

THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND TRADES
IN PRAGUE AND REICHENBERG AND BOURGEOIS
ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AS A PROBLEM
OF SOCIAL HISTORY

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The establishment of chambers of commerce and trades in Bohemia during the period of neo-absolutism (1850—1859) provided a strong impetus to the development of economic life. The five Bohemian chambers of commerce were organized territorially along the lines of the administrative principles of neo-absolutism. This structure, however, no longer corresponded to economic and

national conditions by the 1870s and 1880s. This is why various strata of the Czech and German population called for changes in the demarcation lines between the chambers of commerce. At about the same time, Czech industry (mostly agricultural) demanded the creation of a new chamber of commerce in eastern Bohemia incorporating also the Czech districts of the Reichenberg chamber. This project, however, had not been realized by 1918. In an „open letter“ the Germans came out in favour of the establishment of a chamber of commerce of their own whose main object was to be the promotion of the new lignite basin. This proposal also was not carried out. With only a few alterations, the territorial division of Bohemia into chamber of commerce districts survived intact until 1918 and even continued to remain an important administrative organization until 1938. Of some importance was the fact that in 1884 — due to changes in the laws governing elections to the chambers of commerce — the Czech bourgeoisie gained the majority in the senates of the central Bohemian chambers of commerce of Prague (with Pardubitz) and Pilsen.