

## J. M. BAERNREITHER AS A SOCIAL POLITICIAN IN OLD AUSTRIA

*Harald Bachmann*

Joseph Maria Baernreither (1845—1925), the son of a Prague industrialist, was one of the prominent social politicians of the Danube monarchy. After studying law in Prague and Heidelberg, he entered the Austrian judiciary and served as a judge in Prague and Reichenberg. The Reichenberg experience acquainted him with the difficult living conditions and poverty of the factory workers in northern Bohemia. In scientific respects, he threw in his lot with the German academic socialists (*Kathedersozialisten*), becoming, in particular, a disciple of Lujo Brentano. In 1875 he was called to the Ministry of Justice in Vienna and advanced to the rank of ministerial vice-secretary. Baernreither entered politics in 1878 as a representative in the Bohemian Diet. During these years he commenced his studies of the English workingmen's associations which were to provide the foundation for his book on these organizations. As a politician, Baernreither's activity focused mainly on extending social legislation. One of his main successes was a law on labor insurance (a provident-fund law). He attempted to improve the draft law on miners' insurance and was actively engaged in the reform of the industrial courts. The establishment of the labor statistics office in the Ministry of Trade (1898) was his doing, as was the labor advisory council. Baernreither served as trade minister in 1898, and as minister without portfolio in 1916—17, he prepared the way for a welfare ministry that could still be set up before 1918.