

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE COAL DISTRICT OF NORTH-WESTERN BOHEMIA PRIOR TO THE COLLAPSE OF THE MONARCHY

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The social development of Bohemia in the age of industrialization was characterized by intensive social restructuration. This was accompanied by shifts in the national picture mainly in the industrial centers, whose social structure was adapted to that of the Western industrial states in the period from 1850 to 1900. What in the pre-industrial age had been the German coal district of Komotau-Brüx-Dux-Teplitz-Aussig saw the influx of Czech miners who were partly settled by the German bourgeoisie in their own mining colonies. The period of Manchester-type Liberalism led to severe social maladjustments. After 1880 a working-class movement took root everywhere in the coal district, its leaders professing supranational solidarity. The social structure of the district was to a large degree also influenced by a petty bourgeois — peasant German movement which followed the national-ideological aspiration of the German bourgeoisie: the creation of an administratively self-contained German Bohemia. The bureaucratic administration of Cisleithania supported this aspiration, but with the German bourgeoisie's lack of political consistency, it was inevitably doomed to failure. On the one hand, a clearly delimited area of German language and administration was favoured; on the other, the influx of Czech workers was encouraged for economic reasons — and above all for technical wage considerations. Heinrich Rauchberg, one of the most important statisticians of the Austrian period, observed the consolidation of the Czech workers as a subordinate social stratum, but completely overlooked the political implications of this phenomenon in an age with a strong current of democratization. The Czech minority steadily advanced in the social structure and developed its own political life outside, so to speak, the sphere of state activity; its „national social structure“ proved to be viable. The infiltration of nationalism into the working-class movement of Cisleithania brought about its fragmentation into national parties; in the coal district, however, the international solidarity of the Socialists continued to predominate for a considerable length of time. F. Modráček's social aims envisaged the support by the German Social Democrats for their Czech comrades — against the German bourgeoisie — in the struggle for social justice. This is, in fact, what actually happened to a significant enough extent — but it led also to the formation, on the German side, of a non-Marxist workers' party, whose influence has, to be sure, often been overestimated. The Sudeten Germans fully developed a sense of „community“ as a distinct „ethno-sociological group“ only after the turn of the century.