

VITAL PROBLEMS OF AUSTRIA BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR—THE FORM OF STATE AND WAR POLICY

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After the *Ausgleich* of 1867 the opposition against Dualism developed so strongly that even conservative circles were pessimistic about the viability of the Danube monarchy. Nationalism removed the multi-national state's very basis for existence; moreover, the social development of the monarchy did not correspond to the social structure of the modern Western democracies. The strength of the Austrian state lay in its bureaucracy, whose merits were still generally recognized up to the time of the Taaffe ministry. All attempts to prevent the dismemberment of Austria and to appease the nations of Austria by means of a settlement on a bureaucratic foundation were thwarted by the dynamics of nationalism as well as by the structural transformation of Austria in an age of industrial revolution. The Dualist

system of government was an inadequate basis for conducting the policy of *Ausgleich*. What is more, except for the Austrian Social Democracy, there was no supranational political party. The predominance of the Germans in the state could only be maintained for a certain period of time by means of the system of election by socioeconomic classes (*Zensuswahlrecht*). The language question as well as the controversies over the recognition of national demands were an expression of irreconcilable bourgeois ideologies.

The erroneous policy of the bourgeois nationalists was also manifest in their sociopolitical efforts, which were frequently directed toward securing the national property. Only personalities with the stature of a Joseph Maria Baernreither or a Joseph Redlich were able to gain deeper insight into the importance of social policy as a factor of integration. They were, however, forced to recognize that the leading strata of the pseudo-constitutional system were opposed to any broad reform.

From the 1890's on Czech and South Slav national politics were oriented toward the models of the Western democracies and established close ties with their leading personalities. Masaryk, Kramář and the South Slav politicians acquired an ever greater international reputation. Already at the turn of the century, Masaryk was determined to put an end to the existence of Austria (Cisleithania), since the Dualist form of state stood in the way of any realization of the Bohemian *Staatsrecht*. The South Slav question was likewise coming to represent an ever-growing threat to the monarchy.

Nevertheless, the reform politicians of Austria still hoped for a solution of all outstanding questions — above all the Bohemian — through a skillfully executed *octroi*. Minister Baernreither, as a member of the Count Clam-Martinic ministry worked out an *octroi* designed to offer a last-minute solution for the Bohemian question on the basis of language equality. The world-wide political convulsions of the year 1917 also doomed this attempt to failure.