateted with the Patriotic-Economic Society in the Kingdom of Bohemia. For the Branch Associations of the Boleslav Prefecture], 1860; PH 1 (1861-1862) 39, 128, 414; 2 (1862-1863) 120.
[29] PH 2 (1862-1863) 44-47, 61-63, 69-71, 125-127, 149-151 et passim.
[30] PH 1 (1861-1862) 39.
[31] PH 1 (1861-1862) 38-40, 421-422; 2 (1862-1863) 126-127; Boleslavan [The Boleslav] 3 (1862-1863) 264 et passim.
[32] PH 1 (1861-1862) 100-101.

At the gatherings, members regularly emphasised that agricultural associations were places where the idea of equality was realised. For example, a meeting report by the association in Rakovník in 1864 explained the importance of the agricultural associations for social life as follows: "[…] all statuses represented in the association merge into one idea, they become more and more acquainted by marching together for one purpose, they help the idea of our age, which is characterised by the word 'equality', to come gradually into effect."[33] They also stressed that the agricultural associations were not contributing to the interests of certain individuals or groups but rather to a larger community such as the homeland, the nation, or the common good,[34] as the following meeting report from the association in Písek in 1865 illustrates: "[…] they [agricultural associations] are a strong bulwark against prejudice and selfishness. The agricultural association in Písek has always attempted to make the 'common good' its motto and conduct our activities according to it."[35] By legitimising their "publicness" in this way, members strove to create a new forum for discussion in rural Bohemia despite the restrictions on social and political activities.

Besides meetings, agricultural associations also organised leisure events including theatrical performances, dances and concerts, which were assumed to encourage interactions between members of different backgrounds while fostering a common cultural identity. A certain stylisation is observable in these gatherings. For instance, members began and ended each meeting with the cheer "*Sláva* (Vivat)!" and also engaged in singing. Reports state that association gatherings allowed banners in "national colours" to be displayed while endorsing "national dance" and "national songs" such as *Kde domov můj* (Where is my home).[36] Various Czech national symbols were invented by Czech liberals, who envisioned a modern Czech nation comprising equal and independent citizens who would embody and popularise the concept.[37] Agricultural associations also adopted these national symbols to reflect members of different rank and status gathering as equals and contributing to shaping new cultural identities.

As a novel type of social relationship resting on principles such as equality among members and operating on the basis of statutes, the agricultural associations thus instilled new attitudes and practices in their members while creating a community beyond the boundaries of profession, social status, and city or village residence. It is noteworthy that the development of agricultural associations by the late 1860s was significantly owed to the efforts of Czech liberals and the application of liberal and national principles. The associations' activities demonstrate that they contributed to promoting ideas such as progress and equality as well as the ethos of public engagement and the common good, which the Czech liberals endorsed. The equation of

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[33] PH 3 (1864) 390.
[34] PH 1 (1861-1862) 210; 2 (1862-1863) 20, 22.
[35] Hospodářské noviny 16 (1865) 308.
[36] NA, PM 1860-1870, 8/5/11/1, box 849, Prager Kreisamt an Statthalterei-Präsidium, 09.07. 1862; 24.09.1862; PH 1 (1861-1862) 40, 203, 241, 400; Boleslavan 2 (1861-1862) 277.
[37] *Shinohara,* Taku: A New Trend in Czech Historiography. On Self-Representation of the Czech Nation in the 19th Century (In Japanese). In: Tōoshi-kenkyu 19 (1997) 15-22.

contributing to the common good with contributing to the nation indicates an entanglement of liberal and national principles within Czech liberalism, as was the case with its German counterpart. Supported by these principles, agricultural associations fostered new cultural, social, and political customs among their members and facilitated the transformation of their practices. Furthermore, we can assume the associations offered personal networks and experiences that helped to further the political careers of farmers, as demonstrated by the cases of farmers who served as committee members and were eventually elected to district boards, or even to the Bohemian Diet.[38]

The development of the agricultural associations from the 1870s to the 1890s

It is important to note two significant characteristics during this period. The first is the rapid growth in the number of agricultural associations and their membership. While they had already increased to a certain extent by the early 1870s, the speed of their expansion accelerated in the second half of the decade.[39] During the 9 years from 1875 to 1884, the number of associations grew nearly fourfold, from 138 to 514. In 1896, there were 1.465 associations – more than ten times the number in 1875 and almost three times that in 1884. The total membership in agricultural associations increased from 21.579 to 57.107 during the period from 1875 to 1884. By the end of the 1890s, it is estimated to have amounted to more than 100.000 individuals.[40] With regard to the geographical distribution of the associations, it is significant that a large number of them compared to the 1860s also began to operate in southern Bohemia. Nevertheless, central, eastern and north-western Bohemia remained the centres of agricultural association activity as in the 1860s.[41]

Another notable feature of this period is the increased specialisation of associations. The association law of 1867, which expanded the freedom of association, enabled the founding of agricultural associations independent of the Patriotic-Economic Society.[42] It also stimulated the establishment of various different types of

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[38] *Kiryu:* Farmers as New Citizens and Members of the Czech Nation 75 (cf. fn. 15).

[39] According to Stubenrauch, there were 9 agricultural associations in Bohemia in 1857, including the Patriotic-Economic Society with 18 branches. Their number reached 93 in 1871. *Stubenrauch,* Moritz von: Statistische Darstellung des Vereinswesens im Kaiserthume Österreich. Wien 1857, 192-209; Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1871. Wien 1873, 474.

[40] *Kiryu,* Yuko: The Development of *Besedas* and Agricultural Associations in Bohemia during the Rise of the Czech Agrarian Movement, 1870s-1890s. In: Moderní dějiny 29 (2021) 2, 173-175.

[41] Seznam odborných spolků v království Českém na konci roku 1884, jež s radou zemědělskou byly ve spojení [List of Professional Associations in the Kingdom of Bohemia at the End of 1884, which were in connection with the Agricultural Council]. Praha 1885.

[42] Along with the abolition of the prefectural system in 1868, the association law of 1867 also facilitated the reorganisation of the branches of the Patriotic-Economic Society. With its dissolution in 1872, all of its former branches became independent. *Nožička:* Počátky rolnického spolčování 37 (cf. fn. 5); *Verbík:* Zemědělské instituce 149-151 (cf. fn. 5); *Volf,* Miloslav: Vlastenecko-hospodářská společnost [The Patriotic-Economic Society]. Praha 1956, 3.

associations, including political ones, which had not been allowed until then.[43] This diversification promoted the specialisation of associations in general and influenced the role of the agricultural associations, which functioned as key forums for discussion between people of various occupations and social statuses.

It is reasonable to assume that the growing involvement of agricultural associations in politics caused by the economic downturn since the 1870s intensified this tendency. After being affected by the Long Depression beginning in 1873, Bohemian agriculture suffered declines in grain and sugar beet prices starting in the late 1870s and 1884, respectively. This led to a rapid increase in the number of farmers afflicted by profit reductions, rising debt, foreclosures, and forced auctions.[44] Members of the agricultural associations believed this "agricultural crisis" could not be overcome through self-help (*svépomoc*) alone and that a wide range of state policies including the introduction of protective agricultural tariffs, bans on imports of certain agricultural products, tax reforms, provision of cheap credit, and reduction of transportation costs were crucial.[45] The associations therefore attempted to expand their political influence by various means such as petitioning legislative bodies, as we shall see below. These efforts are considered to have strengthened their character as organisations representing agricultural interests.

Growing numbers of farmers belonging to the executive committees of agricultural associations also confirm this tendency. Let us examine, for instance, the social makeup of the leadership of agricultural associations in the Chrudim region. In 1862, the executive committee of the Chrudim Prefectural Agricultural Association comprised 14 members. Whereas five burghers made up the largest group, only one farmer was confirmed.[46] In 1886, however, 11 of 32 executives of the Chrudim District Agricultural Association were farm owners (*statkáři*), thereby constituting the largest social group.[47] Although farm owners and farmers are not equivalent, this suggests that an increasing number of people can be categorised as farmers becom-

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[43] The total number of associations grew drastically after 1867. Particularly noticeable was the increase in numbers of associations such as loan funds (*Vorschußkassen*), social clubs (*Casino- und Geselligkeitsvereine*), choir societies, gymnastics clubs, and volunteer fire departments. Statistische Monatsschrift 8 (1882) 196-199.

[44] *Křížek:* Krise cukrovarnictví 4 (1956) No. 2, 270-298; No. 3, 417-447; 5 (1957) No. 3, 473-505; 6 (1958) No. 1, 46-59 (cf. fn. 4); *Havránek:* Die ökonomische und politische Lage der Bauernschaft 104-112 (cf. fn. 4); *Jindra,* Zdeněk/*Jakubec,* Ivan: Hospodářský vzestup českých zemí od poloviny 18. století do konce monarchie [The Economic Rise of the Bohemian Lands from the Mid-18th Century to the End of the Monarchy]. Praha 2015, 162-165.

[45] Hospodářský list [Agricultural Journal, hereafter HL] 5 (1879-1880) 251; 7 (1881-1882) 34; 9 (1883-1884) 204; 10 (1884-1885) 157; Hlasatel hospodářského spolku pro okolí Hradce Králové [Herald of the Agricultural Associations for the Surroundings of Hradec Králové, hereafter HHK], R. 1880, 93-94; R. 1885, 46-49, 55.

[46] Its social composition was as follows; 5 burghers, 2 mayors, 1 aristocrat, 1 member of parliament, 1 director (*ředitel*), 1 farmer and 3 unknowns. PH 1 (1861-1862) 123.

[47] The social structure of the other members was as follows: 3 officials, 3 members of parliament, 2 administrators of manors, 2 millers, 2 heads of district boards, 2 mayors, 1 director and 1 professor at the agricultural secondary school, 1 leaseholder, 1 forester, 1 horticulturist, 1 veterinary surgeon and 1 lawyer. HL 11(1885-86) 115-116.

ing executives. Other available documents also indicate that farmers began to constitute the core of the associations' executive bodies and expanded their influence.[48]

It should be emphasised, however, that despite the remarkable changes occurring during this period, the agricultural associations maintained a definite continuity with the 1860s and did not transform into organisations dedicated exclusively to the representation of agricultural interests. Educational activities remained one of their primary focuses.[49] In the discussions on overcoming the "agricultural crisis", education was considered an important means to this end alongside the expansion of farmers' political influence.[50] The associations therefore continued to promote both professional and general education by arranging lectures and discussions at their meetings and encouraging reading.[51]

Furthermore, their increased specialisation did not lead to a complete loss of diversity in their membership,[52] nor to a break in their relationships with Czech liberal politicians. Moreover, their vigorous participation in national activities – such as donations to the Central School Association (*Ústřední matice školská*) and the erection of monuments to national figures – not only demonstrates their commitment to

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[48] According to the document held in the archives of the Agricultural Council (*Zemědělská rada*), the social structures of the executive committees of the associations in Jaroměř, Rakovník and Čáslav were as follows: Jaroměř – 6 farmers, 1 farm owner cum postmaster, 1 miller, 1 horticulturist, 1 official, 1 doctor of medicine; Rakovník – 8 farmers, 2 professors, 1 farm owner, 1 notary, 1 burgher; Čáslav – 6 farmers, 2 lessees of farms, 1 farm owner, 1 director, 1 administrator of manner, 2 unknowns. NA, Zemědělská rada [Agricultural Council, hereafter ZR], box 34, Hospodářský spolek v Jaroměři, Valná hromada 25. prosince 1879 [Agricultural Association in Jaroměř, General meeting 25. December 1879]; Protokol sepsaný při plném shromáždění hospodářského spolku v Čáslavi dne 14. března 1880 [Record Written at the Full Meeting of the Agricultural Association in Čáslav on March 14, 1880]; Z výboru hospodářsko-průmyslového spolku v Rakovníku dne 10. září 1880 [From the Committee of the Agricultural-Industrial Association in Rakovník on September 10, 1880].

[49] *Kiryu:* The Development of *Besedas* and Agricultural Associations 190-192 (cf. fn. 40).

[50] HL 7 (1881-1882) 100-101; 10 (1884-1885) 161.

[51] HHK, R. 1884, 4-5; R. 1885, 4-6; R. 1886, 3-4; HL 8 (1882-1883) 69 et passim.

[52] Although documents on the social composition of the agricultural associations' memberships are scarce, membership lists from 1880 and 1881 preserved in the archives of the Agricultural Council indicate that farmers accounted for about 50 to 60 percent of their memberships. While many other members were also engaged in agriculture-related occupations, not a few people were involved in professions other than agriculture. An example is the membership composition of the agricultural association in Kutná Hora in 1880: 102 farmers, 24 farm owners, 19 burghers, 19 administrators of manors, 6 merchants, 6 clergymen, 5 teachers, 3 foresters, 3 lessees of farms, 3 owners of factories, 3 brewmasters, 3 municipalities, 2 professors, 2 officials, 2 doctors of medicine, 2 postmasters and 13 other professions. NA, ZR, box 89, Seznam členů hospodářského spolku Kutnohorského [List of Members of the Agricultural Association in Kutná Hora]. – It should also be noted that the spread of agricultural associations during this period did not necessarily and immediately expand their associational activities beyond the boundaries of social status and gender; most of their members belonged to the wealthier strata, and women's engagement in their activities was limited or minor. They maintained a definite continuity from the 1860s in this regard as well. *Kiryu:* The Development of *Besedas* and Agricultural Associations 186-187, 194 (cf. fn. 40).

the national cause; it also indicates that they kept developing their activities within the national network consisting of various organisations and individuals supporting the concept of the modern Czech nation.[53]

How, then, did the agricultural associations attempt to assert their political influence and establish independent political organisations? In the following chapters, we will examine this process by focusing on the roles of national and liberal discourse.

Discontent of the agricultural associations and creation of their network

The economic downturn beginning in the 1870s increased the dissatisfaction of the agricultural associations with the existing governance system, and they began to express their growing frustration soon after the onset of the Long Depression. For example, an article published in 1873 in the Agricultural Journal (*Hospodářské listy*), the organ of the agricultural associations in eastern Bohemia, criticised that the state treated agriculture differently than industry and commerce, especially with regard to the representation of interests:

> […] unfortunately, our agriculture does not yet enjoy the same advantages as industry and commerce. [...] To protect the interests of industry, the chambers of industry and commerce have been founded, to which an industrialist freely elects his representatives. Their importance is recognised also politically by the fact that these chambers can send their deputies to the Provincial and Imperial Diets to defend the interests of industry. [...] By contrast, what agriculture has gained is scant, even though it cannot be denied that something has happened here as well. […] farmers are far behind the other estates in regard to rights.[54]

Emphasising inequalities between agriculture and industry, respectively between farmers and other estates, the article called for the establishment of chambers of agriculture and other measures to support agricultural production.[55] As this argument implies, equality became one of the keywords in the associations' attempts to expand their political influence.

The reorganisation of the Agricultural Council for the Kingdom of Bohemia (*Zemědělská rada pro království České*) in 1880 met these demands to improve the representation of agricultural interests only partially. The council had been established in 1873 at the initiative of the government "for the promotion of agricultural

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[53] HL 8 (1882-1883) 69; 10 (1884-85) 81; 11 (1885-86) 96; HHK, R. 1883, 5; R. 1885, 5 et passim.

[54] HL 3 (1873-1874) 207. – The elections to the Bohemian Diet and the House of Deputies of the Imperial Diet were conducted through a system of *curiae*. In this system, voters were divided into three or four groups called curiae, and each curia elected an allocated number of deputies. The electorate for the Bohemian Diet was divided into three curiae, namely (1) large estate owners, (2) towns and chambers of commerce and trade, and (3) rural constituencies. *Urban,* Otto: Die Landtage der böhmischen Länder. In: *Rumpler,* Helmut/ *Urbanitsch,* Peter: Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918 7, No. 2: Die regionalen Repräsentativkörperschaften. Wien 2000, 1997. The electorate for the House of Deputies of the Imperial Diet was divided into four groups: (1) large estate owners, (2) towns, (3) chambers of commerce and trade, and (4) rural constituencies. Gesetz vom 2. April 1873, RGBl. Nr. 40/1873, §. 7. In this way, the chambers of commerce and trade were granted the right to elect delegates in both elections.

[55] HL 3 (1873-1874) 207-208.

interests".[56] However, as the centralist Auersperg cabinet did not allow the agricultural associations to send representatives to the council, it consisted mainly of members appointed by the emperor and the governor (*Statthalter*), a representative of the Bohemian land committee (*Landesausschuß*), and experts selected by the minister of agriculture and the land committee,[57] which provoked further dissatisfaction among the associations.[58] The worsening economic conditions intensified their desire for a "legitimate" representative institution for agricultural interests.[59] On 22 May and 22 June 1879, delegates of 109 agricultural associations from all over Bohemia came together in Prague to discuss measures to cope with the effects of the economic downturn; their focal issue was likewise the representation of agricultural interests. The assembly's resolution called for a reorganisation of the Agricultural Council to include representatives of agricultural associations in its membership.[60] The Taaffe cabinet formed after Auersperg's resignation in 1879 approved this restructuring, and the associations consequently gained the right to elect delegates in 1880;[61] their desire to include representatives of the council in legislative bodies was not easily realised, however.[62]

To improve their political leverage and achieve their purposes, the agricultural associations intensified their efforts to organise farmers at both the regional and interregional levels.

At the regional level, they considered the agricultural circle called *beseda* in Czech, which generally operated at the communal level, to be an effective means of organising farmers; the agricultural associations established by this time functioned mainly at the prefectural or district level. Existing associations frequently promoted the foundation and activities of *besedas* and often established them as branches. *Besedas* contributed to the rapid growth in the number of agricultural associations and their membership during this period.[63]

At the interregional level, there were attempts to reinforce the relationships between agricultural associations. One way of doing this was to convene joint assemblies. Meetings attended by delegates of multiple agricultural associations began to be organised in the 1870s, as illustrated by the Congress of Czech Farmers (*sjezd hospodářů českých*) held every year since 1876 or the abovementioned assem-

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[56] Kundmachung des Statthalters vom 2. April 1873, Landes-Gesetzblatt für das Königreich Böhmen, Nr. 25, 1873, §. 1.

[57] *Ibid.* §. 4; *Šouša,* Jiří: Vznik České zemědělské rady [The Establishment of the Bohemian Agricultural Council]. In: Sborník historický 27 (1980) 63-64.

[58] HL 2 (1872-1873) 89.

[59] For example, Československý hospodářský list 1 (1875-1876) 116.

[60] Stenografické zápisky o shromážděních zemědělských spolků království Českého odbývaných dne 22. května a 22. června 1879 v Praze [Stenographic Records of the Assemblies of the Agricultural Associations of the Kingdom of Bohemia Held on 22 May and 22 June 1879 in Prague]. Praha, 1879; *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 111-123 (cf. fn. 8).

[61] *Šouša,* Jiří: K vývoji českého zemědělství na rozhraní 19./20. století [On the Development of Bohemian Agriculture at the Turn of the 19th/20th Centuries]. Praha 1986, 39-40.

[62] HL 8 (1882-1883) 130-131; HHK, R. 1884, 46.

[63] On *besedas,* see *Kiryu:* The Development of *Besedas* and Agricultural Associations 177-200 (cf. fn. 40).

bly in 1879.[64] Another widespread activity was the collective submission of petitions regularly initiated by agricultural associations through periodicals and letters.[65]

A meeting held in Pardubice on 23 November 1884 was a good example of cooperation among agricultural associations. It was attended by 400 representatives of the associations and *besedas* in north-eastern Bohemia. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss measures to reduce the influence of the agricultural crisis, and its resolution demanded that the government, legislative bodies, and land committees take action to alleviate the distress, for example through improving agricultural credit, tax reforms, and the reduction of transport costs.[66] Thirty-one agricultural associations in other regions subsequently supported the resolution as well.[67] The involvement of the *besedas* in this joint assembly and the support for its formal results by associations in other regions indicate that the agricultural associations were able to strengthen their cooperation both regionally and interregionally.

The associations' attempts to enhance their political influence were thus accompanied by the creation of a broad and dense network.

Attempts by the agricultural associations to increase the political influence and their dissatisfaction with the Czech liberal parties

The efforts of the agricultural associations to represent their interests in political decision-making affected their relationships with the Czech liberal parties. Although the National Liberal Party (*Národní strana svobodomyslná*) was established in 1874 by separation from the National Party (*Národní strana*), the two entities maintained political cooperation based on the idea of "national unity" and played a central role in parliamentary politics, portraying themselves as representing the entire Czech nation.[68] This idea affected not only the relationship between the parties themselves but their relations to the agrarian movement as well.

Although the association law of 1867 and the subsequent flourishing of various organisations and assemblages diminished the significance of agricultural associations for Czech liberals, the ties between them were not completely severed.[69] In

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[64] The first congress of Czech farmers was held in Chrudim in 1876. Československý hospodářský list 1 (1875-1876) 127; 2 (1876-1877) 117; 3 (1878-1879) 193.

[65] NA, ZR, box 70, No 2869. Mělník hospodářský spolek. Resoluce hospodářsko-průmyslového spolku přijatá valnou hromadou dne 2. září 1884 [Agricultural Association in Mělník. Resolution of the Agricultural-Industrial Association Adopted by the General Assembly on 2 September 1884]; Petice stran krize cukrovarnické, k No. 2869 [Petitions Regarding the Sugar Crisis].

[66] HL 10 (1884-1885) 31, 43-44, 49.

[67] HL 10 (1884-1885) 82.

[68] According to Urban, the idea of "national unity" played a crucial role since the beginning of the modern Czech national movement and was seen as the most important and indispensable prerequisite for any success in the struggle for fulfillment of national political demands. *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft. Vol. 1, 440-441 (cf. fn. 1).

[69] The Czech liberal parties were regarded as typical *honoračni strany*, i.e. political parties comprising notables, which were characterised by their minimal organisation and narrow social basis. Thus, a network of various associations and confidants (*důvěrníci*) formed their organisational base for a long time. *Malíř/Marek:* Politické strany. Vol. 1, 19-21 (cf. fn. 1).

particular, changing political circumstances during the 1880s such as the extension of voting rights and the intensifying confrontation with German parties were considered to enhance the associations' importance for the Czech liberals as a means of involving the rural population in politics.[70] The engagement of Czech liberal politicians in agricultural associations during this period, for example by giving lectures at meetings and submitting petitions to legislative bodies, can be explained by these circumstances.[71]

The relations with the Czech liberals became increasingly important for the agricultural associations, who recognised the need for a wide range of state policies with the growing impact of the economic downturn.

To achieve their aims, the associations stressed the significance of agriculture and argued that the influence of the distressing circumstances affecting it was not limited to this one sector alone. For example, an article published in the Agricultural Journal asserted that the agricultural crisis could affect the whole state: "[…] it [the agricultural crisis] threatens not only agriculture – the most powerful pillar of the state – but also industrial production, which can be fatal for our entire national economy."[72] The associations emphasised the importance of farmers for the Czech nation in particular, describing them as the "core of the nation",[73] and the severe impact of the agricultural depression on it. At an assembly of the agricultural association in Litomyšl, for instance, a speaker explained the consequences of the ongoing developments as follows: "When farmers will be impoverished, the country (*země*) will be impoverished; when a large part of the farms will be sold by foreclosure, the nation will be crippled."[74] By arguing that the agricultural crisis would affect a larger community such as the entire state or even the whole nation, the associations highlighted the broader public character of the issue and attempted to appeal to the Czech liberal politicians.

The efforts also extended beyond appeals to the Czech liberals, however. The associations' attempts to get more farmers into legislative bodies became quite vigorous from the mid-1880s, especially around the Imperial Diet election of 1885. The New Boleslav (*Nový Boleslavan*) of 19 September 1884 reported on an important example of such activities:

After the election of a member of the Imperial Diet on 16 September 1884,[75] more than 50 voters, mostly mayors of the municipalities (*obecní starostové*), held a meeting in the Hall of the Golden Wreath to discuss how to establish a compact farmers' party that would defend agri-

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[70] According to Havránek, approximately half of the owners of small farms (2-5 ha) were entitled to vote after the electoral reform of 1882. *Havránek:* Die ökonomische und politische Lage der Bauernschaft 117 (cf. fn. 4). – On the Czech-German confrontation since 1880, see *Křen,* Jan: Die Konfliktgemeinschaft. München 2000 (VCC 71), 169.

[71] HL 5 (1879-1880) 24; 8 (1882-1883) 78; 9 (1883-1884) 30, 71, 117-118, 234, 252, 335 et passim.

[72] HL 9 (1883-1884) 103.

[73] HL 10 (1884-1885) 175.

[74] HL 10 (1884-1885) 150.

[75] This election was a by-election. Denní kronika. Doplňovací volba poslance [Daily Chronicle. By-Election of a Deputy]. In: NL, 13.09.1884.

cultural interests and ensure that the representatives of the farmers' estate (*rolnický stav*), who are real farmers and therefore know all needs of this estate, hold seats in all self-governing and legislative bodies.[76]

On the 26th of the same month, a proposed programme for a farmers' party was presented in the same journal. Arguing that nothing had been done to protect the estate of the farmers despite it constituting the main pillar of the state and bearing a large burden, it demanded that farmers be represented equally with other estates in the legislative bodies:

> […] we will not exalt our estate over other estates, but we will demand to be recognised as an element equal to the others by proving our political maturity. […] Having complete trust that our parliamentary club in the Bohemian and the Imperial Diet will bring the guaranteed right of our language inherited from the fathers fully into force, we wish for the pace of our legislation regarding national economy and agriculture to be faster […]. We will strive for the political education of our people in independence, dignity, and civic bravery. We will make sure that the people become the judge of civic virtue and political knowledge. We will try hard to ensure that the farmers' estate is represented in the legislatures equally with industry, commerce, and crafts (*živnostnictvo*) according to its interests. Bearing in mind that the impoverishment of a nation is the precursor of its complete extinction, we strive for the existence of our nationality, for the prosperity of our people.[77]

It is noteworthy that this programme referred to liberal principles such as equality along with the liberal belief that active political rights are based on independence as citizens. It also declared its support for a parliamentary club comprising members of Czech liberal parties and its commitment to the national cause. This effort at founding a party can therefore be understood as an attempt to increase the political power of farmers within the existing framework of national politics led by Czech liberals.

Although the plan to establish a farmers' party in Mladá Boleslav did not bear fruit, similar efforts and demands to delegate more farmers or people versed in agricultural matters to the Imperial Diet can be observed elsewhere around this time as well.[78] They reflected the growing dissatisfaction of the agricultural associations and farmers with the Czech liberal parties. Despite claiming to be representatives of the entire Czech nation, the core of their leadership and the ranks of their legislators were made up of educated professionals (*Bildungsbürgertum*) from the urban milieu – especially lawyers – while farmers were underrepresented in the 1880s.[79] Their

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[76] "Nový Boleslavan" orgánem strany rolnické ["The New Boleslav" Becomes the Organ of the Farmers' Party]. In: Nový Boleslavan, 19.09.1884.

[77] Našemu rolnictvu [To Our Farmers]! In: Nový Boleslavan, 26.09.1884.

[78] HL 10 (1884-1885) 235-236; Hospodář 15 (1885) 141, 145; *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 171-172 (cf. fn. 8).

[79] According to Urban, the social composition of the deputies elected by the second and third curiae, i.e. the non-aristocratic curiae, during the Bohemian Diet election of 1878 was as follows: educated professionals (*Bildungsbürgertum*) – 58 percent, businesspeople (*Unternehmertum*) – 32 percent, farmers and farm owners (*Bauerntum*) – 10 percent. In this election, the National Party and the National Liberal Party won half of the seats elected in these two curiae, namely 83, and the German Liberal Progressive Party (*Deutschliberale Fortschrittspartei*) won the rest. The abovementioned social composition of the deputies can be considered to reflect the character of these liberal parties, with educated professionals at its

priority had always been to realise their national aspirations in the shape of reinstatement of the State Right (*státní právo*), the historical rights of the Bohemian Kingdom, and they showed a limited willingness to tackle economic problems, especially agricultural ones. For instance, the joint statement of the National Party and National Liberal Party concerning the elections for the Bohemian Diet in 1883 only touched upon the "mental and material improvement" of "the most numerous farmers' class (*rolnická třída*)" without mentioning any specific measures, even though the impact of the agricultural depression was already apparent.[80]

The following statement by Rudolf Šetka, a farmer and secretary of the agricultural association in Jindřichův Hradec, in May 1885 clearly expresses criticism of the predominance of educated professionals in Czech liberal politics. It called for the election of men who knew the farmers' needs to the legislative bodies, even referring to the possibility of founding independent clubs within them:

> Delegates elected in the rural constituencies should generally be versed in agriculture and its needs, which is not possible for lawyers, professors, teachers, etc. […] Among farmers as well as other people engaging in agriculture, there will be no lack of men with knowledge of the subject who would work to cope with the already very serious agrarian question; in our midst, too, we have men who would honourably represent the most numerous parts of the population of our Empire in the legislative bodies, where they could boldly stand together as an independent club, as a club for purely national economic interests.[81]

The reaction of the Czech liberal parties

The Czech liberal party leaders's response to the farmers' demands was negative. A letter by František Radislav Rieger, one of the National Party leaders, to his colleague Karel Mattuš in August 1884 declared the farmers' efforts to be based on "fallacy" that was to be prevented from becoming established:

> It goes against my conviction that the idea that only a farmer could represent farmers well is beginning to take hold also in our country. It is true, of course, that everyone knows best where his shoe pinches, but only a shoemaker knows how to adjust it so that it does not pinch. What would we accomplish with 20 to 40 farmers if we had no other parliamentary forces? It is necessary to explain the issue more often to people so that such a fallacy does not take root and exclude the forces which could help us effectively from the parliament.[82]

The reaction of the heads of the National Liberal Party was likewise unfavourable, as exhibited by an article published in its organ, the National Newspaper (*Národní listy*), in May 1885. While acknowledging the need to support the struggle of farm-

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core. *Urban:* Die Landtage der böhmischen Länder 1998-2002. – In the election for the House of Deputies of the Imperial Diet in 1879, the 16 deputies elected by the fourth curia in the Czech districts in Bohemia consisted mainly of educated professionals, businesspeople and large estate owners, and did not include any farmers. Výsledky voleb na říšskou radu ve venkovských obcích [Election Results for the Imperial Diet in Rural Municipalities]. In: NL, 29.6.1879.

80 *Cibulka,* Pavel: Politické programy českých národních stran v letech 1860-1890 [Political Programmes of the Czech National Parties in 1860-1890]. Praha 2000, 262-263.

81 Hospodář 15 (1885) 145.

82 *Heidler,* Jan (ed.): Příspěvky k listáři dra Frant. Lad. Riegra [Contributions to the Letters of Dr. Frant. Lad. Rieger]. Vol. 2. Praha 1926, 227.

ers and craftsmen for survival, it described the "idea of estate representation (*myšlenka stavovského zastupování*)" spreading among them as one "which cannot accommodate to the constitutional principles and is considered to have been overcome a long time ago." The article thus argued as follows:

> […] it is therefore more than ever the holy duty of a journal devoted to the national interests to follow the movement [of farmers and craftsmen], support it, but also warn it not to go astray and to contribute to a general clarification of economic interests and mutual understanding, so that there will not be a war of all against all, but a common struggle for common interests.[83]

The explanation of this "holy duty" indicates that the article attributed the efforts of farmers and craftsmen to organise themselves and send their colleagues to the various legislative bodies largely to their lack of understanding – just as Rieger did. Moreover, it regarded them not only as anachronistic but also as a potential source of "a war of all against all", and contrasted the partial interests of farmers or craftsmen with "common interests".

The joint manifesto of both parties for the Imperial Diet election, dated 22 May 1885 and presented with a list of candidates, stressed the importance of comprehensive knowledge for legislators while criticising the idea that only a farmer could properly represent farmers. It pointed out various tasks the Imperial Diet had to handle and argued as follows:

> Who would not understand that, in addition to the general education, honest character, and independence required of every individual member of parliament, it is necessary for the Czech delegation to have in its midst men knowledgeable in all branches of political science, public law, law, finance and, of course, national economy that encompasses all interests of commerce, industry, customs, and agriculture, as well as the social system; knowledge based on the relevant literature as well as on their own experience and knowledge of the laws of other nations? In recent times, the slogan that only a farmer, only a craftsman knows and can well represent the needs of his estate is spread here and there; but surely he can only do this if he also possesses the other abilities indicated above. It must not be forgotten that a true member of parliament should be primarily concerned with the welfare of his whole country, and even the entire Empire, as well as with the consent of all its interests, without neglecting the interests of the districts and estates from which he received his mandate, and which, even if he does not belong to them, he can still well know and care about from his experiences and origins.[84]

Asserting extensive knowledge as the most important quality of a legislator, the manifesto claimed that by electing candidates on the accompanying list, "national interests will be best defended and the Czech delegation armed with the necessary forces."[85]

Thus, while the agricultural associations or farmers insisted that their interests mattered to the whole nation and justified their efforts by referring to principles such as equality and demonstrating their commitment to education, the Czech liberals described those efforts as anachronistic attempts to defend "partial interests" contrasted with "common interests" or "national interests", and ascribed to them a

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[83] Proud doby [The Flow of Time]. In: NL, 13.5.1885.

[84] *Navrátil,* Michal: Čechové na říšské radě (1879-1900) [Czechs at the Imperial Diet (1879-1900)]. Praha 1903, 53-54.

[85] *Ibid.* 54.

lack of knowledge or understanding.[86] The Czech liberals' engagement in activities directed at enlightening farmers since the middle of the century was based on the belief that they were not educated enough to participate in public life as independent citizens and members of the nation.[87] Relying on the same national and liberal arguments they had used to promote farmers' enlightenment, they subsequently tried to thwart efforts to enhance the political influence of farmers in order to maintain their hegemony in the Czech political landscape.

The fact that both the agricultural associations and the Czech liberal parties strove to justify their respective positions using national and liberal arguments reveals that their struggle was not about the acceptance or rejection of these principles; rather, they fought over hegemony in the Czech political arena with competing interpretations of them.

The efforts to establish a central organisation for the agricultural associations

The Imperial Diet election in 1885 did not result in a notable increase in farmer delegates.[88] Neither this circumstance nor the negative attitude of the Czech liberal parties discouraged the agricultural associations, however. After several failed attempts to found a central organisation of agricultural associations or an agrarian party since the second half of the 1870s,[89] they intensified their activities for the establishment of a new agricultural body to defend their interests in the mid-1880s with the approach of the decennial negotiations on the economic terms of the dualism, the informal preparations for which began in June 1885.[90]

In October 1885, Jan A. Prokůpek, a farmer and chairman of the agricultural-industrial association in Kolín, called for the foundation of regional agricultural unions (*župní hospodářské jednoty*) to amalgamate the associations in neighbouring areas. He argued that agricultural associations could not achieve the expected results in the current difficult situation if they worked individually, stressing the need for them to "act collectively like one person in public" so that their demands and proposals would be implemented.[91] Prokůpek's suggestion was mostly received

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[86] The Czech liberals' reaction to farmers' attempts suggests that they shared the German liberals' views with regard to representation of the interests of a class or occupational group. *Judson:* Exclusive Revolutionaries 178 (cf. fn. 12).

[87] *Kiryu:* Kodym's Newspaper 414 (cf. fn. 18).

[88] The social composition of the 18 deputies elected by the fourth curia in the Czech districts in Bohemia was as follows: 4 farm owners, 3 large estate owners, 2 officials, 1 canon, 1 mill owner, 1 factory owner, 1 doctor cum farm owner, 1 lawyer, 1 publisher, 1 head of district board, 1 mayor cum farm owner, 1 notary. *Navrátil:* Čechové na říšské radě 54-56 (cf. fn. 84).

[89] *Nožička:* Počátky rolnického spolčování 39-40 (cf. fn. 5); *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 104-110 (cf. fn. 8).

[90] *Ibid.* 177. The decennial negotiations covered issues such as trade and tariff policies, parts of the taxation system, and railway policies, which mattered in terms of agricultural interests. *Paulinyi,* Akoš: Die sogenannte gemeinsame Wirtschaftspolitik Österreich-Ungarns. In: *Brusatti,* Alois (ed.): Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918. Vol. 1. Wien 1973, 567-604.

[91] HL 11 (1885-86) 9-10. – The idea of establishing such regional agricultural unions was orig-

favourably, and the issue was tabled at agricultural associations throughout Bohemia.[92]

These discussions about regional agricultural unions revitalised debates on the founding of a central organisation of agricultural associations in Bohemia. However, as a meeting report from the association of the Český Brod district shows, while "the establishment of such a centre has long been recognised as necessary […] opinions differ as to what kind of centre it should be."[93]

As a result, the attempts to establish a central organisation of agricultural associations during the second half of the 1880s came to fruition in two ways: the reorganisation of the Agricultural Society (*Hospodářská společnost*) into the Central Agricultural Society (*Ústřední hospodářská společnost*) in 1888 and the foundation of the Peasant Union for the Kingdom of Bohemia (*Selská jednota pro království České*)[94] in 1889.

The former was mostly supported by agricultural associations in central and eastern Bohemia, such as those in Chrudim, Pardubice, and Kolín.[95] On 4 February 1887, the Chrudim and Pardubice groups convened an assembly of associations in beet-cultivating regions to discuss a new bill for sugar taxation. The establishment of a central organisation also became a subject of debate, and a committee was instated to pursue this objective.[96] It decided to enter into negotiations with representatives of the directorate of the Agricultural Society, an association of large landowners and manor administrators whose purpose was to promote agriculture.[97] An agreement was reached to restructure the Agricultural Society into a central organisation for the agricultural associations in Bohemia by modifying its statutes to add delegates of the

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inally proposed by the agricultural association in České Budějovice in 1883 in the discussion on the reform of the organisational structure of the Agricultural Council, which never came to fruition despite being supported by a large number of agricultural associations. *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 164-167 (cf. fn. 8).

92 Zpráva o činnosti Zemědělské rady pro Království české 1885 [Report on the Activities of the Agricultural Council for the Kingdom of Bohemia 1885], 15; HHK, R. 1887, 10; *Nožička:* Počátky rolnického spolčování 82 (cf. fn. 5).

93 Ústřední hospodářská společnost pro království české [The Central Agricultural Society for the Kingdom of Bohemia]. In: NL, 30.06.1887.

94 In principle, the word "*sedlák*" is translated as "farmer" in this study. However, considering that the area of southern Bohemia was dominated by small- and medium-sized farms, the word "*sedlák*" is translated as "peasant" for this region.

95 The executives of these agricultural associations included active and future Bohemian Diet members of the National Party such as Josef Machek, the chair of the agricultural association in Chrudim, Antonín Formánek, a committee member of the agricultural association in Pardubice, and Jan Antonín Prokůpek, the chair of the agricultural-industrial association in Kolín. HL 12 (1886-1887) 239. – Although one may assume that the National Party was relatively influential in these associations, further research is required to clarify its influence in the reorganisation of the Agricultural Society.

96 HL 12 (1886-1887) 101-102, 213-214.

97 The Agricultural Society was founded as the Agricultural Club (*Hospodářský klub*) in 1867 and restructured into the Agricultural Society in 1880. It focused on technical, technological, and economic organisation problems. *Novák,* Pavel: Ústřední hospodářská společnost v letech 1867-1920 [The Central Agricultural Society 1867-1920]. In: Vědecké práce Zemědělského muzea 28 (1989-1990) 27-31.

associations.[98] According to Adolf Eckert, the chair of the agricultural association in Chrudim and a promulgator of this agreement, the existing Agricultural Council – which was basically an advisory organ of the government and the land committee – was not suitable to become the central organisation of agricultural associations they wanted; the founding of a farmers' association (*selský spolek*) following the example in Moravia was likewise undesirable, since there were fears that three parallel organisations – i. e., the Agricultural Council, the Agricultural Society, and a newly established farmers' association – would not work together but rather against each other. While admitting that the Agricultural Society had lacked a relationship with farmers so far, Eckert argued that the cooperation with it would be adequate because "a significant part of the members, especially large landowners, already felt it necessary to come into contact with the agricultural associations, and various factors indicated that the Agricultural Society truly wished to be at the forefront of the association movement."[99]

The establishment committee of the Central Agricultural Society, which consisted of representatives of the original Agricultural Society as well as of the agricultural associations in Chrudim, Pardubice, Kolín, Čáslav and Karlín, thus published an announcement dated 1 July 1887 requesting the individual agricultural associations to discuss the issue and inform the committee whether or not they would join.[100] At an assembly of agricultural associations and farmers held in Prague on 8 and 9 January 1888 and attended by more than 2.000 people – including delegates from 114 associations – the restructuring of the Agricultural Society into the Central Agricultural Society was approved.[101]

While this reorganisation was supported by farmers who endorsed the cooperation of all social strata engaged in agriculture, the foundation of the Peasant Union was promoted by agricultural associations in southern Bohemia that stressed the differences between peasants and large landowners, and was supported by the National Liberal Party in its final phase. The abovementioned announcement by the founding committee of the Central Agricultural Society, dated 1 July 1887, provoked a reaction from peasant leaders in southern Bohemia, who were also aiming to coordinate agricultural associations across the land.[102] In an article in the National Newspaper dated 28 July 1887, Alfons Šťastný, a southern Bohemian peasant leader and co-founder of the National Liberal Party, criticised the idea of establishing a central organisation by simply adding delegates of the agricultural associations to the current membership of the Agricultural Society consisting mainly of large landowners. Šťastný argued as follows: "[…] it is obvious that the reformed Agricultural Society

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98 HL 12 (1886-1887) 239.

99 Ústřední hospodářská společnost pro království české. In: NL, 30.6.1887.

100 HL 12 (1886-1887) 239.

101 Sjezd hospodářských spolků a rolnictva českého v Praze [Congress of the Czech Agricultural Associations and Farmers in Prague]. In: NL, 09.01.1888.

102 Efforts to establish a union of agricultural associations were also pursued in southern Bohemia since 1885 and resulted in the foundation of the South Bohemian Agricultural Union (*Jihočeská jednota hospodářská*) on 3 July 1887. *Nožička:* Počátky rolnického spolčování 82 (cf. fn. 5).

will be nothing more than a society, but not a union of the agricultural associations which need to organise themselves. It will also not convey their demands, especially those of the peasants."[103] He consequently stressed the need for a union composed only of agricultural associations and based on equality.[104]

In January 1888, when the reorganisation of the Agricultural Society into the Central Agricultural Society was approved, the agricultural association in Bernartice in southern Bohemia organised an assembly attended by more than 300 peasants. The resolution adopted there declared that a central organisation should be founded "by the unrestricted and free will of the peasants themselves on a democratic basis, free from all elements unfavorable to them" and have "an independent and decisive influence on all elections held by them".[105] A week later, 15 agricultural associations in southern Bohemia decided to establish the Bohemian Association of Smallholders (*Zemský spolek malohospodářů*).[106] Šťastný, a chief promoter of this plan, approached Heřman Janda, a National Liberal and farmer leader in the Podřipsko region, to secure the cooperation of farmers there who objected to the establishment of the Central Agricultural Society.[107]

The intensifying conflict between the National Party and the National Liberal Party, which ultimately led to the end of their parliamentary cooperation in the late 1880s, had a decisive effect on this process.[108] To assure and expand its influence on farmers, the National Liberal Party changed its negative attitude towards the idea of defending professional interests. Instead, it advocated the foundation of an organisation modeled on the Farmers' Association (*Selský spolek*) in Moravia whose purpose would be to claim political rights and improve the material situation of farmers within the party's political camp.[109] As a result, the Peasant Union for the Kingdom of Bohemia was established in cooperation with central Bohemian farmers and peasants in southern Bohemia on 16 May 1889 as the first dedicated interest group for Czech farmers.[110]

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[103] Ústřední jednota hospodářských spolků v Čechách nebo Ústřední hospodářská společnost pro Čechy? [The Central Union of the Agricultural Associations in Bohemia or the Central Agricultural Society for Bohemia?] In: NL, 28.7.1887.

[104] *Ibid.*

[105] Shromáždění českých rolníků [Assembly of Czech Farmers]. In: NL, 31.01.1888.

[106] *Šťastný/Traub:* Ze života Alf. Šťastného 294-295 (cf. fn. 4).

[107] *Ibid.* 299; *Nožička*: Počátky rolnického spolčování 85-86 (cf. fn. 5); *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 201-214 (cf. fn. 8).

[108] The latter founded the club of the independent Czech delegates in the Imperial Diet on 26 January 1888. In the following year, it also established an independent parliamentary club in the Bohemian Diet. On the confrontation between the two parties in the 1880s, see *Tobolka:* Politické dějiny. Vol. 3, No. 1, 241-266 (cf. fn. 1); *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft. Vol. 1, chapter 6 (cf. fn. 1); *Garver:* The Young Czech Party 121-128 (cf. fn. 1).

[109] On the National Liberal Party's policy change, see *Tobolka:* Politické dějiny. Vol. 3, No. 1, 271-272 (cf. fn. 1); *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 180-199 (cf. fn. 8); *Havránek:* Die ökonomische und politische Lage der Bauernschaft 126-131 (cf. fn. 4); *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft. Vol. 1, 555-573 (cf. fn. 1).

[110] Na zdar Jednotě selské [Cheers to the Peasant Union]. In: NL, 16. 5. 1889.

The foundation of the Union of Czech Agriculturalists (Sdružení českých zemědělců)[111]

Neither the reorganisation of the Agricultural Society into the Central Agricultural Society nor the founding of the Peasant Union marked the end of the quest for a central organisation defending agricultural interests, however. The police headquarters in Prague disbanded the Peasant Union in 1890 on grounds of its involvement in a mass campaign against the Viennese Agreement (*Wiener Punktationen*).[112] Its successor institution, the Bohemian Peasant Union (*Zemská selská jednota*) founded in 1891, began to cease functioning around 1893 owing to antagonism between central Bohemian farmers and peasants in the southern regions.[113] In addition, the Central Agricultural Society, which worked primarily in the professional field, still did not meet the demands of farmers to defend their interests.[114]

In the 1890s, with the decennial negotiations on the economic terms of dualism approaching once again, the agricultural associations once more intensified their efforts to unite. The associations in Chrudim, Pardubice, and Kolín, which had been major advocates of the reorganisation of the Agricultural Society, began to hold regular meetings with delegates of the associations in eastern Bohemia at the end of 1894.[115] Unions were established in various regions – for example, the Regional Agricultural Union for North-Eastern Bohemia (*Župní hospodářská jednota pro severo-východní Čechy*) was founded in February 1895. In 1896, two farmer leaders in the National Liberal Party followed suit: In February, Stanislav Kubr, a farm owner in Kněževes, established the Central Bohemian Farmers' Organisation (*Středočeská selská župa*), and in October, František Udržal, a farmer from Roveň, founded the Political Farmers' Union for the Districts of Pardubice, Přelouč and Holice (*Politická selská jednota pro okresy Pardubice, Přelouč a Holice*).[116]

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111 Following Garver, the word "*zemědělec*" is translated as "agriculturalist" in this study. *Garver:* The Young Czech Party 223 (cf. fn. 1). On the definition of "*zemědělec*", see *Harna,* Josef/*Lacina,* Vlastislav: Politické programy českého a slovenského agrárního hnutí 1899-1938 [Political Programmes of the Czech and Slovak Agrarian Movements 1899-1938]. Praha 2007, 13.

112 *Heumos,* Peter: Die Entwicklung organisierter agrarischer Interessen in den böhmischen Ländern und in der ČSR. In: *Bosl* (ed.): Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik als multinationaler Parteienstaat 334 (cf. fn. 3). – On the Viennese Agreement and the reactions to it, see *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft. Vol. 1, 573-586 (cf. fn. 1).

113 *Heumos:* Die Entwicklung organisierter agrarischer Interessen 334-337 (cf. fn. 112).

114 *Novák:* Ústřední hospodářská společnost 32 (cf. fn. 97); *Nožička:* Jan Antonín Prokůpek 134 (cf. fn. 4). – Furthermore, the supranational agricultural policy the Society initially aimed for seems to have lost attractiveness and feasibility as the conflict over centralism and federalism deepened. *Heumos:* Agrarische Interessen 111-112 (cf. fn. 8).

115 HL 20 (1894-1895) 24, 58, 69.

116 HL 20 (1894-1895) 149; 21 (1895-1896) 137; *Tobolka:* Politické dějiny. Vol. 3, No. 2, 272 (cf. fn. 1); *Frankenberger:* Antonín Švehla 63-64 (cf. fn. 4). – An assembly held in Pardubice in January 1896 to discuss the economic terms of the dualism also illustrates the intensifying activities of the agricultural associations during this period. It was attended by 1.200 people including their delegates and received 1.500 petitions. Its resolution demanded the dissolution of the trade and customs union between Austria and Hungary. HL 16 (1895-1896) 114-115, 117.

Kubr's Central Bohemian Farmers' Organisation took further steps to establish a new unified agricultural organisation for the whole of Bohemia in cooperation with farmer leaders in other regions. In autumn 1896, a programme for the new organisation to be established, the Union of Czech Agriculturalists (*Sdružení českých zemědělců*), was published. It was signed by Stanislav Kubr as well as the farm owners Jan A. Prokůpek from Kutlíř, Josef Horák from Čáslav, Josef Syrový from Horky, and Jan V. Markalous from Třebosice, and distributed throughout Bohemia.[117] According to the document, the Union's purpose would be "to defend the farmer himself as a producer as well as his production, to preserve a strong farmers' estate (*silný stav selský*), and to protect medium-sized farms from extinction."[118] Following a preparatory assembly on 27 December 1896 in Prague, the Union of Czech Agriculturalists was established on 27 February 1897, with Stanislav Kubr elected as its chairman.[119]

The Union aimed first and foremost to protect the agricultural or farmers' estate (*zemědělský/selský stav*), and middle-class farmers in particular. Its programme presented 36 concrete demands that were primarily concerned with agricultural interests, such as the dissolution of the trade and customs union between Austria and Hungary to avoid competition with Hungarian agriculture, the introduction of protective trade policies, the nationalisation of the main railways, the disbanding of cartels harmful to agriculture, state aid for balancing mortgage debts, and the abolishment of land tax and its replacement with progressive income tax as well as business tax.[120] At the same time, it stressed that farmers were citizens and members of the nation, explicitly stating their desire "to not submit themselves to new servitude or serfdom of any other estates, but to remain free citizens fully aware of their power" and arguing that "a Czech farmer never forgets his national duty".[121] The programme declared that the Union would follow the leadership of the National Liberal Party on national and political issues despite including members and supporters of both the National Liberal Party and the National Party.[122]

The establishment of the Czech Agrarian Party

The envisaged cooperation between the National Liberal Party and the Union of Czech Agriculturalists did not last long. The Union, which aimed to dissolve the trade and customs union between Austria and Hungary, vehemently opposed the

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117 *Nožička:* Jan Antonín Prokůpek 135-138 (cf. fn. 4); *Frankenberger:* Antonín Švehla 64-68 (cf. fn. 4).

118 Sjezd českého rolnictva v Praze dne 27. prosince 1896 [Congress of the Czech Farmers in Prague on 27 December 1896]. Praha 1897, 20.

119 Sdružení českých zemědělců pro království české [The Union of Czech Agriculturalists for the Kingdom of Bohemia]. In: NL, 28.02.1897.

120 Sjezd českého rolnictva, 22-38.

121 *Ibid.* 12-13.

122 *Ibid.* 20; *Frankenberger:* Antonín Švehla 66-68 (cf. fn. 4). – After its landslide victory in the Imperial Diet election in 1891, the National Liberal Party established a leadership position in Czech politics during the 1890s. *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft. Vol. 1, chapter 7 (cf. fn. 1).

provisional agreement on the economic terms of dualism submitted to the Imperial Diet by the government on 12 October 1897 and urged the National Liberal Party to support its demands.[123] The party adopted a pro-government stance in this matter and did not express support for the Union, however, which severely increased the latter's frustration.[124] As a result, the board of the Union decided on 30 November 1898 to work independently in national and political issues as well, stressing the autonomy and capabilities of the farmers' estate: "The farmers' estate is so intelligent, so progressive and so strong that it can finally work independently not only in economic but also in national and political issues."[125] On 6 January 1899, the general assembly of the Union of Czech Agriculturalists adopted the following resolution mirroring the decision of the board: "The assembly approves the independence from political parties and the establishment of an agrarian party, which will defend the interests of middle-class farmers without forgetting its obligations to the other estates of the Czech nation and to the Czech nation as a whole."[126]

The founding of the Czech Agrarian Party as an independent political party did not end the confrontation between farmers and the National Liberal Party, however. The latter condemned the dissociation using the same arguments as before. At the abovementioned assembly on 6 January 1899, F. Hovorka, a National Liberal Party deputy to the Bohemian and the Imperial Diet, declared it an undesirable political separation and attributed it to a lack of political education: "My soul is aggrieved to see a kind of split between us. I am not against an estate organisation. I support it. However, it is our duty at the present time, as far as politics is concerned, to unite. Nevertheless, in this respect, we have separated. We need political education."[127] An article published in the National Newspaper on 8 January 1899 criticised the establishment of the Czech Agrarian Party in harsher tones, arguing that an attempt to

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123 *Tobolka:* Politické dějiny. Vol. 3, No. 2, 171-172 (cf. fn. 1); Resoluce na sjezdu důvěrníků přijatá [Resolution Adopted at the Confidants' Convention]. In: Obrana zemědělců [Defender of the Agriculturalists], 01.04.1898.

124 The National Liberal Party began to change its anti-governmental stance after the formation of the Badeni cabinet in 1895, which expressed a willingness to fulfill its national and political demands. After the publication of Badeni's language ordinances in 1897, the National Liberal Party took a step to support the government. *Urban:* Die tschechische Gesellschaft. Vol. 1, 652-717 (cf. fn. 1). – It is also important to note that the influence of the commercial and industrial middle class on the policies of the National Liberal Party grew steadily after 1891, as it was beneficial to industrial interests in Austria to maintain the customs union with Hungary, which guaranteed them the Hungarian market. *Garver:* The Young Czech Party 101 (cf. fn. 1).

125 Prohlášení [Statement]. In: Obrana zemědělců, 02.12.1898. – Heumos pointed out that the voting rights issue also contributed to the final break in the relationship between the Union and the National Liberal Party, as the former was against the introduction of universal and equal suffrage whereas the latter supported it. *Heumos:* Die Entwicklung organisierter agrarischer Interessen 340 (cf. fn. 112).

126 Valná hromada Sdružení českých zemědělců pro království české [The General Assembly of the Union of Czech Agriculturalists for the Kingdom of Bohemia]. In: Obrana zemědělců, 20.01.1899.

127 *Ibid.*

defend the interests of the farmers' estate with full force was an attempt to "equate the **lower**-class interests with the greater and general national interests" or "to **subordinate** these elevated national interests to the class interests", declaring the latter to be a "sin against one's nation".[128] Contrasting class interests with national interests, the article denounced an organisation such as the Agrarian Party, declaring it a threat to the entire nation:

> [A] political economic organisation lacking the ties that unite the whole nation into one, the ties of the national idea, means nothing but the fight of some against others, means in further consequence nothing but the dissolution of the national society and the end of the nation.[129]

The 1903 programme of the Czech Agrarian Party

Despite the National Liberal Party's criticism that the establishment of economic organisations would lead to the end of the nation, the first official programme of the Czech Agrarian Party adopted in 1903 insisted on its legitimacy and highlighted its importance for the Czech nation. The comprehensive policy paper consisted of seven parts: an introduction, a section on general principles of agrarian organisations, a section on organisation of the press, and four specific programmes.

The introduction asserted the significance of farmers and the party itself by reviewing the history of the Czech nation. According to the text, the Czech nation had originally been and still remained predominantly an agricultural nation, and there was no slavery or servitude since a Czech was always a friend and admirer of everyone's freedom. However, it went on, the original equality, independence, and freedom of individuals in the Czech nation had disappeared with the growing influence of the Germans; professional fighters had become lords, and farmers had fallen into a state of servitude (*stav poroby*).[130] The relationship between farmers' freedom and the power of the nation is decribed as follows:

> Our nation originally resisted foreign influence, as long as its farmers were free. Under the last Přemysls, the further the freedom of farmers decreased, the more the national spirit decreased and the Czech language was suppressed. This foreign influence was broken by the Hussite movement, a farmers' movement that named the Czech nation and increased the civil liberties and rights of our language. After the fall of Hussitism, Jiří Poděbradský, the famous king of Bohemia, instead of seeking the natural pillar of his homeland in the power of the farmers (*selský lid*), degraded the farmers' estate (*selský stav*) by increasing *corveé* and thus weakened his nation so that after his famous reign, in order to attain equilibrium, the Bohemian crown was offered to foreigners, who then led the nation to the White Mountain.[131]

The crucial importance of farmers for the nation was further emphasised: "The Czech farmers' estate is the heart of the nation. If one allows this estate to be destroyed, one stops this heart from beating, silences the mouth, the formerly eloquent, and the nation ceases to live."[132]

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[128] Stavovské třídění [Estate Division]. In: NL, 08.01.1899. Emphasis in the original.
[129] *Ibid.*
[130] *Harna/Lacina:* Politické programy českého a slovenského agrárního hnutí 45 (cf. fn. 111).
[131] *Ibid.* 47
[132] *Ibid.* 47.

The introduction subsequently criticises that the farmers' situation had not improved significantly even after 1848: "By the abolition of the *corveé*, the farmer was granted his civil rights, and by the constitutional system he was also granted participation therein, but to a much lesser extent than he was entitled to."[133] It went on to accuse previous Czech politics of neglecting the needs of the estates, emphasising the latters' significance and asserting that they were what formed a nation:

> Czech politics up to this point, led from Prague, has been a politics of frenetic slogans based on the opinions, needs, and life of large cities, and has not been as it should be. It should consider the life of the nation as a whole and the special needs of the estates, the aggregation of which is and always will be the true concept of a nation. Not political parties but estates form a nation as a whole, because without political parties a nation would remain a nation, but a nation without estates, especially without an agricultural estate (*zemědělský stav*), would not be a nation that could sustain itself.[134]

Based on this concept of a nation composed of estates, the text argued that the agricultural question was in fact the "Czech question" (*česká otázka*), since the Czech agricultural estate and its requirements were also crucial for the realisation of the Czech national programme:

> The Czech agricultural people (*český lid zemědělský*) want to save themselves in order to be strong and happy, guarantee a future for their estate and families, and remain the foremost fighters in the nation led by the idea of true freedom and true progress, in order to fight for their ideal properties with success. An independent status of the lands of the Bohemian Kingdom, re-establishment of the Bohemian State – these are the first and most important objective of our programme common to all Czech national parties, the most significant objective, worthy of the greatest sacrifices and struggles. The Czech agricultural estate and its requirements are the most natural foundation, the most important and powerful argument of the State Right ideas.[135]

Linking agricultural issues with national matters, the introduction explained the purpose of the Czech Agrarian Party as follows:

> Its duty is not only to work seriously and systematically for the realisation of the desires of Czech agriculture, which aim to eliminate or at least mitigate the causes of the agricultural crisis and alleviate it, but also to advocate with the same or even greater conscientiousness the Czech national demands in terms of nationality as well as with regard to State Right-related, educational and social aspirations.[136]

Following this preliminary exposition and the explanation of the party's organisation and press activities, four specialised sections – namely 1) a national and political programme, 2) a social programme, 3) a cultural programme, and 4) an agricultural programme – presented specific concepts and objectives in the respective areas.[137]

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133 *Ibid.* 47.
134 *Ibid.* 48.
135 *Ibid.* 50.
136 *Ibid.* 48
137 The four programmes included the following goals: 1) National and political programme: guarantee of language rights and implementation of the State Right of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. 2) Social programme: prevention of the spread of poverty, restriction of bureaucratism, and fair balancing of the interests of various classes and estates. 3) Cultural programme: promotion of general and professional education. 4) Agricultural programme:

While the most extensive of these was unsurprisingly the agricultural programme, it essentially represented nothing but a summary of the various demands repeatedly expressed in efforts to defend agricultural interests. By contrast, the social programme was the weakest, while the cultural programme – which cited the promotion of cultural and educational activities as a goal – was more extensive.[138] The party's emphasis on education is also evident from its assertion that education levels needed to be considered for electoral reform.[139] In the national and political programme, there were no significant differences to the National Liberal Party.[140]

Although the agriculture-specific section exhibited a protectionist character,[141] the 1903 programme as a whole clearly manifested a commitment to the Czech nation and relied on national and liberal arguments to legitimise the Agrarian Party, just like previous attempts to defend agricultural interests had. This is evident from its main assertion that Czech agricultural people wished to "save themselves" to be economically strong, educated, and progressive so that they could contribute to the nation. The history narrative that the document relied heavily on to emphasise the significance of farmers for the nation clearly demonstrates the influence of the historical interpretation by František Palacký, a Czech liberal leader, which was based on the assumption that the Czech nation was originally agricultural and consisted of equal, independent and free individuals, and that it was contact with the Germans that had led to the creation of a hierarchical society.[142] It is noteworthy that the programme not only indicated an influence of the Czech liberals but also directly quoted several of their prominent representatives. For example, it cited the following words by František Ladislav Rieger in defence of its aim to improve the material situation of farmers through politics: "Nations always have only as much freedom as they can attain and defend by their education and material power (F. L. Rieger 1864)."[143] To

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estate protection and support for agriculture, promotion of agricultural organisations including cooperatives, improvement of farming methods, alteration of agriculture's relationship to other economic sectors and market, founding of farmers' fidei commissum (*rolnické kmenové statky*), introduction of general insurance, reform of agricultural credit, improvement of working conditions, taxation system and administrative bodies, protective trade policies, and dissolution of the trade and customs union with Hungary. *Ibid.* 55-70.

138 *Ibid.* 17-18.

139 *Ibid.* 56.

140 *Ibid.* 17.

141 Tobolka emphasises the conservative character of the Agrarian Party's economic policy in comparison with the National Liberal Party's liberal stance. *Tobolka:* Politické dějiny. Vol. 3, No. 2, 278-279 (cf. fn. 1). Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that there were members of the National Liberal Party who insisted on the need for state intervention, such as František Fiedler, who participated in compiling the Agrarian Party's programme in 1903. *Velek,* Luboš: Liberalismus, svépomoc a státní intervence v agrárním programu mladočechů na přelomu 19. a 20. století [Liberalism, Self-Help and State Interventions in the Young Czechs' Agrarian Programme at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries]. In: Osudy zemědělského družstevnictví ve 20. století [Fates of Agricultural Cooperatives in the 20th Century]. Uherské Hradiště 2002, 57-66.

142 *Palacký,* František: Dějiny národu českého w Čechách a w Morawě [History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia]. 10 vols., Praha 1848-1876.

143 *Harna/Lacina:* Politické programy českého a slovenského agrárního hnutí 56 (cf. fn. 111).

justify the declaration of the protection and maintenance of the farmers' estate – and especially the agricultural middle class – including the introduction of a farmers' fidei commissum (*rolnické kmenové statky*) as being among the party's main goals, the programme referred to the following statement by Karel Havlíček:

> If many of the large farmers' lands remain undivided, we can in time, when the farmers' estate (*selský stav*) becomes more self-respecting and respected by other estates, expect in our homeland the most essential farmers' (*kmetský*) estate, the estate of middle-class farmers, who still belong to the happiest, most moral, and most useful citizens in every county.[144]

It should be emphasised, however, that the programme relied not only on conventional national and liberal arguments but also on the new concept of the nation composed of estates.[145] It criticised Czech politics up to its publication as catering to the opinions, needs, and life of large cities and asserted that they should "consider the life of the nation as a whole and the special needs of the estates", arguing that the true concept of the nation was a nation composed of estates. By projecting this view, the programme challenged the hegemony of Czech liberals, who claimed to be representatives of the entire nation and tried to thwart the farmers' efforts by stressing the importance of national unity.

After its establishment, the Czech Agrarian Party sought to integrate agricultural organisations across the Bohemian lands and merged with the Czech Agrarian Party in Moravia and Silesia (*Česká strana agrární pro Moravu a Slezsko*) to found the Czechoslav Agrarian Party (*Československá strana agrární*) in 1905.[146] In the election for the House of Deputies of the Imperial Diet in 1907, the first election after the introduction of universal male suffrage, the Agrarian Party won 28 seats and became the strongest Czech parliamentary group.[147] By the beginning of 1914, it was already a modern mass party with 125 district organisations and 2.467 local organisations, and its membership had reached 91.194.[148] It thus grew into a powerful political force during the late Habsburg period and participated in the founding of Czechoslovakia.

Conclusion

The foundation of agricultural associations in Bohemia was promoted in the course of the revolution from 1848 to 1849, during which hereditary subjection was abolished. Their establishment was supported in particular by Czech liberals, who envisioned a modern Czech nation comprised of equal and independent citizens and considered associations facilitating the enlightenment of farmers to be a key instru-

144 Karel Havlíček, Spis Dra. Braunera o naších selských záležitostech [Dr. Brauner's Writings on Our Peasants Affairs]. In: Pražské Noviny 1847, quoted from *Ibid.* 57.

145 According to Tobolka, this concept was derived from Šťastný's idea. *Tobolka:* Politické dějiny. Vol. 3, No. 2, 277 (cf. fn. 1).

146 In 1900, Šťastný's Bohemian Peasant Union also joined the Czech Agrarian Party. *Heumos:* Die Entwicklung organisierter agrarischer Interessen 340-341 (cf. fn. 112).

147 In this election, the Czech parties won 107 seats in total. Of these, the Agrarian Party held 28 seats, followed by the Social Democrats with 24 seats and the National Liberal Party and the Moravian People's Party with 19 seats each. *Garver:* The Young Czech Party 357 (cf. fn. 1).

148 *Malíř/Marek:* Politické strany. Vol. 1, 420 (cf. fn. 1).

ment for achieving their purpose. The development of these agricultural associations by the late 1860s demonstrates that they contributed to promoting liberal and national principles such as intellectual and economic independence, progress and equality, and the ethos of public/national engagement. The economic downturn starting in the 1870s caused the agricultural associations to recognise the need for a wide range of state policies to overcome it, which led to an increased involvement in politics. To expand their political influence and achieve their purposes, the associations attempted to organise farmers at both the regional and interregional level and arranged actions such as collective submission of petitions, joint assemblies, and sending more farmers to legislative bodies.

When these activities did not yield the expected results, the associations' dissatisfaction with the Czech liberal parties, which played a central role in parliamentary politics, increased. They therefore intensified their endeavours to establish an organisation representing their interests more effectively, which eventually led to the foundation of the Czech Agrarian Party aimed at protecting the interests of the agricultural estate.

This study's analysis demonstrates that agricultural associations and farmers always relied on liberal and national arguments to legitimise their efforts rather than denying liberalism and nationalism. Despite the criticism of the Czech liberals, who described farmers' interests as "partial interests" contrasted with "common interests" or "national interests" and emphasised their lack of education, the associations argued that their interests did indeed matter to the whole nation and justified their purpose by referring to principles such as equality and economic and intellectual independence. The conflict between the agricultural associations and the Czech liberal parties was thus not over acceptance or rejection of national and liberal principles – they fought for hegemony in the Czech political arena, with both groups relying on liberal and national principles and competing over their interpretations.

The Czech Agrarian Party's 1903 programme illustrates that factors conventionally viewed as symbols of the conservative character of the agrarian movement (like its negative attitude towards the introduction of universal suffrage), were not merely a reflection of farmers' conservatism. The programme's assertion that educational levels needed to be considered in the context of electoral reform indicated that its rejective stance on the introduction of universal suffrage could be regarded as a legacy of the hierarchical worldview of classical liberalism.[149] In addition, the programme shows that the estate-based logic considered fundamental to the agricultural movement was not a pre-modern relic as criticised by the liberals, but was in fact based on liberal principles such as freedom and equality and served as a strategic tool to challenge Czech liberals, who tried to maintain their hegemony by stressing the importance of national unity.[150]

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[149] *Judson:* Exclusive Revolutionaries 54-60 (cf. fn. 12).

[150] The Agrarian Party decided to adopt the demand for universal suffrage into its programme in 1905. It can be assumed that after this policy change, the party began to rely more significantly on agrarian ideology to win the support of all strata of the rural milieu, as symbolised by the slogan "Countryside – one family (*Venkov – jedná rodina*)". *Petráň/*

By shifting the focus away from the estate-related (*stavovský*) aspects of the Czech agrarian movement, this analysis has shown that the movement also incorporated important legacies of liberalism and nationalism as advocated by the Czech liberals; it thereby provides a point of departure for re-examination of the agrarian movement and its agrarianism. The employed approach provides new clarity concerning the rearrangement of the Czech political theatre and its subsequent development, and will thus contribute to a better understanding of political developments in Habsburg Central Europe with regard to nationalism as well as liberalism.

Havránek: Rolnické hnutí v českých zemích 881-882 (cf. fn. 4); *Heumos:* Die Entwicklung organisierter agrarischer Interessen 327-328 (cf. fn. 112). – On agrarian ideology, see *Malíř / Marek:* Politické strany. Vol. 1, 415-416 (cf. fn. 1).