

THE HEIR APPARENT ARCHDUKE FRANCIS
FERDINAND AND HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE
BOHEMIAN PROBLEM

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This essay is focussed on the approach of the Heir Apparent and his circle of trusted advisers to the national issues of the ancient crownland of Bohemia within the overall political problems of the Habsburg monarchy. The study draws primarily on the Nachlass of the archduke deposited in the Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv in Vienna and the state archives in Prague. It discusses the

relationship of the Heir Apparent to such Bohemian aristocrats as Count Ottokar Czernin, the future World War Minister of Foreign Affairs; Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic, future Prime Minister; Count Ernst Silva-Tarouca, Prince Karl Schwarzenberg, and above all to Prince Franz Thun, Governour of Bohemia of long standing, Austrian Prime Minister and one time Master of the archducal household. Relationships to other high officials are surveyed as well as far as they pertain to the Bohemian question. The most important documents among the many interesting ones published here for the first time are the letters written by the Archduke himself. They reflect in full the strange, in some ways repellent and in others fascinating personality of this autocrat.

As the interpretation of these documents reveals, the position of the Archduke in regard to the national conflict in Bohemia could be considered as neutral above the parties. While Francis Ferdinand was in general in favour of a German directed centralistic state structure and therewith an opponent of strong nationalistic tendencies, he feared the power of German perhaps more than of Czech nationalism. To him nationalism was within strict limits acceptable as long as it seemed to serve as means to the end of breaking the power of the dualistic political system which in his opinion was completely dominated by Magyar aspirations. Accordingly Czech, German, or any other national movement was welcome to him as long as it offered the chance to strengthen the position of the Crown above the peoples. He abhorred the same movements as soon as he felt that they impaired this status.