

“THE AUTHOR HAS TO BE OF CZECHOSLOVAK
NATIONALITY” – THE CZECH ACADEMY AS SUPPORTER
AND SUPERVISOR OF THE NATIONAL ARTS, 1891–1914

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Until autonomous statehood was reached, the activities of the Academy of the Arts and Sciences in the framework of the Czech national movement had a much stronger political orientation than was and is the case in comparable institutions within established European societies. The driving force, when the Academy was founded in 1890, was the desire to get closer to what was perceived as the level of nations with an established cultural standing. Consequently, Class IV of the Academy was assigned the task of developing Czech Cultural life and propagating its achievements abroad. This task it fulfilled on the whole successfully, even though it was first and foremost a welfare service for prominent artists and their adherents. Its second function however, that of centrally directing the development of the arts in the country, it was able to fulfil but in a political sense. That its support went almost exclusively to proponents of an ethnic or nationalist orientation, has doubtless contributed to national consolidation, but not to narrowing the distance to the leading European nations.