

„TACTICAL OPPORTUNISM“: KAREL KRAMÁŘ'S ADAPTATION OF PALACKÝ'S CONCEPT OF THE BOHEMIAN „STAATSRECHT“¹

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The cardinal political demand of the Czech national movement in the Habsburg Monarchy from 1848 to 1914 was the restoration of the historic Bohemian „Staatsrecht“ (České státní právo) in a form that would establish the legislative and administrative predominance of the Czech majority in the Bohemian Kingdom over the German minority. Pursuit of the „Staatsrecht“ occupied the thoughts and actions of two outstanding Czech politicians: František Palacký from the revolutionary year 1848 until his death in 1876, and Karel Kramář from his political debut in 1889 until his renunciation of Austria in 1914. Four years afterwards, on 14 November 1918, it was Kramář's proud duty, as prime minister of the new Czechoslovak Republic, to declare before the country's National Assembly: „All the chains that have bound us to the dynasty of Habsburg-Lorraine are torn asunder.“²

At first glance, linking Kramář with Palacký on the „Staatsrecht“ issue may seem inappropriate. On one hand, Palacký was the national revivalist, linguist, philosopher, and author of the monumental „Dějiny národu českého“ (History of the Czech Nation) that depicted the ancient struggles, glories, and misfortunes and that set Czech historiography on its distinguished path. His electrifying letter to the „Frankfurter Vorparlament“ of 11 April 1848 and his farseeing essay „Idea státu rakouského“ (The Idea of the Austrian State) of 1865 influenced Czech political thought for decades. Palacký's heroic stature was virtually unchallenged in his lifetime. Honored as „Father of the Nation“ (Otec národa), he was the first Czech bourgeois intellectual to win renown as an Austrian statesman and a European politician.³

Kramář, on the other hand, was an ambitious liberal and nationalistic politician and publicist. He earned academic credentials in law and political economy and was an outstanding orator and debater. He was at ease equally in a crowded Czech meeting hall and in polite society with high Austrian officials. Eager to play the role of national spokesman, he refused to accept any imperial government appointment. Because of his great personal wealth, his opposition to radical extremism, and his willingness to compromise with Vienna for incremental gains, he was satirized as an

¹ A previous version of this essay was presented at the conference „František Palacký: Dějiny a dnešek“ [František Palacký: History and the Present Time] held at Charles University, Prague, 14.–17. June 1998.

² Kramář, Karel: Řeči a projevy [Speeches and Declarations]. Praha 1934, 15.

³ Urban, Otto: Česká společnost 1848–1918 [Czech Society 1848–1918]. Praha 1982, 34.

opportunist by Social Democrats, Czech National Socialists, and liberal intellectuals such as T. G. Masaryk and his partisans. Kramář's fellow Young Czech, Professor Bohumil Němec, aptly characterized him as the nation's scapegoat, upon whom it heaped the blame for its failures and troubles.⁴

These differences between the revered Palacký and the controversial Kramář are considerable; however, on the Bohemian „Staatsrecht“ they shared common ground. After Palacký and F. L. Rieger, Kramář gave it more attention before the First World War than any other Czech politician. His flexibility in using the „Staatsrecht“ program to meet changing circumstances, rather than hewing at it as an inflexible doctrine, seemed to validate charges that he was too cozy with Vienna.

Kramář finessed these criticisms by admitting to a „tactical opportunism“ based on his principles and scholarly research so that his conscience was clear.⁵ This „tactical opportunism“ shaped Kramář's stance toward the „Staatsrecht“. One of the first to notice this was Rieger, Palacký's successor as national spokesman, during Kramář's first election campaign for a Young Czech parliamentary mandate in the winter of 1891. Rieger complained that Kramář „will move heaven and earth to get that mandate, for which he can hardly wait [...]. He promised things that cannot be fulfilled.“ But he conceded that „Dr. Kramář by his studies and travels has obtained the experience necessary for the office of deputy. I only regret that in his candidate's speeches he tells people things that he himself, as an educated man and a lawyer, certainly cannot believe.“⁶

Kramář won his first election convincingly against the Old Czech candidate, who happened to be Rieger's brother-in-law. While he was campaigning he learned, perhaps for the first time, of the intense feeling among the voters in his North Bohemian constituency for the fulfillment of the „Staatsrecht“ demand.

„This was their most serious interest,“ Kramář recalled. „They saw that the nation's resistance was able to bury the punktace (compromise of 1890) and believed that an equally united will of the people could win that which was our undeniable right.“⁷

In his book „The Multinational Empire“ published half a century ago, the American historian from Austria, Robert A. Kann, observed, that „All the great Czech leaders [...] were in a sense disciples of Palacký.“⁸ We may rightly ask, was Kramář one of Palacký's disciples? True, he embraced Palacký's – and Karel Havlíček's – Austroslavism, their quest for the equality of nations in the Austrian Empire, their fears of Pangerman chauvinism and expansionism, their abhorrence of Vienna's bureaucratic centralism, and their rejection of reactionary Russian Panslavism; but

⁴ Němec, Bohumil: „Za dr. Karlem Kramářem“ [After Dr. Karel Kramář]. *Národní listy* 27.5.1937.

⁵ Kramář, Karel: *Paměti* [Memoirs]. Praha 1938, 71.

⁶ Letter of F. L. Rieger to the Board of Trustees of the National (Old Czech) Party in Prague, 23.2.1891. In: *Fond Kramář, Archiv Národního Muzea v Praze*, ANM 2-3 8634.

⁷ Kramář: *Paměti* 270.

⁸ Kann, Robert A.: *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918*. 2 vols., New York, 1950, I, 165.

he was sentimentally attached to Russian society and culture, had an almost blind faith in Russia as protector of the lesser Slav nations and as a counterweight to Germanism, and believed liberal Russian forces would soften tsarist autocracy.⁹

Kramář traveled widely in Eastern and Western Europe. He grasped Palacký's geopolitical insight about the vulnerability of the Bohemian Kingdom and its small Czech population surrounded by populous neighbors; that Bohemia lacked a contiguous outside power that might defend it by reason of related nationality and culture. Like Palacký, he knew the Slavs of the Austrian Empire faced centralizing pressures from the Germans and Magyars that blocked their hopes for self-government. He understood that an even worse fate awaited the Slavs were the empire to disintegrate. He was mindful of Palacký's dramatic warning that the small Slav nations would survive only if a strong bond united them all. The essential artery of this vital association is the Danube. Its central power must never move far from this river if it is to be and remain effective. Clearly, if the Austrian state had not long existed, it would have been in the interests of Europe, indeed of humanity, to have created it.¹⁰

Kramář's expertise in the „Staatsrecht“ came from his studies at universities in Strasbourg, Paris, and Berlin and especially at the Charles-Ferdinand University beginning in 1880. His professors included Leopold Heyrovský, Emil Ott, Antonín Randa, and Matouš Talíř. It was Talíř who certified his degree of JUDr. in April 1884. Thereafter, Kramář with his parents' support devoted many months from 1886 to 1890 conducting research in the Vienna „Hofkammerarchiv“ on the administrative history of the reign of Maria Theresa in preparation for his habilitation and an academic career.

These studies convinced Kramář that the „Staatsrecht“ of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown had not been destroyed after the defeat at Bílá Hora. Rather, the result was purely an internal revolution that did not change the external relations between the Kingdom and other states.¹¹ He defined and emphasized these „external relations“ concisely in this statement:

Firstly, the Bohemian Staatsrecht includes the relationship of three indissolubly united Lands of the Bohemian Crown, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, to the Habsburg dynasty [...]. Secondly, the relationship of the independently sovereign Lands of the Bohemian Crown, in their unity, toward the other Lands of their King and to other states. Thirdly, finally, the public

⁹ Herman, Karel/Sládek, Zdeněk: *Slovanská politika Karla Kramáře* [The Slavonic Policy of Karel Kramář]. Praha 1971, 3–12. — Vyšný, Paul: *Neo-Slavism and the Czechs*. Cambridge 1977, 29–32. — Winters, Stanley B.: „Austroslavism, Panslavism and Russophilism in Czech Political Thought, 1870–1900.“ In: *Intellectual and Social Developments in the Habsburg Empire from Maria Theresa to World War I*. Ed. Stanley B. Winters and Joseph Held. Boulder CO 1975, 175–202, here 183–187.

¹⁰ *Spisy drobné Františka Palackého* [Minor writings of František Palacký]. Vol. I, Ed. Bohuš Rieger. Praha 1898, 20.

¹¹ Kramář, Karel: *Das böhmische Staatsrecht*. Wien 1896, 9. Kramář originally published this study at the invitation of the Viennese weekly „Zeit“. A Czech translation as „České státní právo“ appeared later that year with a new introduction. A second Czech edition was published in 1914 with the two previous introductions and a third one by Kramář dated May 1914.

and constitutional law of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown, the competency of the Diets and the administration in the Lands, and the rights of the Crown with respect to the Estates in legislation and administration.¹²

Kramář wrote this classic definition in his brochure „Das böhmische Staatsrecht“ in 1896 and often referred to the „Staatsrecht“ in speeches in parliament and in articles.¹³ In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Palacký had inveighed against the Austrian Germans and Magyars after Czech hopes of Bohemian autonomy were dashed by the „Ausgleich“ of 1867 and the repeal of the Fundamental Articles in 1871.¹⁴ With the celebration of the centennial of Palacký's birth imminent, Kramář responded in Palacký's spirit to a Hungarian Liberal politician who defended Dualism as preserving the integrity of the Empire against a „Slavonic danger“ inherent in a federalized Empire with a Slav majority population.¹⁵ The Slavs only want equal rights for all, with freedom to pursue their cultural aspirations as voiced by Palacký, its most brilliant representative, and an end to a germanizing centralism that favors the domination of one group over others, he wrote.¹⁶

In 1876, Eduard Grégr, the co-founder of the Young Czech party, had deflated the „Staatsrecht“ program of the Old Czech party as worthless without the power to enforce it.¹⁷ Kramář's emphasis upon the „Staatsrecht“ was an attempt to refocus the attention of the Young Czechs and the budding Czech political parties at the turn of the century on the legal and historical evidence in its favor. His concept rested on several suppositions derived from his research in Vienna. One was that the internal arrangements of a state are fluid and susceptible to outside events. In the case of the medieval Bohemian Estates, that event was their decisive defeat by an absolute monarch. But 1620 did not signify the loss of Bohemia's autonomy or its „Staatsrecht“, according to Kramář. As Josef Kalousek had already observed, the Renewed Land Ordinance of 1627 did not break the continuity of the „Staatsrecht“. The sovereignty of the Bohemian Crown had remained intact through the act of coronation, which guaranteed the unity and integrity of the state and obligated the King not to cede any territory from it. Kalousek drew the conclusion that the coronation was the decisive guarantee of the „Staatsrecht“, its safeguard against absolutism, and had conserved the continuity of the historical rights of the Bohemian Crown despite all subsequent events.¹⁸

¹² Ibidem 5.

¹³ E.g., see Haus der Abgeordneten, 400. Sitzung der XVIII. Session, 28. März 1906, 35767–35769.

¹⁴ Zacek; Joseph F. Palacký's Politics: The Second Phase. *Canadian Slavic Studies* 5/2 (1971) 51–69, here 58–59.

¹⁵ Kramář, Karel: *Národnost v Uhrách a Rakousko* [Nationality in Hungary and Austria]. *Česká revue* 2 (1898) 1083–1086, 1153–1160.

¹⁶ Ibidem 1159–1160.

¹⁷ Grégr, Eduard: *Naše politika. Otevřený list panu dr. F. L. Riegrovi* [Our Politics. An Open Letter to Dr. F. L. Rieger]. Praha 1876, 10.

¹⁸ Kalousek, Josef: *České státní právo. Historicky výkládá* [The Bohemian State-Law. Historically Explained]. Praha 1871, 586–591. – Idem: *Vyd. druhé, místy opravené* [Second corrected edition]. Praha 1892, 553–560.

Accepting Kalousek's conclusion, Kramář set forth another supposition: that the administrative connections of the Bohemian Lands to the other Habsburg Lands were specifically represented by the Bohemian Court Chancellery.¹⁹ Hence the external relations of the Bohemian Lands remained continuously intact throughout the 17th century. The Bohemian Estates, while lacking legislative authority „in the modern sense,“ served as reservoirs of Bohemian sovereignty. Nothing regarding the integrity of the Bohemian Lands could be changed without their approval.²⁰ As evidence, he cited their approval of the Pragmatic Sanction of Charles VI in 1720 and other acts of the early 18th century.²¹

Kramář's third supposition was that the real transformation in the existence of the Bohemian Kingdom occurred on 1 May 1749, when Maria Theresa abolished the separate Bohemian and Austrian Court Chancelleries and their bureaucracies. In their place, she created a new central institution, the „Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus“, whose responsibility was the control of the political administration and part of the financial administration, especially the direct taxes.²² At the same time, she established a Supreme Court in Vienna to hear all appeals from provincial courts in the Bohemian and Austrian Lands.

The final blow, according to Kramář, came in 1762, when the „Directorium“ was suppressed and political and fiscal responsibilities were divided. A new Bohemian-Austrian Court Chancellery was created to handle political matters and taxation, while finances were assigned to the Court Treasury. Kramář wrote about these changes: „In the prevailing view [...] Maria Theresa fashioned order and enlightenment out of chaos and ruin,“ but actually her reforms brought destruction and evil.²³ He denounced the abolition of the Bohemian Court Chancellery as „a violation of the law of such force that the Battle of the White Mountain cannot compare with it.“²⁴ Her despicable act was the root cause of the oppressive centralization of power in Vienna that Palacký and other Czech leaders have often railed against. Nevertheless, Kramář insisted, the three Bohemian Lands remained a legal unity, and the „stipulated relationship“ between the Kingdom and the dynasty remained as fixed and unchanging element in the Bohemian „Staatsrecht“. ²⁵

¹⁹ Kramář: Paměti 363. Kramář said this in a speech in parliament on 22. November 1892, reprinted in his memoirs.

²⁰ Kramář: Das böhmische Staatsrecht 9. – On the unbroken continuity of the historic Staatsrecht in certain respects, see also Hassenpflug, Eila: Die böhmische Adelsnation als Repräsentantin des Königreichs Böhmen von der Inkraftsetzung der Verneuernten Landesordnung bis zum Regierungsantritt Maria Theresias. Bohemia 15 (1974) 71–90.

²¹ Kramář, Karel: České státní právo a Česká strana lidová [The Bohemian State-Law and the Czech People's Party]. Česká revue 2 (1899) 1096. This essay is a detailed response and rejection of T. G. Masaryk's natural law theory of political rights.

²² Idem: Das böhmische Staatsrecht 17. Idem: České státní právo. Druhé vydání [The Bohemian State-Law. 2nd ed.]. Praha 1914, 32.

²³ Idem: Z doby předteresiánské [From the pre-Theresian Era]. Athenaeum 9 (1892) 198. – Idem: Das böhmische Staatsrecht 21.

²⁴ Ibidem 18. Cf. – Kramář: Paměti 69.

²⁵ Idem: Das böhmische Staatsrecht 34.

Kramář was not a man given to tilting at windmills, at least not in this phase of his career, when his star was ascending in Czech and Austrian politics. He acknowledged that „the association of the Bohemian and Austrian Lands since 1749 has created conditions that cannot be denied or abolished.“²⁶ One of these conditions was the „common interests“ of the Empire. From the standpoint of the „Staatsrecht“ there were no „common interests“, but from the standpoints of reasonableness and practicality these interests were inescapable facts. Kramář thus was able to justify his acceptance of Austria and propose her reform much as Palacký had done in the Kremsier (Kroměříž) draft constitution of March 1849. Although they spoke out separated by half a century, the *conditio sine qua non* for both men was that Austria must be reorganized to provide equality and autonomy for her nationalities. This would strengthen her internally so as to shield the nationalities against Germanization, Russification, and other threats to their individual existence and thereby gain their unshakeable loyalty.

Kramář invoked his research findings about the „Staatsrecht“ many times after the publication of his brochure of 1896. The contemporary legal scholar Valentin Urfus judged that „despite all the strength which he devoted to the topic, it was only an isolated episode in the life of a professional politician.“²⁷ Indeed, although Kramář never went beyond his initial research and suppositions and exploited them for his political agenda, his emphasis on the subject helped keep it alive as a public issue. No other Czech writer focused so intensely on the „Staatsrecht“ before 1914 except the historians of law Bohumil Baxa and Jan Kapras.²⁸ Kramář is credited with going beyond Palacký's „Idea státu rakouského“ by means of „a new twist“ (*eine neue Wendung*) in advancing a type of nullification theory that, in one scholar's opinion, later formed the ideological basis on which T. G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš operated during the war.²⁹

References to Palacký in Kramář's writings are usually brief and sometimes critical. He believed that although Palacký's opinion of the „Staatsrecht“ in 1848 differed from the one he later held, this did not diminish the rights of the Bohemian

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Urfus, Valentin: K vzájemnému poměru českého státoprávního programu a předbřeznové stavovské opozice [On the Mutual Relations of the Czech State-Law Program and the pre-March Estates Opposition]. *Právněhistorické studie* 13 (1967), 85–103, here 86.

²⁸ Baxa, Bohumil: K dějinám veřejného práva zemí koruny české [History of the Public Law in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown]. Praha 1906. – Kapras, Jan: Právní dějiny zemí koruny české [Legal History of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown]. Vol. 1. Praha 1913.

²⁹ Rabl, Kurt: ‚Historisches Staatsrecht‘ und Selbstbestimmungsrecht bei der Staatsgründung der Tschechoslowakei 1918/1919. In: *Das böhmische Staatsrecht in den deutsch-tschechischen Auseinandersetzungen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Hrsg. v. Ernst Birke und Kurt Oberdorffer. Marburg 1960, 78–99, here 86–87. – However, Richard Georg Plaschka makes no mention of Kramář. He sees Masaryk as accepting Palacký's „foundations“ while „using questionable methodological procedures“ to formulate definite theses that „helped win the ideological battle of the first world war.“ Plaschka: *The Political Significance of Frantisek Palacky*. *Journal of Contemporary History* 8/3 (1973) 35–55, here 54.

Crown as Kramář saw them. He condemned the „failed passive resistance“ of the 1860s and 1870s, in which Palacký and Rieger played significant roles, as having „unduly suppressed the spiritual horizon“ of Czech politics.³⁰ Kramář sympathized with Palacký's fears of a universal Russian empire, when Palacký and a Czech delegation encountered conservative, aggressive Russian nationalism in Moscow in 1867. He endorsed Palacký's rejection of Great Russian chauvinism and, with him and Havlíček, he wanted the Czechs to preserve their language, individuality, and historic traditions. Kramář, however, always optimistically foreseeing a reformed Russia, wished that Palacký had lived long enough to see Russia's liberation of the Balkan Slavs in 1876 and thus might have softened his skepticism over her intentions.³¹

At Kroměříž in January 1849, Palacký had proposed a federal restructuring of the Austrian Empire by dividing it into eight ethnographically based provinces. In 1890, Kramář offered his own plan, prudently confined to the Cisleithanian portion of the Empire. He proposed to end Vienna's bureaucratic centralism by devolving sovereign legislative and administrative functions upon each of four territories defined by their geographic, national, economic, and historical affinities. Common imperial functions such as defense and foreign relations would remain with Vienna, but patriarchal absolutism would disappear.

Out of this new federal configuration, with equal rights for all nationalities, Kramář suggested, there would develop loyalty to a renewed Austria among its diverse peoples. One of the four territorial units would be Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. He excluded Slovakia, or Upper Hungary, whereas Palacký's imperial vision had grouped Slovakia with the Bohemian Lands in one of his eight proposed provinces. In Kramář's view, the ending of centralism would open the way for balanced negotiations for a Czech-German compromise in Bohemia and would restore the efficacy of the ancient „Staatsrecht“, to be expanded in the direction of democracy.³² For a man who had not yet celebrated his thirtieth birthday, this was a bold and noble conception.

By 1906 Kramář had become thoroughly seasoned in the rough and tumble of politics in Vienna and Prague. His frank and controversial „Poznámky o České politice“ (Notes on Czech Politics) attacked the nation's past and present political leadership, not sparing himself. His indirect references to Palacký and the decades of Old Czech predominance appear in this passage:

Ultimately, each of us is the creator of his own fate. Historical justice is nothing other than – the logic of history. We have made so many mistakes, perhaps it is advisable that it is better in the end that we look to the blame for our failures, sufferings, and injuries in ourselves alone – rather than in the injustice of others.

³⁰ Kramář: Paměti 86. – Idem: České státní právo a Česká strana lidové 1097–1098.

³¹ Idem: Paměti 307–308. – Františka Palackého Spisy drobné 1, 375. – Zacek: Palacký's Politics: The Second Phase 51–69, gives the context of Palacký's Slavism of the 1860s.

³² Kramář, Karel: Federativné Rakousko. Čas 4 (1890) 699. – Havránek, Jan: Zrození politika [Birth of a Politician]. Dějiny a současnost 3 (1998), 18–21, here 21 gives Palacký's plan. – See also Kořálka, Jiří: František Palacký (1798–1876) Životopis [Biography]. Praha 1998, 313–314.

We lost the Staatsrecht struggle because of the uncertainty and vagueness of what we wanted, wrongly estimating power relations, ignoring events that we did not expect and did not wish to see, and that turned out otherwise than we wanted; incorrectly appraising our own strength, and finally our stubbornness and arrogance, which often prevented us from taking advantage of repeated opportunities offered us in parliament because they did not correspond to the theoretical absolutism of our Staatsrecht convictions – not the wrongs of our opponents. They simply exploited the full measure of our mistakes.³³

Kramář's use of „we“ and „our“ in his indictments in this passage softens his severe rebuke of Palacký and Rieger for their policy of passive resistance that led the nation „through the desert“ for two decades in the 19th century; however, as his „Poznámky“ elsewhere discloses, he himself and his Young Czechs also are subjects of his sharp self-criticism.³⁴

On major public occasions in 1909 and 1912, Kramář expounded his „Staatsrecht“ concept as the program for the nation to follow, even as the prospects for winning any portion of it in those years were remote. On 21 November 1909, he discussed national policy before an audience of over 2000 under the auspices of the Young Czech Student Organization. His speech blended a detailed exposition of the „Staatsrecht“ idea with an analysis of political trends from a Young Czech perspective. He chided Palacký and the men of 1848 for not pressing the „Staatsrecht“ demand in the year of revolution, while later accepting its reactionary form under the leadership of the Bohemian feudal nobility. Such mismanaged struggles, he claimed, only reinforced Viennese centralism, the negation of the „Staatsrecht“.³⁵ Basically, Kramář said nothing he had not said before, but the partisan audience apparently loved it because the printed text is sprinkled with exclamations such as „Výborně!“ (excellent) and „Hlučný potlesk!“ (great applause).

Kramář's most substantial and favorable commentary linking Palacký with the „Staatsrecht“ program occurred on 1 July 1912, when the huge monument honoring the Father of the Nation was unveiled in a plaza named after him along the Vltava. Kramář was chosen as the main speaker by the Young Czech-dominated Prague Municipal Council. The unveiling capped a week of celebratory events that attracted many visitors to the city.³⁶

³³ Kramář, Karel: Úvod [Introduction]. In: Poznámky k české politice [Notes on Czech Politics]. Praha 1906, 5–7. – Idem: Anmerkungen zur böhmischen Politik. Transl. Josef Penížek, Wien, 1906, 3–4 contains a shorter and quite different Introduction from the one in the Czech edition.

³⁴ Negative comments on Kramář's Poznámky are the pseudonymous: Č.: Zpověď dra Kramáře [The Confession of Dr. Kramář]. Naše doba 13 (1906) 561–569. – Masaryk, T. G.: Politická situace. Poznámky ku poznámkám [The Political Situation. Notes about Notes]. Praha 1906. – Masaryk's differences with Kramář and other adherents of the historical Staatsrecht program are presented in: Kučera, Martin: Masarykova státoprávní polemika počátku století [Masaryk's Staatsrecht Polemic at the Beginning of the Century]. Masarykův sborník 9 (1993–1995) 71–84.

³⁵ Kramář, Karel: O české politice [About Czech Politics]. Praha 1909, 5.

³⁶ For the events that led up to the Palacký commemoration see Urban: Česká společnost 531–552, and Tobolka, Zdeněk: Politické dějiny československého národa od r. 1848 až do dnešní doby [Political History of the Czechoslovak nation from 1848 to the present]. Vol. 3/2, 1891–1914. Praha 1936, 541–579. – For the Slavonic aspects of the dedication, see Vyšný: Neo-Slavism and the Czechs 213–214. – On the origin of the idea of a monument

Kramář used the occasion to glorify Palacký as a historian, an organizer, a national revivalist, and above all a politician. Even in his most difficult moments, Kramář said, the great man did not despair. When the „Ausgleich“ with Hungary loomed, Palacký proclaimed his immortal maxim, „We existed before Austria, and we shall exist after it!“ Kramář hailed this as „the sigh of a giant, defeated, but unbroken and unconquerable.“³⁷

Kramář lauded Palacký for his prophetic insights, his faith in the nation, his steadfastness, and his „democratism.“ He noted that when Palacký began his political activity, the validity of the „Staatsrecht“ was not in question. A crowned King of Bohemia was sitting on the throne and it would have been troublesome for Austria to have cancelled the ancient compact. Palacký's political goal, however, was not maintenance of the status quo but restoration of the rights of the Czech nation based on full equal rights within the Empire. He kept this goal even after he accepted Baron Jozsef Eötvös's theory of historico-political entities. Eötvös conceived a solution to Austria's reorganization not as a federalized state but as a unitary decentralized state, whereby the state would grant autonomy in all matters „to the Lands, except those strictly relating to affairs common to all.“³⁸

Palacký, however, was not happy with this theory, according to Kramář, even when he turned to it after his agreement with the Czech nobility. Kramář quoted him as saying sadly, „But the principle of national equal rights will therefore meet even greater difficulties in its practical implementation [...] and its execution still depends, so to say, on the existence or non-existence of Austria as a united and powerful empire.“³⁹

„How prophetically Palacký saw the future!“ Kramář declared:

His national autonomy was, and certainly is, under the given conditions impossible [...] but the idea itself, in connection with the historical constitutional principles of the empire, is the only salvationist idea for Austria in the future [...]. There is no other way by than autonomy [...] so long as it does not endanger the unity of the Land and the mutual political, economic, and social interests of the whole Kingdom.⁴⁰

Kramář exhorted his hearers that Palacký's program remained the nation's program, the Czech political program – „but we must go on a different road“ because

dedicated to Palacký, its design, and Kramář's speech, see Hojda, Zdeněk/Pokorný, Jiří: Pomníky a zapomínky [Monuments and Forgotten Monuments]. Praha 1996, 92–104.

³⁷ Palacký, František: Idea státu rakouského [The idea of the Austrian State]. In: Spisy drobné Františka Palackého. Vol. 1, 209–267, here 266. – Kramář, Karel: Řeč posl. Dra. Kramáře při odhalení pomníku F. Palackého dne 1. července 1912 o 11. hod. dopolední [Speech of Dr. Kramář on the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Monument to F. Palacký on 1 July 1912 about 11:00 in the Morning]. Národní listy 1.7.1912. – The author has also worked from an unnumbered but paginated typescript of the speech under the title given above in Fond Kramář ANM. Kramář's remark about Palacký as „a giant, defeated“ and other parts of his speech were called „humiliating“ by Pokroková revue 8 (1912) 336.

³⁸ Kann: The Multinational Empire, Vol. 2, 96.

³⁹ Fond Kramář ANM typescript Řeč posl. Dra. Kramáře, 6. Portions of Kramář's speech are also given in Hojda/Pokorný: Pomníky a zapomínky 101–103.

⁴⁰ Fond Kramář ANM typescript Řeč posl. Dra. Kramáře, 6. In this passage, Palacký referred to autonomy for Slovakia, whose strivings he came to appreciate while he studied at Preßburg (Bratislava).

in Palacký's day „everything was being reborn; it was possible to reach our goal in one blow.“ The „Staatsrecht“ policy was comprehensible, and in his time the „invincible life force of the nation“ was awakening.⁴¹

Kramář admitted that „today conditions are different. Unfortunately they have stabilized against us in the constitutional sense, and there is no hope of changing all at once the structure of Austria in the sense of the historical rights of our Kingdom.“⁴² With this admission, Kramář shifted the tenor of his speech toward contemporary politics, an opportunity he could not resist. He proclaimed:

Our policy must always be the Staatsrecht, no matter what roads lead to it, even the roads of the most opportunistic politics of Vienna. Under the given circumstances, we are forced into the policy of patience, persistence, and diligent work. Even in that, Palacký will be our example. Let us be as persistent as granite, as Palacký was; let us have his iron diligence, his foremost feature, and never, ever despair. We will not go as straight as he did but we will go forward, so that we can say with pride, in front of his monument, that we go toward the goals that he laid out for us. We want to secure the legislative and administrative independence of the Czech Kingdom, but just as he, in the Empire's interest and our own, we too are willing to give the Empire what it needs to be powerful and strong externally and also to support our expansive economic life.⁴³

The speech was an outstanding example of Kramář's use of „tactical opportunism“, whereby he bent principles to practical necessity.⁴⁴ He transformed his past condemnations of Palacký's obstinacy and passive resistance into praise for his persistence and farsightedness. Under a torrent of effusions and admiration, he elevated Palacký to all but sainthood. Except for grumbling from the radical and nationalist left, the speech met with general approval. Essentially, Kramář had skillfully placed Palacký's mantle over his Young Czech Party's „positive policy“, the „policy of the free hand“, and the policy of winning incremental benefits through artful persuasion and timely compromises with the decision-makers in Vienna, and, he still hoped, through a settlement with the German parties in Bohemia.

Finally, we return to the statement above by Robert Kann, that „All the great Czech leaders [...] were in a sense disciples of Palacký.“⁴⁵ On the question of the Bohemian „Staatsrecht“, does Kramář belong among Palacký's disciples? The word „disciple“ (Jünger, učedník) is defined as a follower with blind faith in his master and usually zealous to spread his teachings. Kramář preached Palacký's federalism and Austroslavism; he recognized the Czech nation's need for Austria in order to survive Europe's Great Power „Realpolitik“ and growing national chauvinism, but he adapt-

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibidem 8. – In 1912, when Kramář admitted the dim prospects for realizing the Staatsrecht program, the platform of every major political party in the Bohemian Kingdom (except the Czechoslovak Social Democrats) included the demand for fulfilling the Staatsrecht. Heidler, Jan: České politické strany v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku [Czech political parties in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia]. Praha 1914.

⁴³ Ibidem – Kramář: Řeč posl. Dra. Kramáře 8.

⁴⁴ By defending Palacký's policy toward Vienna, Kramář was criticized for injecting a partisan note in his speech, because Eduard Grégr had attacked that policy in his speech at Kutná Hora in 1883. Hojda/Pokorný: Pomníky a zapomínky 103. – Grégr was a steadfast critic of his fellow Young Czech Kramář's use of „tactical opportunism“.

⁴⁵ See note 8 supra and the text for Kann's original word usage.

ed Palacký's legacy flexibly and selectively under greatly changed conditions. Hence, Kramář was not a true disciple. Instead, as a freethinker, an exponent of the spoken and written word, a Slav while a Czech above all, and the first modern professional Czech politician, he was closer to Havlíček than to Palacký,⁴⁶ but Palacký's influence on him was undeniable.

In the revised German-language edition of Robert Kann's book on the nationality question and empire reform, the author changed the word „disciple“ to „Schüler“ (pupil).⁴⁷ One can agree with that. Like any intelligent pupil, Kramář studied Palacký's writings and career, but used his own judgement about which of Palacký's teachings to accept as his own.

The supreme lesson that Kramář learned from Palacký concerned the relationship between Austria and the Bohemian Kingdom embodied in the „Staatsrecht“. Both men accepted Austria's lordship over the Bohemian Lands, but only so long as she offered hope of respecting the „Staatsrecht“ and granting the Czechs full rights equal to those enjoyed by her other nationalities, especially the Germans and Magyars.

If Austria ever were to shatter this hope, Kramář, like Palacký, was prepared to abandon her, and in 1914 he did so. His change of heart had secretly begun before the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand on 28 June.⁴⁸ A week later, he publicly condemned political murder and blamed the death on the unfortunate policies of Vienna and Budapest. He was the only Czech politician to speak so openly. But he also rejected a hostile policy toward Austria as fully compatible with primary loyalty to the Czech and Slav causes. „We do not desire to leave Austria“, he said.⁴⁹ The contradiction between his faith in Russia and Slavdom and his Austro-slavism was soon put to a final test. On 23 July, Austria declared war on Serbia, and on 6 August she supported Germany in the general war under the terms of the Dual Alliance, which Kramář had long opposed.

Kramář was the sole Czech leader to react immediately and publicly to the outbreak of the European war on 4 August. In an article in the Young Czech organ, the „Národní listy“, he prophesied a catastrophic conflict whose end no one could foresee and that would transform the map of Europe. He rallied his countrymen with hopeful words: „Our future lies in ourselves! If we do not destroy ourselves, nobody can annihilate us!“⁵⁰ His faith in the nation opened the way for a thoroughgoing change in the public's attitude toward Austria and with it an end to the remaining illusions of fulfilling the Bohemian „Staatsrecht“ within Austria and on Austria's terms.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Proces Dra Kramáře a jeho přátel [The Trial of Dr. Kramář and his Friends]. Ed. Zdeněk V. Tobolka. Vol. 2, Praha 1918, 10, 101–103.

⁴⁷ Kann, Robert A.: Die Nationalitätenprobleme der Habsburgermonarchie. 2. erw. Aufl., Bd. 1: Das Reich und die Völker. Graz-Köln 1964, 162.

⁴⁸ Paulová, Milada: Dějiny Maffie. Odboj Čechů a Jihoslovanů za světové války 1914–1918 [The History of „Maffia“. The Resistance of the Czechs and South Slavs during the World War 1914–1918]. Praha 1937, Vol. 1, 55–61.

⁴⁹ Tobolka: Politické dějiny. Vol. 4, 48.

⁵⁰ Kramář, Karel: Světová válka [The World War]. Národní listy 4. 8. 1914.

⁵¹ Paulová: Dějiny Maffie, Vol. 1, 88.