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THE CZECH AGRARIAN PARTY, 1899-1914:
A STUDY OF NATIONAL AND ECONOMIC AGITATION
IN THE HABSBURG MONARCHY

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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1974

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During the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-38), the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party under the direction of Antonín Švehla was one of the leading political parties. While it was not the strongest party, its solid rural support and sound leadership enabled it to play a vital role in organizing the coalition governments of the interwar period. This paper will examine the origins of that party in the period before the outbreak of World War I. It will focus on the founding of the Czech Agrarian Party in Bohemia and analyze its attempts to build a political program combining national and economic demands.

In the years immediately before 1914 the Czech Agrarian Party had already begun to play an increasingly influential role in imperial and provincial politics. This was so partly because the political and economic developments of the previous half-century had created a favorable climate for a dynamic peasant movement. From its formation in 1899 until the outbreak of World War I, the
Czech Agrarian Party worked diligently and successfully to unite Czech peasants and to gain political influence for them. In doing this the Czech Agrarian Party sought to combine its economic program with adherence to traditional Czech national demands, envisioning the real strength of Czechs to lie in a healthy rural class living in an autonomous Bohemia. It achieved impressive electoral successes within a decade of the party's founding. In the 1907 elections to the Reichsrat and Zemský sněm, the Czech Agrarian Party became the largest Czech political party in these two legislative bodies.

Bohemia was experiencing some of its most tumultuous years when the Czech Agrarian Party was organizing and building. The two decades prior to the outbreak of World War I were ones of increasing national rivalry between Czechs and Germans. Germans were seeking to preserve their hegemony in Bohemia while Czechs were demanding autonomy in the belief that it would advance their national development. Bohemia was a microcosm of the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire where the national issues separating Slavs and Germans were fomenting national strife. Simultaneously, with its attempts to cope with national disunity, the Habsburg imperial government was trying to fulfill its great power role in European diplomacy.

Czech politics during these years was becoming increasingly fractionalized. The years of national solidarity in the nineteenth century under the banners of the Old Czech Party and later the Young Czech Party was ending. The twentieth century witnessed the
rise of many Czech political parties from Social Democrats to agrarians, each seeking to achieve certain national, political, and economic goals. On the left stood the Social Democrats and their worker constituency. On the right were the Czech clericals and Old Czechs representing the interests of the Roman Catholic Church and the conservative Czech upper classes. Taking a middle course were the bourgeois nationalist parties such as the Young Czechs and Czech Progressives who competed for the votes of the urban middle classes. Ideologically close to the bourgeois nationalist parties were the Czech agrarians who were attempting to organize the peasantry.

The Social Democrats, bourgeois nationalists, and agrarians won the loyalty of the vast majority of Czech voters in the years before the outbreak of World War I. The bourgeois nationalists stressed national autonomy in their programs while the Social Democrats emphasized economic advancement and reform. It was left to the agrarians to adroitly combine national beliefs, associated previously with bourgeois parties, and an economic orientation, centered on a particular class's needs, into one program. They provided their supporters with a program that satisfied their desire to be a part of a nation and that promised to make their future more secure materially.

Within Eastern Europe the Czech Agrarian Party of the pre-1914 era was a forerunner of the peasantist parties of the interwar
The Czech Agrarian Party was the first peasantist party formed in Eastern Europe, and presented a political alternative to farmers heretofore influenced by populism. Whereas populism had been largely a vague ideology, peasantism became a political reform movement emphasizing the state's or nation's need for the rural class.

Peasantism, as discussed in this paper, is defined by the following characteristics: 1) it takes as its social model the individual peasant and proposes to remake society and the nation by using and emphasizing peasant qualities; 2) it combines a social-economic program with nationalistic demands; 3) it believes that peasants are entitled to a share of the political leadership of society and to achieve this goal forms a political party. This paper will attempt to indicate that the Czech Agrarian Party developed its raison d'être according to these characteristics rather than relying upon a vague populist ideology.

1The Croat Peasant Party and the Polish Peasant Party were the only other major peasantist parties founded in that area before 1914. The Croat Peasant Party was founded in 1905. See Stjepan Gazi, "Beginning of the Croatian Peasant Party: A Historico-Political Study," Journal of Croatian Studies, III-IV(1962-63), 19-32. The development of the Polish Peasant Party is less precise, owing to its populist origins. A Catholic-Populist Party was formed in 1889, and later in 1895 the Polish Peasant Party was formed. Bolesław Wysłouch, one of the leading organizers, was a populist whose beliefs evolved toward a peasantist outlook. The Polish Peasant Party did not have a peasantist program until 1903. See Peter Brock, "Bolesław Wysłouch, Founder of the Polish Peasant Party," The Slavonic and East European Review, XXX(1951), 139-63.

Bohemia served as fertile ground for the formation of a peasantist movement. It was the first area of Eastern Europe to face the growth of industry—a fact which forced Czech peasants earlier than others to evaluate their role in a changing society. At the same time the lack of a communal tradition in Bohemia eliminated the populist alternative for these peasants. By the late 1890's Czech middle class farmers realized that if they were to cope with the new industrial society, their class needed a political party to represent their interests. Moreover, since the level of education even in rural Bohemia was high, a peasant political party could lobby effectively for support. Numerous provincial and local papers disseminated the party's position to a literate and receptive audience.

Concurrent with the changing economic environment, Czech farmers found themselves situated in the multi-national Habsburg Empire where a variety of national and social interest groups were attempting to promote their programs through the imperial and provincial legislative institutions. In this parliamentary environment Czech peasantism was able to find an atmosphere conducive to the formation of a political party and also an arena where the

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party might gain political experience.

In brief, the Czech Agrarian Party became the first peasantist party of Eastern Europe because the early impact of industrialization in Bohemia forced farmers to protect their role in society; because the rural leadership consisted of an educated middle class nurtured in a liberal democratic tradition that stressed orderly change; and because it existed in a political environment that was increasingly parliamentary.

The party's emphasis on attaining political power within the Habsburg Empire indicated its peasantist outlook. Czech agrarians were content to work for rural interests within the framework of the Austrian state and never supported the populist call for the destruction of the state and its replacement with a new communal society. However, in spite of the Czech Agrarian Party's willingness to work within Austria's political institutions, it continued to support Czech national demands for greater autonomy within the Habsburg Empire, but never at the expense of destroying that Empire.

In the years following 1899 the Czech Agrarian Party organized over 2,000 rural cooperatives, achieved legislation regulating cartels, formed relief organizations to help areas stricken by natural disasters, and fought for legislation that would increase the number of Czechs hired in governmental agencies.

4 For the party's economic accomplishments see Dr. O. Frankenberger and Dr. J.O. Kubiček, Antonín Svehla v dějinách československé strany agrární (Praha: Novina, 1931), pp. 277-92, 369-85.
Moreover, combined with its economic goals the party also provided Czech peasants with a national program that encouraged peasants to take pride in their social class and national heritage.

The role of the Czech Agrarian Party in the pre-World War I period has been subject to differing interpretations. In the First Czechoslovak Republic agrarian intellectuals writing and reminiscing about the party's origins viewed the party as a peasant one promoting rural political and economic interests as well as leading in the struggle for Czech national autonomy. They supported the view that the party was a middle force between workers' socialism and industrial capitalism. Also they regarded the agrarian leader, Antonín Švehla, as one of the great politicians and statesmen of Eastern Europe. Two publications that are representative of this view are Dr. O. Frankenberger's and Dr. J.O. Kubíček's, Antonín Švehla v dějinách československé strany agrární (1931), and Antonín Palach's, Antonín Švehla: Selský vůdce a budovatel státu (1934).

After 1948 Czech communist historians writing about the Czech Agrarian Party have interpreted the party's role differently. They regard the Czech Agrarian Party as a typical bourgeois nationalist party of the pre-1914 period. They feel the party was controlled by middle class farmers who were using the support of small farmers to promote their own self-interest. Post-World War II studies of agrarian politics have concentrated on the interwar period; but two works do focus on party development before 1914. They are Eduard Kučera's and Zdeňka Kučerová's,
O agrárníkův stát (1955), and J. César's and B. Černý's article "O ideologii československé agrarismu" in Československý časopis historický (1959). Both the agrarian and the communist interpretations reflect some obvious ideological biases.
CHAPTER I

THE AGRARIAN MOVEMENT, 1848-1896

Revolution erupted in the Habsburg Empire in March, 1848, destroying the conservative political structure Prince Metternich had labored to construct in the years following Napoleon's defeat in 1815. Prince Metternich fled shortly after the revolution began, leaving power in the hands of the feeble-minded Emperor Ferdinand. Taking advantage of revolutionary unrest various classes and political and national interest groups began to exploit the situation in order to secure political and economic advantages that had been unobtainable under Metternich's rule. Liberals agitated for constitutional and legal reforms, nationalists demanded greater recognition and national autonomy within the Habsburg state, and peasants of the various nationalities called for an end to feudal obligations.

One of the national-social groups attempting to gain from the events of 1848 was the Czech peasant class. Above all they wanted to end the robot and other vestiges of the feudal system which required a peasant to compensate his noble landlord by either cultivating his estate or making monetary payments or payments in
kind for the privilege of tilling the soil. As the revolutionary atmosphere increased in the cities, the aristocracy became concerned about its own security in the countryside. Consequently, Czech peasants, demanding improvements in their economic and social situation, found an unexpected benefactor in the Bohemian nobility. Great Bohemian noble landowners, hoping to avert provincial strife, urged Emperor Ferdinand to free the peasants from their feudal obligations, which the latter duly did on March 28, 1848. In the summer of that year the Austrian Parliament confirmed this action. The Bohemian nobility had several reasons for its attitude: it feared rising peasant unrest unless feudal obligations were ended; it wanted to retain the peasantry's loyalty; moreover, many nobles had gradually realized that feudal obligations were no longer an economic necessity; and finally, some nobles were motivated by humanitarian considerations.

The question of the degree peasants had been emancipated before 1848 is subject to speculation. Under Josef II's reign (1780-90) peasants, including those in Bohemia, were given the freedom to leave their landlords' estates. However, remnants of serfdom survived Josef II's reign, because peasants who did not leave the land were still subject to feudal obligations. The robot was originally labor service that peasants provided to their landlords. The extent that it existed in 1848 is subject to differing interpretations, although it appeared to be most prevalent in Bohemia. More important than the robot were the large number of petty feudal obligations which peasants still owed in 1848. For discussions on the state of peasant feudal obligations before 1848 see: Robert Joseph Kern, Bohemia in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 273-306; Stanley Z. Pech, The Czech Revolution of 1848 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 13-15.

Pech, 1848, p. 276.
Within the Czech peasant class after 1848 there were two distinct social groups. One was composed of peasants who owned land and was largely independent of noble-estate control. However, the majority belonged to the second group composed of landless peasants, who earned their livelihood by working for a noble or an independent farmer. When emancipation came these landless peasants paid no compensation for their release from all feudal obligations, whereas landed peasants were obliged to pay for the land they received. The 1848 peasant emancipation brought freedom from feudal obligations, but it did little to break-up the large estates of the great Bohemian nobles. Thus, there remained a large number of peasants who had no land or very little and a small number of nobles who owned large tracts of land. Emancipation presented poorer farmers with three choices: they might work for the noble landowners, move to the cities, or emigrate to a foreign land.

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3 This paper will define landless peasants as those with an insufficient amount of land to support their families without taking outside work. Peasants owning less than 10 hectares of land will be considered a part of this class, although it would be possible for a farmer with this amount of land to be independent fertile land and a small family. The Czech Agrarian Party also used the 10 hectare limit to define rural ranks. It considered small farmers as those owning between 10 and 20 hectares; middle-sized farmers as those owning between 20 and 50 hectares; and wealthier estate owners as those owning more than 50 hectares. Cep, May 3, 1907, p. 1; October 13, 1911, p. 3. Approximately 80% of the rural class owned less than 10 hectares of land; 15% owned between 10 and 50 hectares; and 5% of the rural population owned more than 50 hectares. See footnote 26, page 46.
Railroad construction, the building of roadways, and the implementing of other public service improvement projects provided many landless peasants with jobs in the years following the 1848 revolution. The expanding textile industries also afforded some peasants an alternative to farming. However, with the 1857 economic recession and the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 (which reduced the Empire's cotton imports), textile industries began laying off workers. In the late 1860's a new rural industry—sugar beet processing—began to develop in Central Bohemia. Factories for this purpose were built as Czech farmers began producing surplus sugar beets to meet the demands of the Austrian market. The growth of the sugar beet industry contributed significantly to rural industrial development, giving many farmers an opportunity to earn a living independent of the land. The 1860's also saw the growth of the distilling industry, adding yet another occupational alternative for landless farmers seeking to support a family. In other words, although emancipation had not provided all peasants with the hope of making a livelihood on the land, agriculture-related industries did present some with such an alternative.

Although agriculture-related industries provided many peasants with work, it also made them more dependent on national and international economic forces and developments. For example,

with the economic crisis of 1869 and the Krach (Crash) of 1873 in Austria-Hungary many of these industries stopped expanding, in fact, even contracted, thus raising problems of rural underemployment. The recovery of the countryside from these economic problems was complicated by the increased competition from cheap, imported grains. Furthermore, beginning in the late 1870's the Bohemian countryside also went through a period of natural disasters and crop failures. Both the landowning middle class and landless peasants were placed in a precarious position as their livelihood was threatened by forces that seemed out of their control. By the 1880's most peasant farmers probably felt they were in a crisis situation, a situation that threatened their welfare and future. As a result farmers began talking about organizing to protect their interests.

The amount of power the rural classes could exert in the Austrian political arena was limited by the voting system. As a result of the February Patent of 1861, voters were divided into four classes or curia. Each curia had a set number of deputies to be elected to seats in the Zemský sněm (Provincial Diet). The first curia was composed of great noble landowners, the second curia was made up of representatives of commercial interests, the third curia was elected by people in urban areas, and the last curia contained representatives of non-noble landed farmers and noble rural voters.

5Frehled, pp. 356-60.
Approximately one-third of all deputies to the Zemský sněm were elected from the rural curia.\(^6\)

In 1873 a similar voting system was established for the election of deputies to the Reichsrat in Vienna. Again the rural curia was entitled to elect approximately a third of the deputies allocated to Bohemia.\(^7\) The rural curia tended to elect its deputies from the ranks of the Old Czech intellectuals or businessmen who had no ties with agriculture.\(^8\) If a farmer were elected he was likely to represent either noble rural interests or those of the wealthy non-noble estate owners. Therefore, the economic interests of middle class farmers and landless peasants were inadequately represented. As a result among these farmers there was a growing feeling of powerlessness to deal with the economic and social problems faced in these decades of agricultural recession and depression. As conditions did not improve into the 1880's, many Czech farmers began talking about organizing to improve their economic and political situation within the Habsburg Empire.

When the Young Czechs split from the Old Czech faction in 1874, one of the points voiced by the former was the need for

\(^6\)Kamil Krofta, Dějiny selského stavu (Praha: Jan Laichter, 1949), p. 435. In Bohemia 79 of the 242 seats were to be chosen by voters of the rural curia; in Moravia 31 of 100.

\(^7\)Ibid. In Bohemia 30 of the 92 seats were allocated to the rural curia; in Moravia 11 of 36.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 436.
better representation of farmers. Because the Young Czechs were hopeful of winning the support of the voting rural middle class in their struggle with Old Czechs for political control in Bohemia, they announced their intention to improve the economic welfare of farmers. Young Czechs, however, did not follow through with their plans for agricultural improvement; they were essentially a party of urban intellectuals whose preoccupation was with national-political rights. Even in the strong Young Czech electoral showings in 1889 for the Zemský sněm and in 1891 for the Reichsrat, the party never slated more than a token number of farmers, which eventually caused some farmers to question the party's sincerity (see page 21).

Although the Young Czech Party neglected its early promise to promote rural political and economic advancement, some farmers were eager to improve the quality of rural life. These were divided into two groups; one group represented farmers from Central Bohemia who had investments in sugar beet farming and related agricultural industries, while the other represented the rural classes of Southern Bohemia where grain and potato production predominated. The first group's leadership was centered around Emmanuel Engel

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9 Krofta, Dějiny, p. 436.
10 Přehled, p. 437.
while the second group was led by Alfons Šťastný. However, it was Šťastný who became the most prominent spokesman for rural interests and who directed the political and economic demands of Czech farmers into a mission vital to the national and economic development of Bohemia.

During the late 1880's and early 1890's Alfons Šťastný became the leading spokesman of Bohemian agrarian interests. Beginning in the late 1880's he founded and helped form several farmers' organizations, which aimed to correct the problems of rural society. In his attempts to politicize rural society, he was given the official blessing of the Young Czech Party. Šťastný, like most other Czech farmers, was a member of the Young Czech Party, having dismissed the Old Czechs as too conservative. In 1888 Šťastný joined the organization of the Zemský spolek politicko-hospodářských malostatkářů (Provincial Political-Economic Club of Small Landowners), and in 1889 he collaborated with Václav Janda in forming the Selská jednota pro království České (Peasant Club for the Kingdom of Bohemia). The Selská jednota

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11 Engel's followers included Václav Janda, Václav Krumbholz, and Jindřich Doležal. Šťastný's following, while not as numerous, included Jan Rataj and Jan Jůn. Both groups cooperated until 1891 when Šťastný and his followers left the Young Czech Party (see page 29). However, Engel's faction of Central Bohemian farmers remained in the Young Czech Party, since it continued to feel that the Young Czech Party was a useful ally for farmers. They became the organizing force of the Sdružení českých zemědělců (Association of Czech Farmers) in 1896 (see page 45ff).


became the main organ through which Šťastný and Czech farmers publicized plans for the economic improvement of the rural class, and it became a powerful rural lobbying organization, especially after the Young Czech Party accepted its rural program as its own.

Šťastný, himself, owned a large estate in Padař in Southern Bohemia which he inherited from his parents. He attended grammar school in Prague and gymnasium in Vienna. After the death of his younger brother in 1856, he managed the estate except for a brief stint of study at Charles University in 1863-64.\(^{14}\) His dislike of the conservativeness of the Old Czechs had prompted him to join the Young Czech Party. Once a member, he developed close relations with many Young Czechs, particularly Dr. Edvard Grégr and Bedřich Páček, but even then he was more committed to an idea than to a party, which in part led to his ultimate departure from the Young Czech club in 1891. Šťastný's early writings did not deal directly with rural problems, but rather focused on what he considered the exploitative nature of the Roman Catholic Church.\(^{15}\) He wrote several pamphlets attacking the pronouncement of papal infallibility and power of the papacy in general, and he stressed the need for a

\(^{14}\) For biographical details of Šťastný's life see, Jan Petr, "Alfons Šťastný," Úspech, V(1934), 253-55. Also see Jaroslav Trojan, Alfons Šťastný z Padařova (Praha).

\(^{15}\) The Pope at this time was Pius IX (1846-78). In 1864 he issued a Syllabus of the Principal Errors of Our Time in which he censured liberalism, nationalism, socialism, religious toleration, and lay-controlled education. Also in 1870 the Vatican Council proclaimed the Pope infallible in matters of faith and morals. Pius IX's beliefs antagonized liberals and nationalists throughout Europe.
separation of church and state. He regarded Pius IX and the papacy as enemies of the Czech nation, because the Roman Catholic Church wanted to monopolize education. National education was necessary for national development; the church, on the other hand, seemed concerned only with preserving its power rather than with promoting the cause of humanity.\(^\text{16}\)

Šťastný participated in the formation of the Selská jednota, because he believed in an organization that would unite the rural community and lead to economic, social, and political improvements for the farmer. The one rural class that Šťastný excluded from participation in the Selská jednota was the great noble landowners.\(^\text{17}\) Šťastný believed that their interests were already well-represented, if not over-represented. Young Czechs were amenable to the organization's formation and to Šťastný's goals, since the organizers were Young Czechs who would attract rural voters away from the Old Czech Party. They were also aware of the farmers' desire to gain better political representation and economic amelioration; consequently, Young Czechs sought to bring this rural movement under their control.\(^\text{18}\) For most farmers the chief issue was the political one of obtaining direct elections in the rural

\(^{16}\) Alfons Šťastný, O doplnění našeho národního programu (Praha: Dr. Eduard Gregr, 1872), pp. 6, 45-7. Alfons Šťastný, Dekret o neomylnosti papeže římského a jeho význam prakticky (Praha, 1873), pp. 3-4.


\(^{18}\) Přehled, p. 619.
curias that elected delegates to the Zemský sněm and to the Reichsrat.

Šťastný expressed a growing resentment among farmers, angered at how large aristocratic landowners dominated rural politics and the Old Czech Party. Šťastný and middle-sized farm owners wanted political power to deal with the economic and social problems created by almost two decades of continuous recession. For a time Šťastný even considered the possibility of establishing another curia within the rural curia that would only permit middle-sized landowners to vote.¹⁹ For Šťastný the national issue was not the crucial one at this time. He disliked the centralizing tendencies of Vienna, but he was prepared to work for cooperation between German and Czech middle-sized farm owners in order to fight against their common enemy—the noble estate owner.²⁰ To Šťastný the main obstacle was the existence of an "agrarian aristocracy" oblivious to the needs of other farmers, but attuned to the social and cultural attractions of Vienna.²¹

Šťastný and his followers regarded his agrarian alliance with the Young Czechs as an alliance against the conservative large


²⁰ Ibid.

landowners, and as a vehicle to permit more small farmers to enter politics. The strength of this alliance would be tested twice within the next two years, once in the 1889 elections to the Zemský sněm and later in the 1891 elections to the Reichsrat in Vienna.

After both elections had been held it was apparent that the Czech countryside had supported the Young Czechs heavily. However, in spite of the support of rural voters, the Young Czech Party had not included a proportionate number of middle class farmers on their candidate lists. The Young Czechs made big inroads into Old Czech strongholds in both elections. The Young Czechs owed their electoral successes to the disillusionment of the lesser Czech bourgeoisie with the national and political conservatism of the Old Czechs, to changes in the voting requirements for elections to the Reichsrat, and to strong rural support.

In the 1889 elections to the Zemský sněm the Young Czechs won 39 seats to 58 for the Old Czechs. While the Young Czechs had not secured a majority of the deputies, they had significantly cut into the previous 9 to 1 advantage of the Old Czechs. Among the 39 Young Czech deputies, well-to-do farmers accounted for 11 deputies

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22 Literární archív, Památník národního písemictví na Strahově. Letter: Jan Rataj to Emmanuel Engel, June 15, 1892.

23 In 1882 the franchise was broadened to include men in the rural and urban curias who paid at least 5 florins in direct taxes annually. Previously only men who paid at least 10 florins could vote.
while 28 seats in the rural curia went to Young Czechs.\textsuperscript{24} The Young Czechs had gained more than half their seats in the rural curia, but they had only given token representation to farming interests. Also the Young Czechs had not put Šťastný on their candidate list. This exclusion miffed Šťastný, and he attacked the vagaries of party politics in his newspaper, \textit{Selské noviny} (Peasant News).\textsuperscript{25}

While the lack of farmer representation might have been attributed to the short time span between the formation of the \textit{Selská jednota} and the \\textit{Zemský sněm} elections (a space of less than six months), there could be no such explanation for the absence of more farmer candidates in the 1891 Reichtag elections. The \textit{Selská jednota} had been in existence for three years and was regarded by the Young Czech Party as its agrarian arm. In the Reichtag elections the Young Czechs completely overwhelmed the Old Czechs. In the urban curia the Young Czechs won 21 of 33 seats and in the rural curia they won all 16 seats. However, of the sixteen seats only four went to farmers.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, less than one-fifth of the rural curia was responsible to rural interests. This percentage


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} Fränkenberger, \textit{Světla}, p. 48. Also see Jurij Krížek, T.G. Masaryk a česká politika (Práha: Státní nakladatelství, 1959), p. 177. Šťastný was among the four farmers elected.
was not particularly pleasing to Šťastný who had voiced plans to organize the countryside and use its political strength to promote rural improvements. He was disappointed with the Young Czechs, who after receiving such solid support from farmers, only gave farmers nominal representation. The Young Czech Party was dominated by urban-oriented Czechs who were primarily interested in spending money on industrialization and not on rural improvements. As this fact became clear to Šťastný, he began divorcing himself from the Young Czech Party until in September, 1891, he broke completely with it. He concluded that farmers needed an independent agrarian organization, because it was impossible to defend agricultural and non-agricultural interests simultaneously. His break with the Young Czech Party precipitated a mutual rivalry that lasted until his death.

Although Šťastný left the party, farmers from Central Bohemia remained associated with the Young Czech Party. They believed that their rural interests could be served by the Young Czech Party, and they found Šťastný somewhat radical and even eccentric. Thus, following 1891 Šťastný had to pursue his goal


29 Křížek, Masaryk, p. 199.
of agrarian reform without the support of many middle class farmers. His influence was limited to Southern Bohemia in the region surrounding Tábor, but his impact was greater as he publicized his ideas through his newspaper, Selské noviny.

During its two year existence, Šťastný's alliance with the Young Czech Party did benefit farmers in some ways. For example, in the Zemědělská rada (Agricultural Council), Šťastný was advocating that more power be given to middle class farmers in order to end the influence of noble landowners. Working in conjunction with Young Czechs and some Czech nobles, Šťastný realized his hopes for the Zemědělská rada. In 1890 the Zemědělská rada was divided into two equal departments—Czech and German. Šťastný saw this development as giving Czech farmers a greater opportunity to deal with their own economic problems, while simultaneously working for the defeat of conservative aristocratic landowning interests. Likewise Young Czechs were happy to see German control of this body suffer a defeat, but not as concerned that it would lead to greater political influence for middle class farmers. Young Czechs had also approved of certain agrarian demands in the campaign of 1889. For example, Young Czechs tried to curry rural favor by supporting a boycott

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30 Ludmila Mrázková and Lidmila Dědková, Česká zemědělská rada—Inventář (Prague: Archivní správa ministerstva vnitra, 1961), pp. 1–2. The task of the Zemědělská rada was to "defend, improve, and represent the interests of agriculture in the Kingdom of Bohemia." Agrární archív. Zemědělská rada. 30/163. (Hereafter cited as A.A. Z.R.).

31 Tobolka, Dějiny, p. 218.
against importing Hungarian grain to Czech cities. They attempted to get people to buy the higher priced Czech grain, and it was in districts most affected by Hungarian competition that Young Czechs received most of their rural support.32

Šťastný's agrarian program, which centered on strengthening the farming middle class, had to be accomplished through economic and political reform. Šťastný's approach to the solution tended to be pragmatic and eclectic.33 Šťastný saw what the agrarian crises of the 1870's and 1880's had wrought in the Czech countryside, and he was motivated by a desire to prevent the economic degeneration of rural society. According to Šťastný, the agrarian problem was composed of three equally vital components: the rural economic, the national-economic, and the social aspect. All three were integrally linked with the farmer's welfare. To solve the agrarian problem each one of these factors had to be resolved. Šťastný believed the rural-economic question could be taken care of by setting and determining the quantity and kind of agricultural production in which farmers would engage. Each individual farmer could do this given the proper education and training in agricultural

32 Jan Havránek, "Der Umwandlungsprozess in der Bauerngesellschaft Böhmens in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in Die Agrarfrage in der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie, 1900-1918. Mitteilungen auf der Konferenz der Geschichtswissenschaftler Budapest 4-9 Mrz. 1964 (Bukarest: Verlag der Akademie der Sozialistischen Republik Rumänien, 1965), p. 298. The rumor was also spread by Young Czechs that Hungarian grain was contaminated by cholera germs.

33 František Kutnar, "Agrární myšlenka a program Alfonse Šťastného," Casopis pro dějiny venkova, XXIII (1936), 73.
production. The national-economic problem could be settled by giving the Czech farmer a fair market price for his product. For this goal to be achieved government regulatory agencies would have to be established. Finally the social question, the inferior relationship of the rural class to other classes in society, might be resolved by augmenting the farmers' political power. With political power a farmer could protect his class interest in an industrializing state.34

Šťastný viewed the České státní právo (Czech state right) as part of the national-economic aspect of the agrarian problem. Šťastný envisioned a federalized Austrian government that affirmed Bohemia's rights to autonomy. His státní právo demands were in agreement with those of Young Czechs, but he placed a different emphasis on the aim of the státní právo. The Czech question of state right was for Šťastný not so much a political or legal question as it was a national-economic necessity. The economic

34 For a discussion of Šťastný's economic program see Kutnar, "Myšlenka," 73-6.

35 Státní právo was a concept that asserted that the Czech crown-lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, much like the Kingdom of Hungary, legally required a special position under the Habsburg crown. The December 1867 Austrian constitution refused to recognize this right, and it became a demand of all Czech nationalist parties, including agrarians, that Austria must recognize Bohemia's legal position. To achieve the Czech state right, Czech nationalists advocated a strong Zemský sněm that would decentralize the power of Vienna thereby diminishing its control over the Czechs. For a discussion of the státní právo see, H. Gordon Skilling, "The Politics of the Czech Eighties," in The Czech Renascence of the Nineteenth Century, edited by H. Gordon Skilling and Peter Brock (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 259-62.
salvation of the Czech rural class, in his mind, depended on the fulfillment of státní právo. The fate of the agricultural class was linked with the future of the Czech state right, because through federalism Czechs could better deal with Hungarian agricultural competition, and Czech agriculture could develop without the bureaucratic restrictions that ties with Vienna imposed. He was prepared to accept loose political ties with Vienna, because he saw these ties as beneficial to Bohemian agricultural by preserving the Alpine markets where Czech farmers could sell their surplus crops. But Štastný wanted to be free of other centralized government regulation. Štastný’s demand for federalism had a pragmatic tinge.

When the Young Czechs accepted Štastný’s agrarian program as promulgated in the Selská jednota, Štastný accepted the national program of the Young Czechs, adapting it as he saw fit to meet the needs of farmers. However, Štastný made no significant alteration in the basic national demand that there be less control from Vienna; he accepted the Young Czech idea for Austrian federalism, but this did not prevent him from promoting closer ties between Czech farmers and farmers of other nationalities in Austria. In September, 1890 in Vienna, Štastný attended an agrarian congress of farmers’ representatives from all parts of Austria. The congress

36 Kutnar, "Myslenka," 77.
37 Ibid.
was hoping to develop a common social, economic, and political program. At the congress a commission was elected that had the task of drawing up a united agrarian program. Štastrný was a leading member of the commission and a strong contributor to the program. He planned to submit the proposals in the agrarian program to the Reichsrat for passage.

The resulting program was in direct response to the economic problems faced by middle class farmers, and their fears of the power of the great noble landowners. The program dealt with three major agrarian concerns: protecting the livelihood of middle class farmers, alleviating rural pressures, and implementing political reforms. To protect the livelihood of middle class farmers the program advocate relief from heavy mortgage obligations, freedom from taxes for those earning only a subsistence wage, insurance against natural disasters, freedom to divide great estates, and free public school education. The program stated that rural economic pressures could be lessened by instituting a personal income tax in place of all direct and indirect taxes, amortizing the national debt, establishing a universal railroad tariff in line with those of neighboring states, promoting railroad construction, instituting

38 Dr. Jos. Kazimour, "Ke_vzniku šťastného 'Programu rolnictva Rakouska' r. 1890-1," Časopis pro dějiny venkova, XVIII(1931), 101.


40 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
legal reforms in judging debt and petty criminal cases, having economic relations with Hungary on the basis of complete parity, and by keeping farmers' sons near home in national guard units rather than in far-off garrisons in a standing army (by having sons serving in the military near home, they would be freer to work on the farm). The political reforms that agrarians demanded were aimed at increasing rural influence. The program called for political equality between the rural and other classes through direct elections with secret ballots. Also it stated the desire that elections to the Reichsrat be held every three years in order to assure closer contact between the deputies and voters who elected them.

The program Šťastný helped create was directed against the aristocratic forces of privilege rather than against the government itself. Austrian institutions were attacked in so far as they were dominated by these forces of privilege, and were not answerable to the needs of rural citizens. Since this program was a multinational effort, it expressed only general economic and political goals and did not raise national issues (such as national demands for autonomy). Šťastný's participation in the above congress was prompted by his belief that rural power required that farmers

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Rural leaders wanted the curia-voting system remodeled so that representation would be proportioned according to the number of people in each interest group (urban, rural, aristocratic, etc.).
cooperate in the existing parliamentary institutions. Farmers could not wait for an individual or an existing political group to lead their crusade; they had to organize themselves if they expected to accomplish anything.

Štastný believed that since Czech farmers lived in Austria, they should take advantage, in their struggle against the domination of aristocratic landowners, of the agrarian majority that would exist if all Austrian rural groups were allied. Only through a great alliance could the power and influence of the great landowners be ended. In Štastný's opinion the great aristocratic landowners were a negative factor for the countryside, because they were ill-informed about agricultural needs, since for most of the year they did not even live on their estates. Middle class farmers who lived on the land were better aware of rural needs.

Štastný envisioned a vast multi-national agrarian club lobbying for rural interests in the Reichsrat and simultaneously advocating a federalistic solution to the Czech question. Young Czechs who agreed on his national platform were somewhat suspicious and even critical of his relationship with other agrarian interest groups. They felt Štastný was becoming an internationalist who was neglecting the importance of the Czech struggle for national

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42 Štastný, Program, p. 17.
43 Ibid., pp. 19, 169.
By early 1891 a gulf was forming between Šťastný and the Young Czechs on the question of what emphasis should be given to economic reforms. This difference within the year led to Šťastný's leaving the Young Czech Party. Šťastný's hopes of a unified rural movement in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire were never fulfilled, because national differences and organizational difficulties prevented it. Nevertheless, Šťastný continued to work for improvements in the conditions of Czech farmers.

Government authorities were fearful of Šťastný's movement. They were concerned about what they regarded as his anti-military attitude and his announced goal of politicizing the rural masses. With regard to the first there was some basis for fearing Šťastný as anti-military; he did attack regularly in his newspaper both the expenditures of tax monies on the army as well as the existence of a standing army. Šťastný said he felt these expenditures only reenforced the reactionary outlook of the army. However, Šťastný did continue to advocate military training for Czech young men, though he favored training near home in a national guard organization. While to some officials and politicians Šťastný may have

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44 For a detailed reaction of the Young Czech Party to Šťastný and his program see, Alfons Šťastný z Padařová, zakladatel "strany agrární." Příspěvek k poznání a ocenění politické jeho činnosti (Praha: Eduard Beaufort, 1895). For Kramář's opinion see Dr. Karl Hoch, editor, Dr. Karel Kramář. Paměti (Praha: Pražské akciové tiskárny, 1938), p. 154. Kramář regarded Šťastný as an antiquated thinker.

appeared to be organizing the masses of the countryside in a way reminiscent of certain Marxist operations in the cities, he was not the radical many people believed him to be. Šťastný’s main goal was to organize middle class farmers (farmers with middle-sized landholdings)—men who he felt were the backbone and leaders of the countryside. Šťastný never supported equal voting strength as one of his political reforms, because he did not feel poorer farmers were able to lead in promoting rural improvements. He was radical in his attacks on the church and the great noble landowners, but conservative in his view of the social organization of the rural masses. With regard to socialism Šťastný again took a pragmatic approach. He wanted nothing to do with international socialism and collectivization, but he also stated that he was willing to take anything good in socialism and use it (e.g., the stress on organizing an interest group to maximize influence).

Šťastný was most critical of the Habsburg government’s economic policies. Šťastný saw the trend to emphasize industrial growth at the expense of rural investments as a move to destroy the

\[46\] The reaction of many government authorities and politicians to Šťastný’s program may have been influenced by earlier Old Czech stereotyping of Šťastný as an agrarian socialist. Old Czechs regarded him as a rural revolutionary. See Dr. František Kameníček, editor, Pamięt i listów Dra. Aloise Prązęka (Praha: Akciové moravské knihářské, 1927), II, p. 359.

\[47\] Archive in Trávníč. Letter: Alfon Šťastný to Prince Schwarzenberg, April 1, 1889. Also see Alfon Šťastný, O zachování selského stavu v Čechách (Praha: Český odbor rady zemědělské pro království České, 1909).

\[48\] Selské noviny, March 20, 1891, p. 85.
farmer while moving toward political domination by German and Jewish industrialists. In Šťastný's opinion this economic orientation would not be altered until farmers exerted their political power. Therefore, to achieve economic improvement through legislation the influence of the great noble landowners had to be ended and the electoral laws had to be changed to allow farmers their rightful political strength.

Šťastný believed once political power for farmers was achieved they could then work for a solution to the státní právo question and its economic ramifications. The case of Hungary, in Šťastný's opinion, demonstrated the interrelationship of the two. Šťastný felt Hungary was in a favored position with respect to the Austrian lands (which Bohemia was not). For example, Hungary was able to establish train regulations which assured the cheap shipment of grain out of Hungary into the Austrian lands. Šťastný urged that Austria regulate Hungarian exports to Cisleithania so that the rest of the nationalities might be on a more equitable economic footing with Hungary. When it became clear to Šťastný that Austria could not or would not deal with the problem of Hungarian exports, autonomy for Bohemia appeared to him to be the best alternative to protect Czech farmers.

49 Selské noviny, October 17, 1890, pp. 113-20; June 19, 1891, pp. 179-82. 50 SUA. Presidium Místodržitelství, 1891-1900 (Hereafter cited as SUA. PM.). 8/5/74/1 (Report 4, XII.93). 51 Šťastný, Program, p. 159.
Another frustration caused by close Czech political ties with the Austrian state was the issue of taxes. Štastný felt that not enough tax money was being used to improve the rural standard of living or to construct rural public works projects. If Bohemia were autonomous, farmers could allocate the money as they felt their needs dictated. Štastný disliked the fact that Czechs were paying taxes that were being spent in other parts of the empire. He felt that Bohemian money should remain in Bohemia to help local farmers. If Bohemia had autonomy, farmers could supervise the spending of their own tax revenues.

Štastný did not desire an autonomous Bohemia so that Czechs could dominate Germans, but rather so that German and Czech cooperation, especially among farmers, could be more easily attained. He envisioned an autonomous Bohemia where democracy and cooperation on common economic problems would take precedence over differences in nationality. Štastný was not anti-German, and hoped for good relations between the two nationalities. Only those Germans who were aristocratic reactionaries or wealthy industrialists were subject to his ire.

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52 Štastný, Program, p. 151. According to Štastný taxes from the Czech crownlands amounted to 198 m. fl., but only 100 m. fl. of this money was returned to Bohemia. In the case of the Polish lands, they paid only 62 m. fl., but received 183 m. fl.

53 SUA. PM. 1891-1900. 8/5/24/1 (Report 4.XII.93).
Following the summer of 1891 Štastný followed an independent course in his efforts to promote agrarian reform and administrative federalism. His influence was limited to Southern Bohemia, since farmers in Central Bohemia continued to remain affiliated with the Young Czech Party. However, Štastný's influence in the Selská jednota and his editorship of the Selské noviny permitted him to wield greater influence than his support in Southern Bohemia alone would have dictated. Throughout the mid-nineties his voice never let other farmers forget the rewards that rural organization might bring. His continued criticism of the Young Czech Party also put it on notice that it would have to deal with rural issues or face the loss of agrarian support among the farmers still remaining loyal to that party. Moreover, he promoted the peasantist belief that rural society had to form an independent political party to protect its social and economic interests, and the peasantist conviction that the countryside was entitled to play a leading role in political society because of its numerical strength and importance to the nation. Finally, Štastný believed that middle class farmers should direct any agrarian reform movement, which helped to create the bourgeois outlook of Czech agrarianism.
CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION OF THE CZECH AGRARIAN PARTY

There were three major Czech agricultural organizations in 1896. The first, the Selská jednota, was dominated by Alfons Šťastný. The other two were the Selská župa středočeská (Peasant Organization for Central Bohemia), and the Jednota východočeská (Eastern Bohemian Union). Šťastný's organization was independent of the Young Czech Party, while the remaining two were affiliated with it. In 1896 an attempt was made by some middle class farmers (among them were Karel Prášek, Stanislav Kubr, J.A. Prokůpek, Jan Dvořák, Josef Sýr, and František Teklý) to unite Central Bohemian farmers into a common organization. By speaking as one voice they hoped to wield more influence for farmers within the Young Czech Party and also to improve their ability to advocate

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1 See page 16.

2 Frankenberg, Švehla, p. 64.
agricultural reform and laws favorable to their-class. Because they felt the Young Czech Party was not sufficiently interested in rural economic needs, many farmers believed some organization was needed to end this neglect and promote agricultural economic reform and relief. Most farmers were content to seek greater influence within the Young Czech Party, although some were discussing the formation of an independent agrarian political organization.

The Young Czech Party was not opposed to this agrarian move to organize, since the proposed organization would be under its influence and could also offset any attraction Alfons Štaastný or the Old Czechs might have among the peasantry. The agrarians were satisfied to remain in the Young Czech Party for several reasons. Having been politically weaned in the Young Czech Party, the agrarians agreed with the national program of the Young Czechs and saw no reason why they could not achieve their economic demands within the framework of the Young Czech Party. Perhaps more


4 V. Chundela, Stanislav Kubr: Zakladatel české strany agrární-sedlák a politik (Praha: Novina, 1933), p. 50. J.A. Prokůpek voiced the opinion that most farmers did not want to be affiliated with any existing political party. Zemědělské listy, August 10, 1896, p. 55; December 31, 1896, pp. 25-6.

importantly, the Young Czechs were the most powerful Czech national party, which made them useful allies when fighting the privileges of the German landed nobility or fighting for sympathetic legislation within the legislative assemblies of the empire. Finally, the agrarians were not prepared to fragment the national movement into a number of political parties.

Beginning in the late summer of 1896 the wealthier farmers held meetings at which they discussed the role of the future agrarian organization. Under the leadership of Stanislav Kubr and his colleagues, it was decided that the agrarian organization would concentrate on solving agrarian economic and social problems, delegating the brunt of the struggle for national and political rights to the Young Czech leadership. However, although the farmers felt that an agrarian organization should leave the leadership of the national struggle to the Young Czechs, they did not intend to forsake or ignore national demands. In an agrarian congress held in August, 1896, a program was proposed. The program had five major sections. The first dealt with general political aims, while the remaining four sections were concerned with economic, social, and organizational goals. The five subpoints to the first section indicate the national position contemplated by agrarians. In this section of the platform they supported the České státní právo (see page 25n); the greatest possible autonomy for the Czech crownlands;

6 Chundela, Kubr, p. 52.
the equality of the Czech and German languages in Bohemia and a
guarantee that national groups would be fairly represented in
legislative, executive, and judicial bodies; changes in the
election laws; and finally, the protection of rural national-
economic interests.  

Generally the national demands discussed were not in their
scope unprecedented, and indicated that the agrarians were
following the lead of the Young Czechs and the ideological heritage
of František Palacky.  

The most noteworthy part of this section of
the program was a final point concerning the protection and advance-
ment of rural national-economic interests. With the inclusion of
this point the agrarians were radicalizing the national program
adopted from the Young Czech Party.  

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7 Chundela, Kubr, p. 52.
8 František Palacky (1798-1876) was a Czech nationalist historian who
idealized the past glories of the Czechs. Agrarians were particularly
enthusiastic about his idea of autonomy for the indivisible historic
crownlands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. For a discussion of his
philosophy see Hans Kohn, Not By Arms Alone (Cambridge, Massachusetts:
Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 69-83. František Kutnar, editor,
Tři studie o Františku Palackém (Olomouc: Nákladem Palackého
University, 1949). Joseph Frederick Zacek, Palacky, The Historian

9 The basic national-political demands of the Young Czech Party were:
1) autonomy for Bohemia on the basis of the historic Czech state
right; 2) an end to Austrian centralism of political institutions
and the employment of a fair proportion of Czechs in all provincial
and state government agencies; 3) no political division of the
historical Czech crownlands into German and Czech districts; 4) a just
census taken according to mother tongues. Prof. Jan Heidler, České
politické strany v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku (Praha: Jos. R.
Vilímek, 1914), pp. 21-3. In the 1890's the Young Czech Party under-
went a period of internal reassessment concerning its organization
and future political and social orientation. This period was
national struggle as primarily a political one whereas the agrarians regarded the national struggle as both political and economic; thus, the agrarians were potentially a more disruptive force to the Habsburg authorities in that they had expanded the national struggle to a new level. The Habsburg authorities could not only expect them to make national demands, but also demands advocating economic policy changes. To agrarians the nation was the rural class, and if the rural class's national and economic needs were not cared for the whole nation would suffer; therefore, the agrarians felt a responsibility to achieve both national and economic goals.

The program adopted at the agrarian congress held in Prague on the 27th of December, 1897, marked the completion of deliberations of the national-economic platform. That program consisted complicated by the defection of many Czechs (ranging from Masaryk to the agrarians) from the party. The Young Czech Party at the turn of the century had the difficult tasks of combining its early liberalism with the new "mass nationalism" of the twentieth century, and also of appealing to the disparate class and interest groups that were forming (i.e., workers, farmers, industrialists). The party had had a middle class political orientation, focusing on liberal political reforms and greater freedom for the Czech nation so as to develop to its full capability. However, with the increasing concern of workers and farmers for economic and social justice in the 1890's, the Young Czech Party's program was ill-prepared to take advantage of these new Czech political, economic, and social interest groups. For discussions of Young Czech development in this period see Winters, "Kramer," in Renaissance, pp. 282-314. Stanley B. Winters, "The Young Czech Party(1874-1914): An Appraisal," Slavic Review, XXVIII(1969), 429. Bruce M. Garver, The Young Czech Party, 1874-1914: Social and Political Conflict in the Czech Lands and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System(Dissertation: Yale University, 1971).

See page 42 for an analysis of the agrarians' concept of the nation and the relationship of the peasant to the nation.
of ten points. The first stated the adherence of Czech farmers to the state rights requirements of the Czech nation. The next two were devoted to national-political concerns, demanding autonomy for the Czech crownlands and also the extension of voting rights. Points four through nine dealt with national-economic demands. They called for: the establishment of agricultural technical schools; tariff and transport policies that benefited farmers when they sold their products; the removal of unfair and discriminatory land taxes; the availability of easy rural credit; reform of the rural insurance system; and finally, adjustment of water rights and help in improving agricultural methods. The final point stated the participants' belief that if the above-mentioned program was accomplished, the rural class would be preserved as a politically and economically viable entity.

These Central Bohemian farmers decided to work within the Young Czech Party to accomplish their program's national and economic goals. The decision to organize within the framework of the Young Czech Party aroused criticism from some agrarians. However, this criticism proved relatively inconsequential. Most of the men forming the agrarian organization had been Young Czechs, and had participated in the latter's struggle for national rights; thus, it seemed quite natural for these agrarians to think of forming an

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agrarian interest group within the party they had associated with all their political lives. Also most agrarians accepted the fact of a monolithic Czech national party organization for the sake of national unity when agitating for political or economic rights vital to the Czech national interest. The agrarians were not thinking in terms of a party or organization which would rival the Young Czech Party. Their organization's primary goal was to help farmers economically through their involvement in the Young Czech Party.

Since Czechs were a part of the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire, the Czech agrarians faced the problems and challenges of dealing with the Viennese imperial authorities if they hoped to achieve internal economic improvements. In addition agrarians had to concern themselves with the international economic policy of the government (e.g., the Austro-Hungarian Settlement and Austrian trade treaties with other countries). Working through the Young Czech Party meant that the agrarians did not have direct contact with the legislative process or high government officials; they were consequently dependent on the Young Czech Party to represent rural

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13 The men organizing the agrarian movement were relatively young. Prášek was 28 years old; Kubr was 34; and Žádarský was 43. Prokůpek was one of the oldest at age 64. For information on Kubr's early life see Chundela, Kubr, and for Prokůpek see Josef Nožička, Jan Antonín Prokůpek, Apoštol hospodářského pokroku a národní osvětě (Praga: Novina, 1939). Also the Ottův slovník has biographical data on leading agrarians. For brief autobiographical descriptions of their early lives see the index of the Literární archív at Památník národního písemnictví na Strahově.
interests. Moreover, this circumstance placed the Young Czech Party in a position of acting as a buffer between Austrian officials and the Czech agrarians. Since the Young Czechs controlled party policy and dominated the Czech national movement in the mid-1890's, they played a prominent role in parliamentary maneuvering. Therefore, if agrarian economic needs were not attended to, Young Czechs as well as the Austrian government could face the ire of disgruntled farmers. The threat of a possible schism between Young Czechs and agrarians existed from the first attempts of the agrarians to organize, since Young Czechs felt the national-political struggle was paramount. They felt that national-political problems could best be resolved when political autonomy had been achieved. In other words Young Czechs, unlike agrarians, were not advocating both an economic and a political struggle with the Austrian government.

Many of the ideological differences between the Young Czechs and the agrarians lay in their respective conceptions of the nation. Jan Antonín Prokůpek, an important agrarian intellectual, greatly influenced agrarian thought as to the relationship between the peasant and the nation. Prokůpek viewed the most important role in both the economic and national development of the Czech nation as belonging to the peasant. His ideas emphasizing the importance of

the peasantry were readily accepted by other agrarians and were used to justify the need for organizing the rural class. Prokůpek's initial goal in the 1890's was to create a peasant organization independent of all existing political parties. However, this concept was not accepted by the majority of agrarian organizers in Central Bohemia at this time.

Prokůpek felt that the peasant was the foundation of the nation. Farmers were the most important social and economic class, and the nation and other social classes only progressed and prospered as the peasant class advanced and flourished. National wealth was created in the soil, not in factories. Therefore, before a state could start to aid industrial development, it must make sure its agricultural base was healthy, or assistance to industry would be wasted. Since the fruits of farming benefited all classes, farmers needed good educations and the best technological devices available in order to get the most out of the soil. Furthermore, a government must guarantee the welfare of its peasantry, if it wished to build an economically healthy nation. Prokůpek also believed that farmers would not wait for the state to assist them, but needed to combine agitation for government aid


17 Ibid.
with attempts at self-help.\textsuperscript{18} Self-help would take the form of educational self-improvement, boycotts against cartels, and the formation of rural cooperatives as well as political action.

Prokupek and the agrarians believed that there would have been no Czech nation in existence in the nineteenth century had it not been for the past contributions of the Czech peasantry.\textsuperscript{19} It was the peasants who preserved and transmitted Czech culture after the defeat of the Czechs by the Austrians at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Many members of the Czech nobility and intelligentsia were killed or forced to emigrate to escape the Austrian reaction. This disappearance of the native upper classes left only the peasants as progenitors of the Czech nation and reminders of its historical past. In spite of the Germanizing attempts of the Austrians, the Czech peasants continued to speak the Czech language and pass on to their children Czech literary and cultural traditions. Thus, with the Czech cultural renascence in the nineteenth century, Czech intellectuals had to turn to the peasant culture to find the basis for Czech national tradition. This the agrarians firmly felt: that the nation was indebted to the peasantry for its defense of the nation and preservation of Czech culture during a period of Austrian absolutism.\textsuperscript{20} After Bohemian

\textsuperscript{18}Nožicka, Prokupek, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{19}Prokupek, Rolník, p. 175. \textit{Obrana zemědělců}, May 29, 1897, p. 69.
cities had been Germanized, the peasantry remained loyal to its national traditions, remaining therefore, the truest source of the national spirit.\footnote{Stanislav Kubr, \textit{Organisace rolnictva a zastoupení stavové} (Praha: E. Beaufort, 1897), p. 5.} For this reason, moreover, agrarians believed the rural classes were superior to the urban. Consequently, the other classes of the Czech nation were obligated to the peasantry, and should repay their obligation by insuring that the modern farmers' economic needs were met. Clearly the agrarians idealized the peasantry as the source of the modern Czech nation and the economic well-being of the nation. Furthermore, their analysis of the role of the peasant in the nation was consistent with peasantist philosophy that stressed the national value of the peasantry.

A concrete step toward a united national agrarian organization was taken in Prague on February 27, 1897, when the \textit{Sdružení českých zemědělců} (Association of Czech Farmers) was officially formed. Stanislav Kubr was elected chairman. Kubr, a member of the Young Czech Party, resisted those farmers who wanted to make the \textit{Sdružení českých zemědělců} independent of all political parties.\footnote{Ibid., p. 7. \textit{Obrana zemědělců}, April 16, 1897, pp. 19-20.} The affiliation of the \textit{Sdružení českých zemědělců} with the Young Czech Party was criticized by Alfons Šťastný. Šťastný's attitude was in part dictated by his long feud with the Young Czechs, so naturally he was not pleased to see other farmers cooperating with
them. As a result Štastný and his followers in Southern Bohemia remained outside the Sdružení českých zemědělců, making it less than the unified farmers' organization Kubr had wanted.

Kubr felt that the founding of an organization of farmers had been inevitable due to harsh customs and tariff policies. Furthermore, although the economically depressed eighties had passed, farmers had still not completely recovered from its after-effects. The blame for the continued rural economic weakness was laid on government policies and the power that middlemen operating cartels had. However, the large number of less productive farms also compounded the economic problems of the countryside. In spite of these economic problems Kubr did not envision agrarian militancy for economic relief fragmenting the broader national movement, since in his view, it was to the advantage of the whole Czech nation to join the peasant in the fight to correct economic injustices.

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24 Kubr, Organisace, p. 5.
26 In 1896 704,000 Bohemian farms were less than 5 hectares in area. There were 160,000 farms between 5 and 50 hectares, and 5,000 farms over 50 hectares. Richter, "Statistische," Handbuch, p. 453.
27 Kubr, Organisace, pp. 5, 10.
Kubr was critical of Štastný for remaining outside the agrarian association, because he hoped for a united farmers' organization that would not be isolated from the mainstream of Czech politics. For Kubr working with the Young Czech Party would guarantee the agrarians a strong political ally in the legislative assemblies of Austria.

Throughout 1897 and early 1898 Kubr directed the Sdružení českých zemědělců in its attempts to organize the rural class. The organization grew from two thousand members in 1897 to eighteen thousand by 1899. Although the movement concentrated on organizing and politicizing the peasantry, it also began a fight against the power of agricultural cartels. Cartels were owned by businessmen, who acted as middlemen between the farmers and their markets. The cartels made handsome profits by charging peasants for processing their crops into the final market forms. These cartels were monopolies that peasants did not have the financial power or unity to break. Cartels forced farmers to accept their inflated prices and services. The agrarian leaders hoped to destroy the power of the cartels and establish in their place some type of rural cooperative. These rural cooperatives would return the profits to the farmers instead of the capitalist middlemen. Shortly after its formation the Sdružení českých zemědělců began

28 Kubr, Organisace, p. 11.
29 Frankenberger, Švehla, p. 84.
to organize to break the power of cartels, and selected as its first target the sugar beet cartel. The struggle against the cartels would be a long one, with total success not coming until 1909.30

Being the party of the new Czech industrialists, the Young Czech Party leadership was largely urban in outlook. It tended to view the cartel as an instrument of economic advancement—not as one of necessary evil. The Young Czechs hoped to build industry in Bohemia—industry controlled by Czechs.31 Since many agricultural cartels were controlled by Czech investors, cartels were thought to complement this Young Czech goal. Naturally when the Sdružení českých zemědělců began its crusade against the sugar beet cartel, the Young Czechs were unsympathetic to their cause. The agrarians soon sensed the lack of support of the Young Czech Party and this reenforced agrarian suspicions that the Young Czech Party was the party of industry.32 The Young Czechs' stance on this issue made it increasingly difficult for the Sdružení českých zemědělců to justify its connections with them. To the agrarians


32 Hakl, Švehla, p. 13.
Young Czechs became the epitome of urban capitalists who were more concerned about industrial development than agricultural development.

One of the first tests of the durability of the agrarian association with the Young Czech Party occurred with the renewal of the economic provisions of the Austro-Hungarian Settlement in 1897. The Czech agrarians wanted a tariff system in the Austrian half of the empire, which would keep out cheap Hungarian grain and allow Czech farmers to sell their grain at higher prices. The Young Czechs tended to oppose this agrarian policy, because urban voters wanted to buy grain as cheaply as possible. As a result of these differences the Sdružení českých zemědělců declared on the 7th of December 1897, that it would vigorously defend the economic policies the farmers wanted, and asserted their right to develop an economic policy independently from the Young Czechs.

Although the tariff issue was an important cause for disagreement between agrarians and Young Czechs, other areas of friction were also developing. The Sdružení českých zemědělců was disturbed at the lack of interest Young Czechs showed in improving

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33 The economic terms under discussion were "quotas for common expenses, the joint bank, and customs and commercial treaties." A. J. May, The Habsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914 (Cambridge, Massachussetts: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 348.


35 Obraza zemědělců, December 10, 1897, p. 307. Kubr had also asserted the right of agrarians to have liberty in economic policy development. Kubr, Organisace, p. 11.
the standard of living of rural society. The Čech agrarians wanted agricultural schools established and rural public service improvements. For these improvements money was needed. Since the money was slow in coming, Czech agrarians began to believe that the Young Czechs were lax in pushing for legislative programs capable of dealing with agrarian problems (e.g., reform of the produce exchange and fairer land taxes). 36

While they differed with the Young Czechs as to economic policies, Czech agrarians did not express any criticism of the national program of the Young Czechs. Rather they helped the Young Czechs publicize their national demands by printing their ideas and proclamations in agrarian journalistic organs. 37 As relations between the agrarians and Young Czechs began to deteriorate, Alfons Šťastný felt that his earlier fears had been justified. He began to reiterate his opinion that farmers could never accomplish their goals in association with the Young Czechs, because they held no positions of power within the Young Czech Party. 38


37 Throughout the Badeni language law controversy the agrarian newspaper, Obrana zemědělců, supported Young Czech resistance in defense of the nation. For an example see Obrana zemědělců, July 30, 1897, p. 1.

38 Selské noviny, February 10, 1897, p. 71. Šťastný stated that only one Young Czech deputy in the Zemský sněm was a farmer; thus, in his opinion it was ridiculous to believe the Young Czechs could adequately represent agrarian interests.
The developing schism between the *Sdružení českých zemědělců* and the Young Czech Party leadership culminated in a break on October 13, 1898, when the executive committee of the *Sdružení českých zemědělců* announced it would no longer be affiliated with the Young Czech Party or for that matter any other political party. Their independent course quickly became evident when they began supporting agrarian candidates in elections. The separation of the *Sdružení českých zemědělců* from the Young Czech Party was welcomed by Šťastný, and he soon affiliated himself with their movement, creating a unified agrarian movement in Bohemia.

On January 6, 1899, the *Sdružení českých zemědělců* held a congress in Prague which ratified the executive committee's decision for party independence. The delegates than announced the formation of their own party, the Czech Agrarian Party, which proposed to defend the interests of middle class farmers.

Although the agrarians split from the Young Czech Party primarily as a result of economic policy differences, it was not long before they began criticizing each others' national stance. The Young Czechs were incensed that the agrarians had left their

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39 Obrana zemědělců, October 14, 1898, pp. 351-52. Kucera, Stát, p. 18. The proclamation announcing the measure was filled with much patriotic rhetoric, indicating they were not giving up the struggle for national rights.

40 Karel Prášek was the first independent agrarian elected to the Zemský sněm (January 1, 1899). In the following years several agrarians ran in off-year elections, meeting with little success.

41 Obrana zemědělců, January 20, 1899, p. 20. Frankenberger, Švehla, p. 82.
party. A name-calling contest, fought out in respective party journalistic organs, raged between the two groups. The Young Czechs charged the agrarians with fragmenting the common national struggle against the Habsburgs, and therefore hindering the cause of national autonomy. In effect, the agrarians had betrayed the Czech nation. The agrarians, who considered themselves to be the true nation, countered by accusing the Young Czechs of disloyalty to the nation because of Young Czech cooperation with Vienna in the previous decades. The agrarians claimed urban influences had warped the Young Czech perspective of the nation. Thus, what had begun as a division over economic policies degenerated into a division over national identity and goals—differences that were more rhetorical than real.

The controversy between the Young Czechs and the agrarians had another effect. The agrarians, who had been motivated to organize for economic reasons, found themselves becoming increasingly concerned with a national program which would indicate to farmers and the rest of the nation that Young Czech criticism of the integrity of the agrarian national stand was unfounded. Agrarians had always been concerned about achieving Czech national rights; their polemics with the Young Czechs forced them to accentuate

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42 Czech agrarians were critical of the Young Czech decision to defy the Old Czech boycott of the Zemský sněm in 1874, and seat their deputies without getting any Austrian concessions of autonomy in return. Agrarians were also critical of Young Czech accommodation with Badeni from 1895 to 1897, because cooperation strengthened centralism.
Czech national rights as part of their program to reassure public opinion.

The Czech agrarians did not contribute new ideas to Czech national-political philosophy, though they did shift the primary national emphasis to the rural class which was consistent with their peasantist orientation. They retained as the basis of their national-political program the traditional státní právo concept, and continued to look to František Palacký's national philosophy to support their own national program. At this time agrarians were seeking national autonomy for Bohemia within the confines of the Habsburg Empire. However, the agrarians were prepared to fight for both national and economic demands simultaneously. National strength had to be built on a sound economic base, in this case an economically strong peasantry. The agrarians, moreover, felt farmers needed economic help immediately, and strove to create a national-economic program which would answer their needs.

The founders of the Sdružení českých zemědělců and the independent agrarian party were mainly young men from the rural middle class. Their fathers owned prosperous estates, and were generally able to give at least one of their offspring a good education in one of the higher schools in Prague. When their sons returned home after their schooling, these gentlemen farmers formed

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the nucleus of an agrarian intelligentsia, and provided rural leadership at a time when the countryside was recovering from several decades of rural depression. Furthermore, their wealth gave them the leisure to indulge in politics which their poorer brethren, who had to go out to the fields every day, could seldom enjoy. Although the programs they advocated were supposed to help both rich and poor farmers, these leaders tended to be conservative in their dealings with the poorest peasant. In actuality the programs they advocated focused more on the needs of middle-sized farmers, although poorer farmers benefited also. Although agrarians wanted electoral reform and more political power for the rural class, their liberal position was compromised by the fact that they supported the continuation of the curia system of voting in elections for the Reichsrat and Zemský sněm.  

Agrarians supported direct and universal, but not equal, suffrage. Since they were not completely convinced that poorer farmers would vote wisely, middle-sized farmers who dominated the party, supported a voting system balanced in their favor. Their stance on electoral issues brought strong denunciation from Young Czechs and Social Democrats, and was eventually challenged by some agrarians as well.

44 Havránek, "Lage," 133.


46 See page 82.
The relationship of the agrarians with the Habsburg authorities was in part dictated by the relationship between the agrarians and the Young Czechs. When the agrarians were associated with the Young Czech Party, their national views were overshadowed by the Young Czech Party's better known leadership. After severing their connections with the Young Czech Party, the importance of this newly-organized farmers' movement was not immediately grasped by Habsburg officials. Before 1900 agrarians had only two delegates in the Zemský sněm and none in the Austrian Parliament. Reports on agrarian meetings to the Austrian Governor in Prague revealed little government fear of the agrarian movement, although reports on agrarian candidates participating in elections suggested the possibility that the movement might gain momentum and grow in strength as it became better organized. Habsburg officials acknowledged that farmer candidates could be very appealing to rural voters.

National conflict between Czech agrarians and the Imperial government was not striking or unique, since the agrarians followed the leadership of the Young Czechs in the national struggle even after their declaration of independence. For example, when the agrarians

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47 Karel Prášek and Josef Novotný were the Czech agrarian representatives in the Zemský sněm. Alfonz Šťastný and Jan Rataj were members of the Reichsrat, but they did not join the Czech Agrarian Party until after its separation from the Young Czech Party. František Udřžal, a deputy to the Zemský sněm, worked closely with the agrarians, but remained within the Young Czech Party until 1907.

Badeni language decrees were revoked in 1897, a huge storm of protest spread through Bohemia. The agrarians viewed this revocation as a setback to státní právo and equality between Czech and German, and joined with other Czechs in protest. As a result agrarian journalistic organs were frequently confiscated and censored by the government for inflammatory remarks and for encouraging farmers to go to Prague to join in the anti-Habsburg demonstrations.

In spite of this rising national rights interest, the Czech agrarians never ignored rural economic demands. Throughout their meetings they continued to call for tariff protection and economic assistance. While expressing strong concern about the national policies of the Habsburgs in local agrarian meetings, agrarian assemblies tended to concentrate their discussions on economic issues and problems. The general format of local meetings began with a report devoted to the political situation, followed by a discussion of a variety of economic and organizational issues.  

The economic issues discussed by agrarians at their meetings could be as threatening to the Habsburg authorities as any national demands. Czech farmers, in addition to feeling that Vienna was not doing enough for them, felt it was burdening them with unfair taxes.

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49 SUA. PM, 1891-1900, 8/5/15/189; 8/5/15/227. Economic issues discussed ranged from the threat of giant industry to the cost of grain or the necessity of an agrarian bank.
They also attacked some of the traditional foundations on which the state was constituted (e.g., the Austro-Hungarian Settlement, the right of the central government to determine fiscal policy). Czech farmers were especially disturbed that the countryside received inadequate remuneration from their taxes. Agrarians wanted their tax money used locally in building agricultural schools or starting a rural insurance program (both much-needed projects). Agrarians felt the money that should have been used on these programs had in some way been squandered or misallocated by the bureaucracy in Vienna on other projects, particularly those involving the army. Due to their suspicion that Vienna was controlled by German-Jewish capitalists whose only concern was to protect their own financial interests, Czech agrarians were sceptical of the government's desire to help rural classes.

In addition to attacking urban capitalist influences in the empire, Czech agrarians also criticized Social Democrats. Social Democrats were regarded as another urban party, which had no commitment to agricultural needs, and moreover, was heavily dominated by Jews and other internationalists, who had no understanding of the national needs of Czech farmers. Agrarians also

50 Obrana zemědělců, April 28, 1899, p. 145. Their anti-military attitude was also evident in their anger at government conscription of horses for the army. Obrana zemědělců, April 9, 1897, p. 14.

51 Ibid., October 15, 1897, p. 239; April 23, 1897, p. 27.

52 Ibid., April 16, 1897, p. 19; April 25, 1897, p. 28.
criticized the Social Democrats' idea of rural collectivization. They felt it destroyed an individual farmer's freedom. Finally, Social Democrats formally represented the workers, which, in agrarian opinion, made it impossible for them to deal properly with rural issues.

Once the agrarians had left the Young Czech Party, the development and passage of appropriate agrarian legislation in the Zemský sněm and Reichsrat became their own responsibility. Since they had no deputies in Vienna, and only a handful in the Zemský sněm a formidable task confronted them. With the channels of the Young Czech Party no longer available, they could only hope that legislation favorable to them would be passed. They sought to influence such legislation through journalistic efforts. In spite of their very small representation in the legislative bodies of the empire, the Czech agrarians were building an organization that began to speak for a significant portion of Czechs, and was embarking on a program to break the power of agricultural cartels.

As with most fledgling political parties with a small base of power, somewhat narrow appeal, and little political clout, the

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53 Obrana zemědělců, April 16, 1897, p. 20. Social Democrats, although advocating a rural program of collectivization, never gave agrarian organizers much competition, since they were concentrating on organizing workers. Moreover, it was doubtful that Social Democrats would have had significant success organizing farmers, since even poor farmers tended to identify with the aspirations of their wealthier brethren rather than with the programs of the Social Democrats.

54 Ibid., October 22, 1897, p. 251.
Czech Agrarian Party faced many problems crucial to its survival. The future of the Czech agrarians depended on their success in mobilizing all rural voters behind their banner and achieving power within government bodies. Meanwhile they sought to reassure Czech nationalists that they were not ignoring national goals while attempting to win economic concessions from Vienna.
CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH OF THE CZECH AGRARIAN PARTY, 1901-1906

The efforts of Czech agrarians to organize the countryside in order to dominate the Czech Department of the Zemědělská rada proved successful.¹ In elections of February 1, 1900, the Czech agrarians managed to place sixty of their followers among the 133 members of the Czech Department, unseating many Old Czechs, Young Czechs, and conservative noble landowners. Ten agrarians received positions on the executive committee, and one was chosen to serve as chairman.² Since representatives were chosen by farmers in district elections, the rising strength of the Czech agrarians indicated their program was attracting rural voters.

¹ The Zemědělská rada was divided into Czech and German Departments that dealt with agricultural problems and promoted rural improvements at the provincial level. A central department attempted to insure that the two national departments operated with a minimum of rivalry.

² Frankenberg, Švehla, p. 83.
From 1899 through 1900 the Czech Agrarian Party ran candidates in several off-year elections to fill vacant seats in the Zemský sněm. Young Czechs were its major opposition, and proved difficult to defeat. In one election the Czech agrarian Ždarský was defeated by a Young Czech, 425 votes to 53; yet, government reports of the election characterized the Czech Agrarian Party as a rising political force that would have to be reckoned with in the future. Habsburg officials felt that the agrarians' organizational efforts combined with an agrarian program that appealed wholly to rural interests were the keys to their future growth.

Elections were scheduled in 1901 for the Austrian Reichsrat and the Bohemian Zemský sněm. Czech agrarians planned to nominate their own candidates and enter the political arena with the proclaimed mission of helping the economically ailing countryside. At first the agrarians tried to devise a compromise with the Young Czechs whereby the agrarians and the Young Czechs would run candidates in mutually agreed upon districts. Both parties were somewhat fearful that the outcome of the elections might weaken their respective movements. Young Czechs were concerned about the likelihood that the Czech Agrarian Party might attract voters who had previously supported them, while agrarians feared that Young

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3SUA. PMT. 7/1900 (Report 31 VII. 00).

Czechs were still strong enough to defeat their candidates. The compromise would have afforded both sides some advantages. Young Czechs would face agrarian opposition only in certain districts. On the other hand, Czech agrarians would be assured of several seats in those districts in which the Young Czechs had not slated candidates. Agrarians by the compromise would be guaranteed of some representation. However, they discarded the plan, since neither party was able to determine just what would constitute a fair proportion of delegates for each party. As a result in the election the parties competed with one another in all rural districts, both attacking Austrian economic and political policies.

On December 8, 1900, an agrarian congress convened to formulate plans for the coming electoral campaigns. The Czech Agrarian Party decided to nominate twelve candidates for the elections to the Reichsrat. During the congress the agrarians reasserted their demands that the Czech state right be recognized by Vienna, and that the Czech crownlands be united. The economic issue that particularly concerned them was the monopolistic danger of cartels, primarily the sugar beet refinery cartels. With respect to the upcoming Reichsrat elections, the agrarians hoped

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5 Kučera, Stát, p. 20. Two independent agrarians, Hyrš and Jaros, also became candidates. Udržal also entered the contest.

6 SUA. PP. V 57/32(Report 10.XII.00).

7 Ibid.
to use the campaign as a platform to publicize their economic concerns for the welfare of the farmer. 8

Elections to the Reichsrat were scheduled for January 8, 1901. The pre-election campaigning was marked by a bitter struggle between agrarians and Young Czechs for votes in rural districts. The Young Czechs faced strong competition in once-safe districts and began promising farmers economic help, such as bonuses for sugar beets sent to the refineries. Since Young Czech supporters owned the monopolistic sugar refineries, they could not advocate drastic changes in the regulation of these sugar cartels without eroding their support among these businessmen. Agrarian candidates were quick to point out to farmers the ties between Young Czechs and the sugar capitalists, denouncing the Young Czechs as hypocrites. Also both parties castigated each other for attempts to compromise on national demands or for actions that weakened the Czech national movement. 9

However, during the polemical battle between Young Czechs and agrarians in the pre-election campaigning, agrarians were also


9 Agrarians attacked the Young Czech Party for its earlier collaboration with the government and its anti-farmer policies, while Young Czechs attacked agrarians for splitting the national movement and for being a party dominated by conservative landowners. These arguments were basically a rehash of their earlier debates at the time of the agrarian split with the Young Czech Party. See page 51ff.
attacking Austrian government policies. These attacks increased in intensity as election day drew nearer. Prime Minister Körber was the focal point of much of their ire. Agrarian displeasure with Körber centered on national-economic issues; they pictured him as biased in favor of big industry and the German nationality. When the election results were tabulated, Czech agrarians had won 5 seats to the Young Czechs' 53. It was a beginning. These agrarian deputies were faced with the dual responsibility of promoting Czech national rights while seeking to improve the economic conditions of the farming class. During the coming year they sought to publicize their position on these issues in order to attract farmers into their ranks.

Czech agrarians felt that no solution to the rivalry between Czechs and Germans was possible without improving the economic life of the countryside. However, it appeared that in the face of agricultural problems, Körber was only interested in maintaining German hegemony in the Czech crownlands. They perceived in Körber's policy the threat of centralism, which would leave the determination


11 The five successful agrarian candidates were Kubr, Hrubý, Práček, Zázvorka, and Rataj. An independent agrarian, Jaroš, also won election. Udržal won a seat, too.

12 Obrana zemědělců, January 9, 1900, p. 9.
of economic policy solely in German hands. This would obviously conflict with Czech aspirations for economic autonomy. Czech agrarians felt that unless their economic problems were solved, there would be no solution to the national question.\textsuperscript{13} The foundation of national autonomy in their opinion depended upon a healthy agricultural society. To agrarians all centralism came to be synonymous with German domination, and a stifling of non-German economic and national advancements.\textsuperscript{14}

During the summer of 1900 the secretary of the Czech Agrarian Party, Emmanuel Hruby, spoke at a meeting in Mnichovo Hradiště and revealed the intensity of agrarian feeling toward the German nationality. He stated: "The Czech nation is proud...it is cognizant that it stands not merely as the first guard of Slavs against Germanization, but it also stands on guard for modern civilization against the imperialistic barbarism which is calling from Berlin."\textsuperscript{15} The Czech nation, according to Hruby, had a mission to fight Germanization, and since the peasantry had preserved and transmitted the nation's culture, it therefore became a mission of the Czech countryside to lead in this struggle. The peasant

\textsuperscript{13}Obrana zemědělců, January 12, 1900, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{14}Stenografické zprávy sněmu království Českého. Čtvrté výroční zasedání z roku 1899-1900. 22. sézení, May 5, 1900, p. 1053. (Hereafter cited as S.Z.S.K.Č.).

\textsuperscript{15}Obrana zemědělců, June 29, 1900, p. 418.
experience in resisting Germanization under the Habsburgs qualified them over other Czech national groups to lead in the national struggle against Kürber's government.

At a meeting on March 25, 1901, a resolution was passed stating agrarian national and economic demands and expressing general dissatisfaction with the government. The agrarians protested against any division of the historical Czech crownlands, and asked for full equality of the Czech language with the German in all parts of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. As before they also objected to the taxes Vienna was demanding, because they felt Czech rural society was not receiving anything in return. Rural insurance and legal protection for cooperatives was also requested. Again they reasserted the charges that Kürber's economic policy favored industry and ignored the degenerating state of agriculture in the empire. The government always promised help, but never acted. Moreover, agrarians were displeased that the Zemský sněm was always called in the spring when farmers were busiest, making it hard for rural deputies to attend.

The imperial army was also a troublesome issue for Czech agrarians. The language of the military was German, and the agrarians, like other Czech nationalists, called for the use of

16 Obrana zemědělců, March 27, 1900, p. 197.
Czech. The military budget disturbed them as well. To agrarians the military spent money with great abandon, but had little to show in the way of victories for all the funds expended. The military had not even been victorious in 1859 and 1866 when the confrontations were limited. Agrarians viewed military expenditures as undermining economic development through the squandering of the nation's wealth on unproductive institutions. In a speech before the Zemský sněm Karel Prášek criticized the military administration. According to Prášek the government had been promising to establish graduate agricultural schools for two years, but none had been built. Instead the money had been diverted to the military. Furthermore, the military was using good agricultural land for its training exercises instead of the less productive areas which were available. In Prášek's opinion these policies were shortsighted and in no way serving the interests of rural society.

Czech agrarians regarded Körber's language policy as further evidence that he was ruling in favor of Germans rather than in the interests of all peoples of the empire. They believed he was provoking the Czech nation into violent actions by overestimating

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18 Obrana zemědělců, February 13, 1900, p. 96.
19 Ibid., April 10, 1900, p. 231.
21 Ibid.
Czech moderation and amiability. Czechs, they warned, would only stand for so much partiality toward Germans before launching into action that would destroy regional peace. Agrarians believed that Körber had to introduce full language equality as a start toward a lasting solution to the lingering national enmity. Also they felt that the language question, if it was not resolved by Körber in Vienna, should be turned over to the Zemský sněm where the Czech majority could work for a satisfactory solution. Moreover, agrarians held that if Czechs were expected to pay taxes, their language should at the very least be regarded as equal with German. Throughout his time in office, Körber remained the focal point of agrarian displeasure. His government was built on German support, making it unlikely that he would bow to agrarian political demands, thereby jeopardizing his position with his German supporters.

Besides demanding national equality for Czechs living in the historic crownlands, the agrarians also asked for national equality for Czechs living in Lower Austria and Vienna. Most Czechs living in these parts of Austria were Czech farmers who had migrated, and

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22SUA. PP. V 57/32. Copy of censored Obrana zemědělců, December 4, 1900. Also Obrana zemědělců, April 24, 1900, p. 263.

23Obrana zemědělců, June 19, 1900, p. 393. Any Czech solution in the Zemský sněm would have undoubtedly antagonized Germans, since Germans were unlikely to trust the fairness of any Czech proposal.

24Ibid., August 17, 1900, p. 530.
Czech agrarians were concerned about their standard of life.

Another irritant directly related to the national question was the Austrian census. Czech agrarians charged that the census had been incorrectly administered. Czechs had been counted as Germans, and often rural towns had been counted as part of urban districts; such a policy could account for a decrease in the amount of money allocated to rural areas.

The broad power of the Austrian Parliament was another increasingly acute concern of the agrarians in 1900. Agrarians were apprehensive about the role and purpose of this body. It was recognized as having positive potential for agricultural development; yet, currently it seemed to be a place where meaningless political activity occurred. Moreover, as an institution it challenged the legislative rights of the Zemský sněm.25 In October, 1900, the Obrana zemědělců carried an article explaining why the Czech Agrarian Party was participating in elections to the Reichsrat.26 According to the article the agrarians believed that in the Reichsrat they could defend Czech national rights against the Germans, protect and improve the farmer's position in society, and

25Obrana zemědělců, September 11, 1900, p. 585. For the agrarian concept of the role of the Zemský sněm see page 80.

26Ibid., October 5, 1900, pp. 658-59.
fight the centralizing policies of Vienna.

After the January 1901 elections the five newly elected Czech agrarian deputies organized a parliamentary club to lobby for their programs. In their club's first meeting the Czech agrarians reasserted their position that the Zemský sněm was the more important of the two legislative bodies, and that their party would work to achieve autonomy for it. They also refused to recognize legislation of the Austrian Parliament as legally binding on them (a statement made at each new meeting of the Reichsrat by all Czech nationalist parties), reiterating that their aim in the Reichsrat would be to voice the complaints of the Czech nation.

Before the Austrian Parliament convened, deputies of the Czech Agrarian Party and the Czech National Socialist Party combined forces to form a club to promote their common interests in the Reichsrat. The new club contained eleven deputies compared to fifty-three for the Young Czechs. As a result of the recent bitter electoral campaign both parties were on poor terms with the Young Czechs and felt a coalition might strengthen them in relation to the Young Czechs. However, by February, 1901, Czech agrarians began expressing a desire to form a parliamentary alliance with the Young Czechs. The Czech agrarians felt the Czech

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27Frankenberger, Švehla, p. 92.
nation was experiencing a difficult period of development and that inter-party unity was crucial if some form of national autonomy were to be achieved. Another reason for laying aside their pre-election rivalry with the Young Czechs was their need for Young Czech support for some their economic proposals. During the spring of 1901 the construction of canals in the Labe and Oder river regions had become a major agrarian concern in the Reichsrat. Canals could make it cheaper for farmers to ship their products; their construction might also attract Young Czechs if one stressed resulting lower prices for urban dwellers. Czech agrarians also wanted a lower tax rate for farmers. In return they agreed to support the Young Czech program to lower tariffs after crop disasters, and they consented to follow Kramár's leadership in the Reichsrat.

Naturally the Czech agrarian electoral victories had initially irritated and disturbed Young Czechs, particularly those Young Czechs who expected Czech agrarians to be the Czech counterparts of the pan-Germans. These men felt that Czech agrarians would complicate the Czech movement for autonomy; they viewed them as schismatics who would only disrupt the activities of the Czech club in the Reichsrat. However, Young Czech distaste for Czech

28 Obrana zeměděčů, February 1, 1901, p. 89.
29 Tobolka, Kaizl, p. 1110. Letter from Kaizl to B. Páčák.
30 Ibid., p. 1112.
agrarians gradually lessened after the election to the point where they, too, began to advocate a compromise with the agrarians. The Young Czech Kaizl expressed the views of the Young Czechs on this issue when he recognized that the growing strength of the agrarians in the rural curia required that Young Czechs collaborate with rather than fight agrarians. Cooperation could create a national alliance that would reverse the trend of Young Czech failures in the countryside. Through an alliance with the agrarians the Young Czechs could demonstrate that they were not as anti-farmer as agrarian election propaganda portrayed them. Furthermore, even with an independent agrarian party in the Czech national front, Young Czechs still held the hope that if agrarians were included in the Czech club led by Kramář, the Young Czech Party could continue to maintain its voting strength in the Reichsrat.

Although the Czech agrarians and the Young Czechs had declared a truce in the spring of 1901, their relations came near a breaking-point during their respective campaigns for the October, 1901, elections to the Zemský sněm. Since they were competing for votes in many of the same rural distracts, they began resurrecting old disagreements and attacking each other as vehemently as in the recent Reichsrat elections. The Czech agrarian campaign propaganda

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31 Tobolka, Kaizl, p. 1153.
was based on the fear of Austrian centralism, pan-Germanism, and militarism; they claimed that the Czech Agrarian Party was better able to represent rural interests vis-à-vis these issues than the Young Czech Party. After the Czech Agrarian Party's modest victory in the January elections to the Reichsrat, the agrarians were more confident about their prospects in the October elections to the Zemský sněm.

Of the more than forty candidates slated on the Czech Agrarian Party ticket, the agrarians managed to elect twenty-one deputies—three times their previous strength. Their voting appeal was especially evident in the farming regions of Central Bohemia. This area had been the center of their organizational efforts. The election was a setback for the Young Czechs. The government, consequently, faced an increasingly splintering Czech opposition.

Following the 1901 elections the Czech Agrarian Party again concentrated on organizing Czech farmers by establishing self-help organizations that would be especially effective in ending the power of agricultural cartels. The leverage of the Czech

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32 Kaizl estimated that it would be a setback to the Young Czechs if the agrarians won twenty-five seats—a number less than that would indicate that the agrarian movement was losing its attractiveness to rural voters. Tobolka, Kaizl, p. 1153. A rumor that the government had secretly offered the agrarian leader Stanislav Kubr 50,000 zlatys to unite with the German agrarian interests in the Reichsrat was circulated (most likely by the Young Czechs), but never proven. Chundela, Kubr, p. 95.
Agrarian Party depended on its platform's attractiveness to farmers and the consequent number of votes farmers could give the party. Since the party depended on the rural vote, it was in its interest to stop the depopulation of the countryside. Farmers, especially the younger and poorer ones, were emigrating to the cities or foreign lands, searching for a better future. By 1900 only 35.6% of the Czech population was engaged directly in agriculture, and with each year the percentage was slowly declining.

The Czech Agrarian Party sought to halt this decline by promoting a program which would remove the reasons for emigration. They hoped to remove the financial disadvantages of living in the countryside by restoring its economic health, and by establishing educational and cultural institutions that would improve the quality of life in an agricultural society. With their involvement in the Reichsrat and Zemský sněm, the agrarians planned to effect legislation that would provide adequate financial funding for their projects. With the depopulation of the countryside,

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33 Farmers who moved to Prague or another city were as lost to agrarian appeals as if they had moved out of the country, since they soon found urban oriented parties best represented their needs.

34 Dr Šim. Kolařík, "Politika agrární," in Česká politika, edited by Zdeněk Tobolka (Praha: Jan Laichter, 1911), IV, p. 35. The percentage indicates those directly engaged in agricultural work; it does not include those engaged in fishing or forestry or other rural work which did not involve the tilling of the soil.

arose the fear that the very nation itself was being undermined. The city was regarded as a denationalizing force, where the twin evils—socialism and capitalism—corrupted the newly-resettled farmer politically, and where environmental conditions destroyed his health and vigor, sapping a former farmer's desire and ability to fight for rural improvement. Therefore, it became the mission of the Czech Agrarian Party to rescue the countryside and the nation from atrophy.

Middle class educated farmers were most aware of these trends, and promulgated programs that would help elevate their poorer brethren and enable them to remain on their farms. The success of the Czech Agrarian Party at the polls partially resulted from poorer farmers shifting their support from Young Czech candidates to agrarian candidates. Undoubtedly poorer farmers could better identify with their wealthier counterparts than with a Young Czech small businessman or intellectual. Moreover, poorer farmers took a sense of pride in the accomplishments of their wealthier neighbors whom they saw going off to Prague or Vienna as deputies. They were examples of what a poor farmer might achieve with sympathetic legislation and a little more hard work. Their steady support was crucial to the continued success

36 Obrana zemědělců, November 18, 1904, pp. 927-28; March 9, 1906, p. 193. A series of articles on the relationship between the city and countryside was carried in the Zemědělské listy during May and June, 1911.
of the Czech Agrarian Party, and their solid voting support
eventually was recognized in the 1907 elections when the Czech
Agrarian Party began offering some small farmers as party candi-
dates. Moreover, the Czech Agrarian Party provided the only
plausible alternative for farmers casting votes in elections. The
Czech Agrarian Party was the only Czech political party that
consistently spoke out for rural interests. Social Democrats and
bourgeois nationalists were urban oriented. On the other hand,
clericals, which in other East European countries obtained their
support largely from peasants, were never strong in Bohemia owing
to the anti-clerical spirit derived from the Bohemian Reformation.

Aside from the emotional bonds that might cause small
farmers to support wealthier ones in elections, the economic demands
made by the Czech Agrarian Party also had a unifying effect. Both
small and wealthy farmers were concerned about protection in times
of crop disasters, about establishing rural schools, and about
breaking the strength of cartels. The fight against cartels, in
particular, was important in unifying the countryside. Cartels
were symbolic of many rural problems. They were the common enemy

37 In spite of the party's attempts to build up support among the
poorest and smallest farmers, its leadership remained strongly
middle class. In the 1907 elections to the Reichsrat the party
was accused of being controlled by wealthy farmers by the Social
Democrats. The Czech Agrarian Party retorted by listing the
landholdings of some of its candidates. The candidate with the
smallest farm had only 16% hectares of land. Fourteen candidates
had less than 30 hectares (there were 41 candidates slated). Cep,
May 3, 1907, p. 1.
of all rural classes. But, since agrarian organizers had experienced some successes in breaking the power of cartels, the victories could be used by agrarian leaders to demonstrate the power of organization. The effect was to enlarge their membership ranks.

Farmers not only supported the Czech Agrarian Party for economic reasons, but also for national and political ones. The party continued to stress as one of the basic planks of its program the idea of Bohemian autonomy. The national program of the party was not novel, but consistently followed the demands originally set forth by Palacký and adopted by the Young Čechs. The party's program permitted its followers to pursue an economic orientation without giving up the traditional státní právo demands, something that could not be done in the Young Czech Party. The Czech Agrarian Party had formed to protect an interest group in Bohemian society, but it never stopped stressing that its economic interests were also intertwined with the national development of the Czech nation. Thus, Czech agrarians proceeded to develop a national-economic program.

As was indicated in the previous chapter (see page 53), the Czech Agrarian Party's national program stressed federalism and autonomy for the Czech crownlands based on Palacký's national ideas. The party based its national demands on the historical rights of the Czech nation. Before 1620 the Czechs had been politically independent of Austria, and to Czech agrarians this
fact justified a legal relationship vis-à-vis Vienna similar to Austria's relationship with Hungary. The alternative to the historic right position was that of natural right as set forth by Thomas G. Masaryk. The Czech agrarian press, however, initially attacked Masaryk's natural right theory. It felt that basing national demands on what they termed sociological and philosophical ideas (e.g., that all men are created equal, that justice was due all men, etc.) were not as concrete as demands based on historic or states right. Having History justify autonomy was deemed more substantial and less subject to varying interpretations. However, by 1902 agrarians accepted natural right as a justification for autonomy, but with the qualification that it was of secondary importance to the historical claims. They expressed willingness to use every reasonable justification that would support the fulfillment of Czech autonomy, including the initially rejected natural right's defense.

The first comprehensive statement of the objectives and position of the Czech Agrarian Party was compiled in 1903. The party at that time published a program detailing in seven points

37 Obrana zemědělců, April 20, 1900, p. 256; April 24, 1900, p. 264.
38 Ibid., September 17, 1901, p. 673.
its national goals. The first reaffirmed the party's adherence to the idea of language equality in the Czech historic crownlands. The agrarians believed that without complete language equality neither national autonomy nor economic improvements would occur, and Czechs would remain second-class citizens indefinitely. Second, the party supported státní právo for the Czech crownlands, promising to recover the nation's right to autonomy through legal means. Historic and natural rights were used to justify their demands for autonomy. Furthermore, the fulfillment of státní právo required that Austrian centralism give way to federalism and autonomous economic and cultural development. Economic prosperity required the freedom to work on local problems without the stifling influence of the Austrian bureaucracy. Third, the program conceded that for the foreseeable future, Czech agrarian deputies would be obliged to participate in the proceedings of the Austrian Parliament, although stressing that participation did not imply recognition of the present structure of government. Participation in Parliament was intended as a forum for voicing the goals of the Czech people. It was also a place where Czechs could attack the evils of militarism, centralism, and Germanism. Fourth, the program supported

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the right of the Zemský sněm to resolve the question of language in the schools. Their emphasis on successful operation of the Zemský sněm was important to their státní právo demands, since it was a Czech national institution which the Austrian Parliament was not. Also Czechs controlled the Zemský sněm, which permitted them to pass legislation without having to compromise with other national parties. Fifth, the 1903 program advocated autonomous organization of Bohemian agricultural institutions independent from the ministries in Vienna. Sixth, it supported election laws based on direct voting. The final plank expressed the conviction that national aims could only be accomplished by an educated citizenry, necessitating, in particular, the establishment of many agriculture-oriented schools.

Clearly the national program which the Czech agrarians had developed was based on traditional concepts of the nation that had evolved before the formation of their party. Their demands for language equality, the fulfillment of státní právo and greater political autonomy were long-standing issues. In spite of their lack of original thinking, Czech agrarians emphasized or interpreted some national ideas differently from existing Czech nationalist groups. The Czech Agrarian Party's emphasis on the Zemský sněm as a better place to work out their national program than the Austrian Parliament, indicated the agrarians were moving away from the Young Czechs who felt the road to power and influence lay in
the Austrian Parliament. While most other Czech nationalists regarded serving in the Reichsrat as more important than being in the Zemský sněm, agrarian politicians took just the opposite view. Agrarians believed that if the Zemský sněm's prestige and purpose could be restored and rejuvenated, autonomy would naturally follow as Czechs would have less reason to go to Vienna for either political or economic legislative programs. To restore the Zemský sněm to its rightful place required that dedicated deputies be elected. Czech agrarians regarded the emphasis on participation in the Reichsrat by other Czech parties as only increasing the power of the centralistic institution.

Czech agrarians were not averse to working in the Reichsrat; they merely wanted to reorder the priority of these institutions. The Czech Agrarian Party followed the program it was advocating, and tried to use the Zemský sněm to achieve the agricultural legislation farmers wanted. It tended to use the Reichsrat as a forum to air national and political grievances during the coming years. In fact until 1907 Czech agrarian deputies in the Zemský sněm rarely were involved in national debates, concentrating most of their energy on budgetary and economic problems. However, in the

40 S.Z.S.K.Č. Indexes(1901-07).
Reichsrat the priorities were reversed.

During the years from 1902 to 1905 a section of the Czech Agrarian Party's national-political program on voting rights was criticized from within the party as well as by rival politicians and parties. Agrarian organizers, starting with Šťastný, supported universal and direct suffrage, but not equal suffrage. Most agrarians were satisfied with the existing curia system, since they could be assured of a disproportionate representation in a district that was becoming increasingly urbanized. In agrarian circles universal equal suffrage was often regarded as an attempt by city dwellers to usurp the power of rural society. However, their stand against equal voting enabled many of their political opponents to stereotype them as reactionaries with aims identical to the great noble landowners. Moreover, a group of agrarians centered around the person of Antonín Švehla also began to attack this part of the program. Švehla did not want the party to have a conservative image, and undertook to lead a campaign within the party to change its voting stand. It was Švehla's intention to build a mass agrarian party on democratic principles that would draw to it all

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degrees of wealth. The Czech agrarian movement had been organized, operated, and dominated by the farming middle class, since Šťastný had established it. Švehla, while not out to destroy middle class control, wanted the party structure to allow for the involvement of poorer farmers. By the end of 1905 Švehla had succeeded in liberalizing the party's 1903 plank on voting rights to include equal, universal, secret, and direct voting principles. Thus, the Czech Agrarian Party was prepared to campaign as a democratically oriented party. It organized to include farmers from all economic and social strata.

As Švehla and his allies became increasingly influential in agrarian politics after 1903, a united countryside became the motivating idea. Venkov jedna rodina (The Countryside is one family) became the slogan for merging all Czech farmers into one political and economic pressure group. Embodied in the slogan was the conception of all rural people having the same interests and the same enemies (primarily capitalism, socialism, and increasing urban influences). It was clear to Švehla that the Czech Agrarian Party could only wield political influence when it had rural classes.

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44 Dr. O. Srdínek, Bohumil Brádač, Josef Vraný, and Dr. Karel Viškovský were among the men who allied themselves with Švehla's democratization efforts.
jointly supporting its programs; thus, it was important for him to
end rural rivalries and concentrate on promoting common interests.

Simultaneously with the attempts of Czech agrarians to
organize their platform and to elect representatives to the Zemský
sněm and Reichsrat, they were also forced by the growing national
feeling among both Czechs and Germans to lobby for their economic
goals while asserting their national position. The Czech Agrarian
Party had to fight for the economic and national fulfillment of
its program unlike other Czech nationalist parties whose chief
concerns were national issues. For all Czechs one of the foremost
national issues was the language question. It had been simmering
since the Badeni Language Decrees and concerned Czechs, since they
felt the use of the Czech language was crucial to the fulfillment
of their státní právo demands.

The main area of the Czech agrarians' strength was in Central
Bohemia, a region almost entirely Czech. Living in Central Bohemia
meant that most agrarian voters did not have first-hand experience
with the situation in the Czech-German border areas surrounding
Central Bohemia. Their contact with Germans would come primarily
through any contact they might have with German government officials.
Since national issues were debated primarily in the cities and
ethnically-mixed border regions, Czech agrarians and their party
supported national demands of the Czech nation for a number of
other reasons. First, they felt it was a responsibility they owed
to the Czech nation. They were above all else Czechs and had to do everything in their power as Czechs to foster the development of the nation. Second, a strong national appeal was needed to offset any Young Czech propaganda that the Czech Agrarian Party was only concerned with rural economic development and not Czech national development. Finally, because they believed that national and economic interests were interrelated, Czech agrarians were placed in a paradoxical position. They believed that without autonomy there would never be substantial rural improvement, but on the other hand, even with no immediate prospect of achieving autonomy, all farmers should work for rural improvements on a self-help basis. The party had two goals to be reconciled in one program of action; it always had to weigh the economic and national ramifications of each political issue that arose in the coming years, often seeing the economic importance of an issue which other Czech nationalist parties did not.

Prime Minister Körber's language policy was the first issue that the rising Czech Agrarian Party had to face in its role as defender of the farmer and the nation. Czech agrarians felt Körber's language policy was openly biased in favor of Germans. Agrarian deputies joined the deputies of other Czech parties in protesting Körber's language policy and on December 23, 1902, issued a public proclamation asserting their státní právo position and
attacking the sole use of the German language in the state and army. They also asked for the establishment of a second Czech university. Accordingly, on January 3, 1903, Körber called a conference to discuss the language issue, but the Czechs in the Reichsrat boycotted the meeting. Czech agrarians felt that the language question would never be resolved by a minister, they felt a constitutional law was needed which guaranteed their national rights. Czech agrarians felt that a legal guarantee was better than any promise an Austrian Minister might make—this attitude probably stemmed from the fact that the Badeni Decrees were not implemented.

While the Czech club in the Reichsrat was engaged in talks with Körber, it experienced a brief period of disunity when the Czech agrarians left the club on February 21. The Czech Agrarian Party was piqued at the Czech club's lack of support for its proposal to regulate sugar refining cartels. However, by February 23 the Czech Agrarian Party was again part of the united Czech club; the other Czech parties had agreed to support their cartel legislation. This act indicated that the agrarians were not going to sacrifice their economic goals for political ends and demonstrated to the

46 SUA. PM, 1901-10. 8/5/42/14.
Young Czechs dominating the Czech club that agrarian economic needs were as of great concern to them as the future autonomy of Bohemia. The Czech club from this point until the 1907 elections became much more stable as Young Czechs realized that no Czech club could dictate to the agrarians. However, in spite of the unity of the Czech club, the Czechs made little headway in their attempts to make the Czech language equal to the German. Körber and the Prime Ministers who followed him until 1907 had no particular need of Czech votes, since they were governing with the votes of German and Polish parties. Although the Czech club remained united, agrarians were dissatisfied with the slow progress being made toward achieving Czech autonomy.

The Czech Agrarian Party throughout the national struggle from 1902 to 1906 blamed earlier Czech political parties for the present problems of the Czech nation. Having only formed at the turn of the century, the Czech Agrarian Party was safe in criticizing the actions of the Old Czechs and Young Czechs. For example, on May 20, 1904, the Czech agrarian, Jan Rataj, gave a speech condemning the Old Czechs for participating in the first Austrian Parliament and the Young Czechs for following their example; thus, setting a trend which allowed Austria to increase the prestige and power of the Austrian Parliament in relation to the Zemský sněm. He felt both

47Frankenberger, Světla, p. 143.
Old and Young Czechs should have used Austrian weaknesses to gain a greater degree of autonomy. Rataj's criticism, which was not entirely justified in the case of the Young Czechs, had a twofold objective. By criticizing the past actions of other Czech nationalist parties, he wanted to dilute accusations that agrarians were willing to sell-out the Czech nation for economic gains. Second, in spite of the existence of a united Czech club, suspicions always lingered among agrarians that Young Czechs might be negotiating with Austrian officials behind their backs, and speeches like Rataj's were aimed at alerting Young Czechs that they could receive adverse public criticism if an unacceptable agreement was reached without agrarian participation.

During this period from 1903 to 1907, relations between Czech agrarians and German agrarians were extremely antagonistic. Czech agrarians regarded their German counterparts as chauvinistic, concerned only with preserving German dominance at the expense of the Czech majority. Czech agrarians often accused German agrarians of supporting policies that were not in the best interests of farmers, and of selling out to German industrialists in Vienna in

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50 This feeling was heightened by the fact that most German agrarians voted for Pan-German parties. The German Agrarian Party was not formed until 1906.
order to support Germanism in Bohemia. However, on agricultural bills that came before the Reichsrat, both groups voted with the agrarian bloc, indicating that they had more in common than Czech agrarians would publicly admit.

During this period the activities of the Zemědělská rada best exemplify the agricultural collusion between Czech and German agrarians interested in promoting agricultural improvements. Although the Zemědělská rada had been divided into German and Czech Departments in 1890, this institution was able to develop common procedures that lessened the disruptive tendencies of the national rivalry. Working with equal budgets, the Czech and German Departments carried on many agricultural programs and even exchanged information of a technical nature. In spite of cooperation in technical areas, the problem of national differences still existed within the Zemědělská rada. Beginning in 1903 reports sent to the central committee indicated that in some districts national differences were interfering with the organization's operation. Language differences in ethnically mixed districts were at the root of the problem. Local district divisions in which Czech farmers had become the majority began returning letters that were written

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51 Agrární archív. Inventář—Česká zemědělská rada, 1873-1942 (Hereafter cited as A.A. Z.R.). 40/211. One indication of the amicable relations between Czech and German farmers in the Zemědělská rada occurred when the German Department sent a letter expressing its condolences on the death of one of the Czech agrarian leaders, Stanislav Kubr. Ibid., 344/306. Letter no. 17130.
to them in German from the Zemědělská rada. They demanded that all correspondence to them be in the language they spoke—Czech. German officials in the Zemědělská rada were reluctant to admit Czech growth and risk the loss of funds and control in these districts and balked at recognizing the Czech majority. This problem was never resolved, and after 1910 it became an increasingly disruptive issue. The friction in the Zemědělská rada was a result of the general political climate of the prevailing national situation rather than an intrinsic institutional characteristic.

Considering the full scope of the work of the Zemědělská rada, the language issue was relatively minor; the bulk of the work of the Zemědělská rada concerned agricultural problems that faced both nationalities. Furthermore, it worked to promote favorable legislation and policies, particularly in the Ministry of Agriculture in Vienna. Since Czech agrarians dominated the Czech Department, they were in a position to use this organization to achieve economic and social improvements in the countryside. For the practical success of the agrarian program the smooth operation of the Zemědělská rada was important. Since it was divided into both a German and a Czech Department, each nationality had virtual autonomy.

\[52\] A.A. Z.R. 317 (Reports 11.I.04; 28.II05).

with regard to its respective budget; this had the effect of lessening the amount of national friction that could develop. Moreover, the central committee that oversaw the operations of both departments was able to resolve most differences. Self-interest and stable management kept the Zemědělská rada out of the most intense national conflicts until the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I.

For Czech agrarians, control of the Czech Department brought their movement a power and prestige that it had not achieved in any other governmental institution. Making the Czech Department work for rural needs was important in proving to farmers what could be accomplished through organization. Also by making the Zemědělská rada responsible to Czech rural needs, Czech agrarian dependence on the Reichsrat or Zemský sněm for favorable agrarian legislation was not great. Therefore, the party could afford to behave more nationally in these legislative bodies, since their national disruption would not vitally effect the agrarian program initiated by the Zemědělská rada.

Following 1903 Czech agrarian attitudes toward Germans was marked by growing distrust. The Czech Agrarian Party was concerned about the centralizing and Germanizing tendencies of the Austrian government prior to 1907, and regarded the continued depression of rural development as the end result of these tendencies. Czech agrarians were critical of the policies and actions of both the
German Agrarian Party and the Alldeutsch Party in spite of their rural constituencies. Czech agrarians were particularly irked by chauvinistic Pan-German obstruction in the Zemský sněm, and what they felt was the sacrificing of rural interests for narrow nationalist rhetoric. 54 Czech agrarians felt the German agrarian leader, Dr. Schreiner, betrayed the farmers who elected him because of his willingness to forgo agrarian legislation for the sake of preserving German dominance in Bohemia. 55 Also the threat of German obstruction in the Zemský sněm created a growing animosity among Czech agrarians, who felt the functioning of the Zemský sněm as a vital organ of regional government was necessary for the fulfillment of their national program.

During 1905 voting reform became a leading topic of political discussion. Moreover, it had national ramifications. Although Švehla had managed in October, 1905, to persuade the party to adopt a more liberal voting platform, there were elements in the party which were not as wholeheartedly behind it as he. As a result some Czech agrarians complicated maneuvers to win voting reform in the Zemský sněm. In a speech given before the Zemský sněm on October 25, 1905, the Czech agrarian, Karel Prášek, disclosed that Young


55 Ibid.
Czechs were cooperating with Germans in order to achieve voting reform. He implied that the Young Czechs were betraying Czech national interests. Prášek was attempting to slow down the move toward reform by raising national questions. In addition, he asked for evolutionary rather than revolutionary reform. Prášek also was critical of Kramář, the Young Czech leader, for working for reform within the Austrian Parliament, which according to Prášek, promoted Austrian centralism at the expense of the federalistic development which would assure autonomy for Bohemia. Throughout his criticisms Prášek had a threefold concern.

Since Prášek was not an advocate of voting reform, he used Young Czech negotiations with German parties to label Young Czechs as traitors for cooperating with Germans. He could not challenge Young Czechs on their voting stand, because he would open himself to criticism as a reactionary. Therefore, he turned on their alleged attempts to work with Germans. By challenging Young Czech national intentions, he put Young Czechs on the defensive and focused public attention on the secondary issue, Czech national rights. Another concern which all Czech agrarians shared with

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57 Ibid., p. 813. Prášek also accused Kramář of planning to cooperate with Prague Social Democrats in the next election in another attempt to discredit him among Czech bourgeois nationalists.
Prašek was the fear that rural interests might not be properly represented in voting reform agreements secretly arrived at by urban parties. Even agrarians who advocated reform would not like an urban diktat, and would prefer keeping the existing system to one that might discriminate against rural interests. Finally, Czech agrarians were concerned that Germans and Poles might be allotted more mandates than their numbers justified; thus, agrarians wanted to make sure that voting reform did not give undue advantage to other nationalities. Clearly Prašek was not enthusiastic about voting reform, and used national rivalries and accusations to delay its passage. Moreover, Czech agrarians as a whole found themselves in agreement with his demands that the reform of the voting system proceed in an evolutionary manner. Agrarians supported a process of gradual reform, because they were suspicious that urban interest groups would quickly agree on a revised electoral system that discriminated against rural voters. Above all, agrarians wanted to preserve rural voting strength, and would be unlikely, especially in a time of increasing urbanization, to accept any alterations in the voting system that did not protect its base of power.

When Emperor Franz Josef initiated voting reform calling for universal suffrage for elections to the Reichsrat, the Czech Agrarian Party accepted his proposal which became law in January, 1907. Throughout 1906 they had made clear the party's feeling that voting
reform would have to assure rural society fair representation. According to the government's proposal 75 mandates were to be allotted to Czechs, and of these 42 were to be predominantly rural or small-town, giving agrarians a chance to win more than one-half of the mandates. Attempts to achieve voting reform in the Zemský sněm were not as successful, since pressure from noble landowners and general national disunity prevented an agreement from being concluded. The Czech Agrarian Party did not oppose discussions calling for universal suffrage in elections to the Zemský sněm, since, especially after the 1907 Reichsrat elections, it was clear to party leaders that the Czech Agrarian Party could benefit from a universal and equal system of voting.

Besides the franchise issue and the national complications which arose from it, tariffs also had both economic and national ramifications for agrarians. Part of the reason for forming the Czech Agrarian Party was to influence governmental policy. Protectionism, the sheltering of Czech farmers from foreign competition, was the keystone of the party's economic demands. Furthermore, the Austro-Hungarian tariff agreement, which Czech

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59 SUA. PM. 1901-10. 8/5/42/14(Report 2.XI.02).

60 Ibid.
agrarians felt favored Hungarian farmers, was a vital issue as well.

Czech agrarians consistently opposed the importation of cheaper agricultural products, especially from Russia and the Balkan states, because these imports were forcing Czech farmers off the land. \(^1\) Czech agrarians, who regarded Czech farmers as synonymous with the Czech nation, believed this competition was destroying the foundation of Czech national development. When the economic war between Austria and Serbia broke out in 1906, Czech agrarians supported the Serbians, \(^2\) because they felt to do so was in their national and economic interests. Czech agrarians did not like the competition of Serbian grain in the Austrian market, and welcomed attempts by Serbia to find new markets and lessen its reliance on exports to Austria. \(^3\) Therefore, agrarians supported the Serb position, while at the same time the Austrian government was trying to assure Serbian dependence on Austria. Czech agrarians also felt that the attempt of Serbia to lessen her dependence on Austria economically had national-political implications. They saw Serbia's struggle in much the same light as their own—a fight

\(^1\) Karel Prášek, Zemědělství české po obchodních smlouvách. Zdráva kterou na valném shromáždění delegátů českého odboru rady zemědělské dne 15. května 1906 (Praha: Zemědělská rada pro království České, 1906), pp. 2-5.

\(^2\) Obrana zemědělců, January 26, 1906, p. 69.

\(^3\) In contrast urban classes welcomed Serbian grain, since it lowered the price of bread.
against the centralizing and Germanizing tendencies of the Austrian state. Each nation had a right to develop free of Austrian interference; thus, Czech agrarians backed the Serbs "in the interests of our own demands and also in the interest of Slav solidarity." Support of Serbia was seen as consistent with their own desire for less economic competition. Furthermore, they saw Serbian efforts to end Austrian interference in its affairs as similar to their own struggle for autonomy.

Another economic issue with national ramifications was the Austro-Hungarian Settlement. Czech agrarians were primarily troubled by the trade aspects of the settlement. First, it appeared to Czech agrarians that Austria was not concerned about agricultural development in its half of the empire as long as Hungary was providing large amounts of cheap foodstuffs. In the opinion of Czech agrarians it was clear that Austria was favoring industrial development and permitting Hungarian farmers to have protection, while its farmers did not. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarian Settlement had created dualism, a system which favored the German and Magyar nationalities. Czech agrarians felt that the Germans in Cisleithania, in their drive to control and dominate

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64 Obrana zemědělců, January 26, 1906, p. 69.
65 Zemědělské listy, February 1, 1902, p. 61.
the area, willingly sacrificed agricultural development in order
to concentrate on preserving their power.\textsuperscript{66} In addition, Czech
agrarians believed that imported Hungarian livestock carried
disease into Austria and Bohemia which ultimately reduced the
production and earnings of farmers in Cisleithania.\textsuperscript{67} Czech
agrarians wanted established a system of inspection by veterinarians,
which, depending on the strictness of enforcement, could act as a
barrier to Hungarian livestock exports.

Generally speaking the economic situation in Bohemia in the
years from 1900 to 1914 was better than it had been for many years.
Many of the economic problems of the last quarter of the nineteenth
century were over; not only was industrial productivity rising, but
farmers were also benefiting from the rise in agricultural prices.
The improving economic conditions can be seen in the nature of
agrarian economic demands—they were concerned with issues that
would maintain rural prosperity, such as protectionism, better
agricultural education, and public works improvements. With the
growth of the rural economy, there was also less chance of a
radical or revolutionary party program developing. Earlier, when
rural economic problems were rife, Štastrý had been able to base

\textsuperscript{66} Zemědělské listy, March 22, 1907, p. 213.

\textsuperscript{67} SUA. PM, 1901-10. 8/5/42/14(Report 2.XI.02). Also see Řeč posl.
P. Karla Práška pronesená dne 15. května 1902 k Ministerstvu orby
(Mladá Boleslav: Josef Nešněra, 1902), p. 9.
his call for change on the evils of the landowning aristocracy which at that time radicalized the position of the conservative Old Czechs who had been leading the national movement. By 1900, with the economy improving, there was less need to find scapegoats. Nevertheless, because Czech agrarians felt Germans were restricting further Czech economic advancement, they continued, after 1900, to advocate national autonomy. They did not want Germans to be able to influence or control future Czech economic development.

The Czech Agrarian Party's economic programs, liberal political orientation, and its national goals were products of the middle class outlook of the party. The party, while demanding rural improvements, did not call for any socialist economic solution. Furthermore, its dislike for industrial capitalism placed it in the milieu of urban small-shopowners who were also fearful of the effects of big business. The Czech Agrarian Party believed that the Austrian political system could be used to improve the quality of rural life. However, even with the party's middle class orientation, it was still concerned about the problems of poorer farmers. This trend became especially clear after Švehla's move to liberalize the agrarian program. He saw the countryside as a family which had common interests in spite of the social and economic class distinctions of rural society. While the Czech Agrarian Party's national and political goals coincided with other bourgeois nationalist parties such as the Young Czechs,
no other party was dedicated to help improve the economic and social position of both poor and middle class farmers.

By the end of 1906 the Czech Agrarian Party was completing its organizational work and had developed a program that emphasized the economic concerns of farmers, but was, in addition, based on traditional demands calling for Czech autonomy. With its involvement in Austrian political and economic bodies, the Czech Agrarian Party had to face numerous political and economic issues which had to be resolved in a manner consistent with its economic and national goals. Among the Czech nationalist parties, the Czech Agrarian Party was the only one with a mass following whose interests were not primarily political. Though in 1906 Czech agrarians could boast only a handful of deputies in the Reichsrat and Zemský sněm, the base of their support enabled them to look forward to the 1907 elections with optimism. Their lack of political strength was the chief problem they had to overcome. Without a base of power in either the Reichsrat or Zemský sněm, they had little chance to implement their national-agrarian program. The 1907 elections would be critical.
Elections to the Reichsrat were scheduled for the spring of 1907. In its campaign the Czech Agrarian Party supported a program to improve the status of tenant farmers, peasants, and rural craftsmen and tradesmen.\(^1\) The party was endeavoring to unite all rural interests, including those living in the countryside, who did not make their living directly from farming.\(^2\)

A month prior to the elections, Emperor Franz Josef made an official visit to Prague. The Emperor's advisors urged him to come, 

\(^{1}\)Frankenberger, Svehla, p. 161.

\(^{2}\)In part to accomplish this goal a new agrarian newspaper was founded. It was entitled Cep(Flail) and was under the editorship of Josef Vraný. It stressed the need to organize workers in agricultural-related industries that many Social Democrats considered their special preserve. The rivalry between Social Democrats and agrarians consequently intensified during the election campaign. Cep, May 10, 1907, p. 1. By 1914 the agrarians had founded more than a dozen newspapers and periodicals throughout Bohemia. While agrarian newspapers were used to publish news items, they were also valuable tools for public relations. Since most rural Czechs were literate, the press was used by the party to publicize its programs and accomplishments among the rural classes.
because they hoped his visit would improve relations between Czechs and Germans and might lead to a lessening of national tensions, thereby making it easier for Prime Minister Beck's government to operate. While in Prague the Emperor met leading German and Czech politicians and performed many ceremonial and social duties. No untoward incidents marred the Emperor's visit.

Only once did the Emperor have more than passing contact with a representative of the Czech Agrarian Party. During an audience he talked briefly with the agrarian, Stanislav Kubr, a candidate running in the Smíchov district. When the Emperor learned that Kubr was a candidate for election, he wished Kubr well. Kubr used that opportunity to tell the Emperor that his election was in doubt because of the growing strength of Socialism. Kubr complained that Socialism had become a threat to the whole empire. Franz Josef apparently took Kubr's comment lightly, saying that he felt Kubr could overcome his Socialist opponent, and that ended the conversation. Although some agrarians regarded this meeting as one of great significance (i.e., an agrarian having dialogue with the Emperor),

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3 Emperor Franz Josef himself hoped his visit would lessen national tensions. SUA. PMT. 3/1907. Letter from Franz Josef to Count Coudenhové, April 29, 1907.

4 Smíchov was a district immediately south of Prague. It was becoming suburbanized as many Prague workers moved into the area. Politically, the district had supported agrarians, but with the increasing influx of workers, it had become more social democratic in outlook.
given the length and schedule of Franz Josef's visit, it could not be considered especially outstanding. Urban bourgeois leaders, like Kramář, played the leading role in Czech politics at this time, and had greater access to the Emperor and his advisors at that time. Because of their lack of numbers, Czech agrarians were still largely onlookers in national negotiations. Although they had hoped the Emperor's visit would lead to greater political rights for Czechs, Czech politicians, including agrarians, were disappointed that his visit was fruitless in this area. The election campaign continued.

The Czech Agrarian Party slated forty-one candidates to run in the rural districts (in addition the party, which had united with Moravian agrarians in 1905, presented twelve candidates in Moravia and one in Silesia). In Bohemia there were 75 Czech mandates and 283 aspiring candidates. On May 14, 1907, four Czech and two Moravian agrarians were elected by absolute majorities. In the run-off elections nineteen more Czech agrarians, three more Moravian agrarians, and one Silesian agrarian were elected. The election

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5Chundela, Kubr, p. 135. Frankenberg, Švehla, p. 166. The Emperor's daily schedule and summaries of meetings can found in the April issues of Venkov, 1907. Particularly see the April 22 issue for Kubr's visit with the Emperor.

6Stanislaw Kubr was overwhelmingly defeated by his Socialist opponent.

7Election statistics are taken from Plzeňský kraj, May 31, 1907, p. 1.
results netted the party a total of twenty-eight seats—twenty-three in Bohemia, five in Moravia, and one in Silesia—making it the strongest Czech political party in the Reichsrat. The Czech Social Democrats with twenty-four seats ranked second, while the Young Czech alliance trailed with twenty-one. Within eight years of its formation, the Czech Agrarian Party had become the largest Czech political party, thereby putting an end to Young Czech control of rural districts.

Since the national program of the Young Czechs was virtually identical with that of the Czech Agrarian Party, the explanation for the success of the agrarians in wooing rural votes clearly lies elsewhere. Undoubtedly the organization of the Czech Agrarian Party, which permitted farmers, both wealthy and poor, to have influence in local district and village committee decisions, was attractive to farmers eager to improve their lot. Also since most agrarian candidates were farmers, rural voters saw evidence of their class gaining political power. Young Czech candidates tended to be businessmen and intellectuals, who ran in rural districts, but spent most of their time in Prague or Vienna. Finally, the economic program of the Czech Agrarian Party was specifically designed for rural needs whereas Young Czechs had to develop a program appealing

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8Heidler, Strany, p. 27. Kučera, Stát, pp. 22-25.
to more than one economic and social interest group. In spite of the remarkable growth of the Czech Agrarian Party, and its control of twenty-eight seats, the party had received only 150,000 votes out of more than 700,000 cast in rural and urban districts.\(^9\)

The growth of both agrarian and socialist parties in Bohemia indicated a growing interest in economic improvements and programs. Most Bohemian voters were concerned with achieving more than national and political justice. However, Czech agrarians differed from the Socialists in that they combined their economic program with the traditional státní právo national demands.

Before the Reichsrat assembled, the deputies of the Czech Agrarian Party met with the party's executive committee to establish the rules of their agrarian club in the Reichsrat.\(^10\) They demanded that speeches given in the Czech language before the Reichsrat be recorded in the parliamentary reports in Czech rather than in German. With respect to their státní právo position, they voiced their commitment to work for the decentralization of power and a

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\(^9\)All 150,000 agrarian votes came from rural districts, since no agrarians ran in urban districts. When considering the total number of votes cast, the Social Democratic Party was actually stronger. They received 280,000 votes when rural and urban district results are combined. Votes, however, were weighted in favor of rural districts where agrarians, of course, were strongest. Also Social Democratic strength was diffused in urban and rural districts. As a result the Czech Agrarian Party was first in number of seats, but second in number of votes received. Statistics from Plzeňský kraj, May 31, 1907, p. 1.

\(^10\)Frankenberger, Svehla, p. 173.
subsequent expansion of the power of the Zemský sněm. In addition to their national and political goals, the Czech agrarians also announced a specific set of economic aims. First, Czech agrarians urged the implementation of a law which would assure that tax money from a province would be used in underdeveloped parts of that same province; they preferred that it not be sent to Vienna or to some other non-Czech region. Agrarians wanted tax money spent on the construction of schools and rural services. Second, Czech agrarians asked for an accurate census to be taken on the basis of a person's mother tongue rather than on the language of communication. This demand was aimed particularly at protecting Czech national strength in areas which were predominantly German. Third, the Czech agrarians demanded universal old-age and invalid insurance. Such legislation would protect old and disabled farmers from losing their livelihood. Fourth, agrarians urged an increase in the allowance of the state improvement fund for Bohemia in order to have more money for rural improvements. Fifth, they wanted to lower the land tax. Sixth, agrarians demanded a law that would regulate cartels and give state aid to districts suffering from crop failures or natural disasters. Finally, they expressed concern over the present system of military conscription which seemed to induct a disproportionate number of

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11 Cep, June 21, 1907, p. 1.
rural young men. The Czech Agrarian Party hoped to legislate this program into law while working for increased autonomy for Bohemia. The program was designed for poorer and middle class farmers. It was the poorer farmers who especially needed help, and who Czech agrarian leaders feared would leave the farms and be lost as supporters if their status were not improved.

When the Reichsrat convened, the Czech Agrarian Party joined Kramář's united Czech club to present a unified front on national issues. However, they could reach no agreement on common economic and social aims which left the battle for rural economic legislation the responsibility of the Czech Agrarian Party. Agrarians in the Czech club were content to allow Kramář to dominate political maneuvering in the interests of unity; also they were probably not psychologically prepared to lead in spite of being numerically the strongest party.

When Emperor Franz Josef addressed the opening session of the Reichsrat, his speech stressed the economic and social projects which he hoped would be promoted, and he dealt only briefly with the nationality issue. Thus, it seemed that mutual economic interests could unite agrarians with the government, since both wanted to concentrate on economic legislation albeit for different reasons.

12 Stenographische Protokolle des Österreichischen Abgeordnetenhauses (Hereafter cited as S.P.U.A.), June 19, 1907, pp. 7-8.
The Emperor saw the resolution of economic and social problems as primary to the strength of his state, while Czech agrarians saw the solution of these problems as a step toward achieving national autonomy for the Czech crownlands.

When Prime Minister Beck formed his government just prior to the May, 1907 elections, he gave two ministerial posts to Young Czechs (Folt and Pacák). Kramář led the united Czech club, which included Czech agrarians, in support of Beck's government, because he felt Beck would be sincere in striving for a solution to the nationality issue and would not allow himself to be controlled by German interests. Beck seemed amenable to Czech demands and goals. The united Czech club's support of Beck's ministry did not prevent its members from signing a national statement declaring that the club did not recognize the legality of the Reichsrat, and demanded, on the basis of Czech historic rights, legislative and administrative independence. The signers felt that Emperor Franz Josef's rescript of September 12, 1871, which recognized the historical rights of Bohemia established a legal foundation for their demands for autonomy. Although the Czech club in the Reichsrat was cooperating with Beck's ministry, it wanted all Czechs to know that this involvement did not mean it acquiesced to the status quo. The united Czech

13 Frankenberg, Švehla, p. 175.
14 For a discussion of the rescript see May, Habsburg Monarchy, pp. 59-60.
club also declared that voting reform (which had been effected in January, 1907) would never placate the Czechs' desire for autonomy. For the moment support of Beck's government seemed the best way to work toward Czech autonomy.

All Czech parties were waiting to see what results cooperation with Beck would bring. An early success occurred on July 11, 1907, when Beck acceded to Czech demands, including those of Czech agrarians, and included Czech transcripts beside the German parliamentary protocols. Moreover, Beck also permitted the publication of parliamentary speeches in the original language in newspapers. Another source of national concern for Czechs was a second Czech university. However, they were not successful in gaining Beck's commitment for this project.

Since Beck's cabinet was organized to include representatives of the Slav nationalities, Germans felt he was ignoring their needs. Beck's hope of building his government around common economic self-interests demanded that he cement his support with Slav deputies. His reliance on Slavs caused German deputies to become suspicious about his aims. Before the May elections Beck had appointed two Young Czechs to the cabinet, but in view of the success of the agrarians and Social Democrats in the 1907 elections, it was clear that Young Czechs were not representative of Czech public opinion. Therefore, in November, 1907, Beck decided to reconstruct his cabinet to include a member of the Czech Agrarian Party. The
inclusion of a Czech agrarian would more accurately approximate the realities of the political situation, and it would bring into his cabinet someone interested in economic issues. Beck named Karel Prášek *Ministr krajana* (Minister of the Interior) for Bohemia.¹⁵ Also partly in recognition of the personal dislike for the Young Czech Fort among Czech agrarians, and also because Beck himself wanted a person who could adapt to the economic orientation of his government, Beck replaced Fort as *Ministr obchoda* (Minister of Commerce) with another Young Czech, Dr. Fiedler.¹⁶ Dr. Fiedler had a reputation as an expert in financial matters, and was not considered as rabidly nationalistic as his predecessor. Czech agrarians had finally received some recognition of the strength they had achieved in the elections. In addition it appeared that the party would suit Beck's own policy, that is to defuse the national controversy by emphasizing economic goals.

¹⁵ The Czech Agrarian Party wanted the *Ministr orby* (Minister of Farming) position, since it seemed most appropriate, given the nature of the party. However, due to the necessity of juggling ministerial positions among nationalists of various parties, the position of *Ministr krajana* fell to its lot. Before Prášek accepted the position he consulted with members of other Czech political parties to gain their approval. The only Czechs who disapproved of Prášek's acceptance were Czech radicals and Social Democrats. Frankenberg, *Svešla*, p. 181.

In spite of Prášek's involvement in Beck's government, and an election victory which owed its success primarily to the party's economic appeal among farmers, the party continued to express its adherence to the státní právo position. With Prášek in the government, the Czech Agrarian Party hoped simultaneously to influence economic legislation and work for federalism. He could urge the government toward federalism while directing the development of the government's economic orientation. Moreover, participation in the government would bring influence and respect.

When Prášek entered the government, the Czech Agrarian Party was forced to volte-face. The party had been very critical of the initial Young Czech involvement in Beck's government, only to find themselves participating in a government formed by the same man. The Czech Agrarian Party's candidates in the previous election had criticized Young Czech support of Beck, because it was de facto recognition of the Austrian position against the Czech battle for autonomy. In the opinion of agrarians participation strengthened and sanctioned centralism. Therefore, by November, the Czech Agrarian

17 <sup>Cep</sup>, November 15, 1907, p. 2.

18 Although the Czech Agrarian Party joined the united Czech club led by Kramár in the Reichsrat, relations between Young Czechs and agrarians were never congenial. Young Czechs were angered by their electoral losses to agrarian candidates, while agrarians felt Young Czechs expected them to be mere followers of the Young Czech leadership in the Reichsrat.
Party had to alter its stand if it were going to participate in the
government and still maintain credibility among its nationalist
supporters. To justify its involvement in the government, the
party stated that it felt the time was appropriate for cooperation,
since Beck seemed aware of the need for improving economic condi-
tions. To reassure nationalist supporters and also to inform
Beck that agrarian participation could not be taken for granted,
Prášek announced that he would remain minister only as long as Beck
supported agrarian demands—demands that called for restraints on
German hegemony as well as economic demands that would benefi'
their rural constituency.

With Prášek's appointment Czech agrarians exalted that one of
their own had made it to the top, and that their enemies among the
nobility, bureaucrats, and industrialists would no longer be able to
force their plans for the countryside on farmers. In itself Prášek's
appointment was unique, since he was the first farmer to be appointed
to a ministerial position, and also the first who did not have an
aristocratic or university background. His appointment was evoked
by agrarian organizers to demonstrate that organization brought
power and that continued work would bring greater successes.

19Cep, November 15, 1907, p. 2.
20Ibid.
After Prášek's appointment in November, 1907, the Czech Agrarian Party embarked on a period of collaboration with Prime Minister Beck. Czech agrarian cooperation with Beck was based in part on the belief that Beck was not an enemy of the Czech nation as his predecessors had been, that he would sincerely work for solutions that would respect Czech national rights. Following the appointments of Prášek and Fiedler, the Czech Agrarian Party united with the Young Czech Party and the Catholic-Nationalist Party to form a new Czech club in the Reichsrat. The purpose of the club was to defend Czech national rights and to work for autonomy by combining their strength and speaking with one voice to the government and other parties when issues affecting these purposes arose. In spite of Czech agrarians being numerically stronger than other Czech parties, again the person chosen to be chairman of the Czech club was the Young Czech, Kramář. The vice-chairman was František Udržal, an agrarian. The first act of the club was to support a Kramář proposal calling for the use of the Czech language in all the judicial courts in Bohemia, even in areas where there was not a Czech majority. As before it was clear that the Czech club would not be concerned with economic issues; this left to the agrarians exclusive responsibility for fulfilling election promises in the economic area.

21 Cep, November 15, 1907, p. 1.
Prašek remained in the Beck government for nearly one year, resigning in October, 1908, over a combination of national issues. While in office Beck's vacillating maneuvers created hostility toward him in both Czech and German camps as national issues proved impossible to subordinate to economic ones. Germans regarded Beck as pro-Czech and by the summer of 1908 succeeded in obtaining his promise that he would make no further concessions to the Czechs without German agreement, especially with regard to the increased use of the Czech language in the courts and the civil service. To Czech nationalists, it appeared as if Beck had caved in to German pressure, and they began to reevaluate their support of his government and to question his sincerity. However, while Prašek was in office the Czech Agrarian Party had moved toward fulfilling its economic program. Tax reforms had been undertaken and important legislation regarding cartels and agricultural insurance were being formulated, but had not yet reached the voting stage.

The rising German reaction to Beck's government created problems for the successful fulfillment of agrarian economic programs, since rising Germanism pushed national issues to the fore. Until mid-1908 the Czech agrarians' prime motivation for political involvement had been economic—to secure help for farmers—but as German national

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feelings escalated, the Reichsrat became a less practical vehicle to achieve their economic goals. Moreover, when an economic program did pass, as in the case of an insurance bill that protected rural and urban workers, it had come through such a long series of national and class compromises that the Czech agrarians felt the final result was worthless. Consequently, Prášek and the party began to regard the Zemský sněm as a better body for securing their economic programs, and attempted to strengthen its viability by asking Beck to increase the period of time the Zemský sněm met each year. Beck's refusal along with his inability to end German obstruction in the Zemský sněm were the chief reasons for Prášek's resignation. In effect Prášek had resigned on a national question. It was the goal of the Czech agrarians to rejuvenate the Zemský sněm to make it a workable legislative institution for an autonomous Bohemia, thus fulfilling their státní právo demands. Even under the command of the sympathetic Beck, the Reichsrat had not proved successful as a legislative body. This was due, in part, to German obstruction which was beyond Beck's control. However, the result was to turn agrarian hopes toward the Zemský sněm and to strengthen the feeling that provincial legislatures were the place where economic programs should be discussed.

\[23\] Cep., July 24, 1908, p. 2; October 23, 1908, p. 2; July 2, 1909, p. 1. The agrarians wanted an insurance bill that would protect their farms and livestock, and not only an invalid and old age plan.

\[24\] Ibid., October 23, 1908, p. 2.
The following year elections to the Zemský sněm were scheduled for February 20, 1908, with the run-off election to be held on March 5. In the curia composing the rural districts the Czech Agrarian Party slated 48 candidates (there were 79 seats being contested in the rural curia, including those that were German). When the final election results were tabulated, the Czech agrarians had won 44 seats, the Young Czechs 2, the Clericals 1, and the Radical Progressives 1. The remainder went to German parties. Even when the results of the urban and commercial curias were added, the Czech Agrarian Party still emerged as the largest Czech political party in the Zemský sněm because of a landslide victory in the rural curia.

The Czech Agrarian Party demonstrated its appeal and support in the countryside by its domination of the rural districts. The overwhelming success of the Czech Agrarian Party candidates in winning seats indicated widespread rural support. If the party was only supported by middle class farmers (about 15% of the rural population) it would not have been able to have this landslide victory. Although the party's leadership may have been dominated by middle class farmers its appeal was broader. During the electoral campaign, the Czech Agrarian Party stressed economic issues, and placed national demands in a secondary position.

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The election was the first undertaken by the agrarians under reform rules adopted by the party the previous year. The reforms prohibited any agrarian party member from simultaneously holding seats in both the Reichsrat and Zemský sněm. The basis of this reform was the necessity to work toward the fulfillment of státní právo and the strengthening of the Zemský sněm as the legislative pillar of an autonomous Bohemia. Czech agrarians hoped that this reform would increase the effectiveness and importance of the Zemský sněm by having deputies who could serve full-time in the Zemský sněm. Furthermore, by permitting deputies to serve in only one legislative body, the Czech Agrarian Party was opening up its ranks to more talent, and giving a greater number of people an opportunity to rise to leadership positions in the party. By involving more people in party affairs, the party lessened the risk of being dominated by a few conservative farmers who were less concerned with the problems and needs of small, poorer farmers. Moreover, the reforms had another political advantage. Czech agrarians could criticize other Czech political parties that permitted their deputies to hold seats in both the Reichsrat and Zemský sněm, since deputies in these positions tended to devote more time to their activities in the Reichsrat, indirectly aiding centralism by preferring the

26 Frankberger, Švehla, p. 178.

27 CEP, October 11, 1907, p. 1.
imperial institution.

The newly elected Zemský sněm was called into session in September, 1908, but its future was clouded as Czech and German nationalism threatened its functioning. The Czech Agrarian Party joined with other Czech nationalist parties in demanding administrative unification of Bohemia, a demand that antagonized Germans who wanted Bohemia divided into Czech and German parts in order to protect themselves from the Czech majority. However, Czech nationalists, including agrarians, would never consent to a political division of the historic Czech crownlands as the Germans demanded, creating little chance for compromise between the two sides.

In spite of increasing national dissension and discord, the Czech agrarians continued to actively submit bills of an economic nature. The party proposed bills sustaining the legal and economic position of agricultural cooperatives, licensing bulls and cattle, assisting farmers in times of natural disasters, and limiting the power of cartels. The Czech agrarian leader, Švehla, even gave a speech supporting the plans for the celebration of Emperor Franz Josef's sixtieth year as ruler. The Czech Agrarian Party's economic goals for the Zemský sněm were dashed, however, when late in September the national dispute increased in vehemence. The Czech club in the

28 S.Z.S.K.Č. I výroční zasedání z roku 1908, pp. 16-63.
Zemský sněm had proposed to fill the executive bureau of this legislative body solely with Czechs. Germans, who had seen their power eroding in the Zemský sněm for some time, considered this act to be the ultimate attempt to make them powerless, and began a policy of obstruction which halted all legislative activity.

German deputies felt that Czechs, particularly Czech agrarians, were not following wise fiscal policy in the Zemský sněm, since their programs called for large expenditures that put provincial finances in the red and left Germans with the bills. The end, as Germans saw it, was that their money would be used to strengthen Czech national institutions. The Germans felt this trend of increased fiscal spending would eventually lead to economic disaster for the whole region. German obstruction in the Zemský sněm combined with the inefficiency of the Reichsrat created a serious problem for Czech agrarians who were trying to secure legislation to improve rural conditions. One of the prime reasons for their formation and organization as a political party had been their goal to secure beneficial legislation, but now this aim seemed to have been frustrated.

Until this time Czech agrarians had left the leadership for Czech national rights to Young Czechs and other Czech nationalists and had worked hard for economic legislation favorable to their rural constituency. The party had increased its electoral strength through its economic emphasis and work in legislative bodies, but with the
growing obstruction of the legislative process, the Czech Agrarian Party had to alter its priorities. No longer would the party be able to show its supporters bills improving the status of the countryside, since German obstruction prevented any bills from being considered. The Czech Agrarian Party would not likely compromise with Germans for the sake of permitting economic bills to pass, since what the Germans demanded (federalization of Bohemia and smaller budgets) attacked the foundation of agrarian goals—autonomy for the historic crownlands and more money for rural needs. 29

German obstruction caused the Czech Agrarian Party to reemphasize its national demands. The party realized that national autonomy would have to be achieved if it expected to succeed in its agrarian economic program. Evidence of the party's changing attitude came to light in a meeting of its deputies in late 1908. As a result of the meeting the party decided not only to concentrate on agrarian questions, but also to involve the party in the struggle for national autonomy.

29 Although the Czech Agrarian Party's economic priorities might have made it amenable to a national compromise, this did not occur. Compromise would have required political and economic concessions by both sides. Looking at the situation from the agrarian viewpoint, political compromise on the issue was out of the question. It was a basic demand that had emotional connotations. Economic compromise could only be achieved if Germans and agrarians could agree on budgetary expenditures, but since the budget had also become a national matter, compromise was unlikely. It could be argued that compromise between other Czech nationalist parties and Germans would have been easier, since their disagreements centered only on political issues.
domination in Bohemia; it was decided that the first national issue in which party resources would be involved would be support for Czech minority schools in German areas of Bohemia.\(^{30}\) Heretofore The Czech Agrarian Party had only voiced support of the Czech nationalists fighting for minority schools. Now the party was making a real commitment of financial and organizational involvement.

After the German obstruction in the Zemský sněm began in September, 1908, relations between Czechs and Germans became more bitter until violent demonstrations erupted in Prague in late November, resulting in the declaration of martial law on December 1. Czech demonstrators were concerned about the events taking place in Bosnia and the pro-German policies of the Habsburg government, but even more so with German chauvinism and obstruction in Bohemia. The Czech Agrarian Party joined other Czech nationalist parties in calling for a total boycott of all German merchants and tradesmen. Agrarian newspapers also asked farmers to travel to Prague to participate in the demonstrations, but since only a few farmers could afford the expense and time, the announcement was more a sign of solidarity with other Czech nationalist parties than anything else.\(^{31}\) Eventually

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\(^{30}\)Frankenberger, Svehla, p. 200.

\(^{31}\)Ibid. Two agrarian leaders were reported on the streets with the demonstrators, although it is unclear whether or not they were actively involved. At any rate it is unlikely they played a very significant role, since demonstration leaders were primarily students and members of the Czech National Socialist Party.
the government brought the disorders under control, but, nevertheless, the incidents still marred the Emperor's anniversary celebration. Prime Minister Bienerth, who had succeeded Beck, faced a difficult situation not only in restoring order, but also in attempting to prevent the Reichsrat from degenerating into chaos as had the Zemský sněm. 32

The autumn of 1908 had also seen the annexation of Bosnia by Austria-Hungary. It created widespread concern in all Czech circles. Because of its lack of emphasis on foreign policy due to its concentration on internal economic programs, in reacting to the annexation, the Czech Agrarian Party tended to follow the lead of Kramář and Masaryk. The chief concern was not that Bosnians were being forced into the empire, but that the methods and principles employed by Austria in conducting foreign policy were injudicious and verging on the immoral. 33 As indicated earlier Czech agrarians were in a dilemma over the Serbian and Bosnian situations. The areas were a source of cheap agricultural imports which Czech agrarians felt threatened their prosperity; on the other hand, however, as Slavs (like the Bosnians to the south), Czech agrarians could envision

32 SUA. PM, 1901-10. 8/4/3/134(censored copy of Cep, July 16, 1909). Czech agrarians were not happy with Bienerth's appointment as Prime Minister, since they regarded him as being controlled by German nationalists, capitalists, and cartel owners.

33 Konirsh, Struggle, pp. 216-20.
Austrian centralistic and Germanizing policy directed against Czechs.

In the course of the Bosnian affair the Czech agrarians attacked Austrian policy through a newspaper campaign which criticized Austria for seeking to dominate the Balkan region. However, within a month of the Bosnian affair agrarian newspapers only passingly referred to the Balkan situation, and the fait accompli was accepted with no dissonance during the Reichsrat session that approved the annexation. Domestic demonstrations protesting German-Bohemian actions in late November tended to turn Czechs inward, and they became more concerned with what they regarded as German efforts to dominate Bohemia by preventing the use of the use of the Czech language in the government offices of the province. In the long-run the effect of the Bosnian affair was to create suspicions among Czech agrarians about the conduct and course of Austrian foreign policy. From their analysis it appeared that Germany was the only great power backing Austria, and they were convinced that this reliance on her would increase, drawing Austria and Germany ever closer and resulting in a strengthening of the German elements of the empire.

34 During the Bosnian affair the leading agrarian newspaper, Venkov (Countryside), attacked Austrian policy and its leadership very strongly and was subject to increased censorship for articles the authorities felt were treasonous. One especially antagonistic article was entitled "Pryč s Austrií" (Away with Austria) which attacked the right of Austria as it was then organized to exist. SUA. PM, 1901-10. 8/4/22/106(Venkov, October 18, 1908, p. 1.).

35 Hlasy venkov, November 13, 1908, p. 3.
Another, though more indirect, outgrowth of the Bosnian affair was increased unity and cooperation in the Reichsrat between Czechs (including agrarians) and South Slavs. In February, 1909, a Slavic Union was formed to lobby for common political interests in the Reichsrat and to battle Austrian centralism. The annexation of Bosnia raised the question of the role of Russia in Balkan affairs, and also her relationship with other Slav nationalities. Czech agrarians saw Russia as a balance against German aspirations and did not want any type of Austro-Russian confrontation. However, within the Czech Agrarian Party there were ambivalent attitudes regarding Czech relations with Russia.

In the years following 1906 Antonín Švehla played a dominant role in the affairs of the Czech Agrarian Party, largely determining the party's stance on important issues, among them Pan-Slavism. However, other competent men such as František Udržal, Karel Prášek, and František Staněk wielded impressive influence in party affairs. Švehla tried to persuade party members that the agrarians should not be concerned about whether one was a liberal or a socialist, a Roman Catholic or a non-sectarian, a Pan-Slav or one who was Western oriented; rather one should strive to accomplish those things which would most benefit the rural class and seek allies without undue _Hlas venkov_, November 13, 1908, p. 3.
preoccupation with ideology or religious affiliation. The party's goal, in Švehla's opinion, was to hasten rural improvements; it should not be deterred by questions of ideology. While Švehla was largely successful in concentrating on this approach, he was not able to persuade all agrarian party members to follow such a course.

In July, 1908, a Pan-Slav Congress was held in Prague and several prominent agrarians participated; among them were Josef Dürich, František Staněk, and Antonín Zásvorka. Venkov was the only agrarian newspaper reporting in detail on the conference, indicating either a general lack of interest in the countryside for news of the conference or the ability of Švehla to prevent what he considered non-relevant ideas from distracting the party from its immediate economic and political goals. For Švehla it was illusory to wait for Russia to solve problems of the Habsburg Empire—the initiative had to be taken by the Czech people themselves. Švehla agreed with those agrarians who wished to democratize Austria, giving Slavs that dominant role in the government that their numbers

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38 Dr. Alfred Fischel, Der Panslawismus bis zum Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche, 1919), p. 526. Since the congress was held in Prague, it would not be unusual to have agrarians present. Of the three most prominent agrarians attending, Josef Dürich was the most confirmed Pan-Slav. When World War I erupted, Dürich went to St. Peters burg to work for Slav solidarity and Russian aid for the Czechs. For the details of Dürich's activities see Vera Olivova, The Doomed Democracy (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972, translated by George Theiner), p. 32. Also see page 147 for agrarian attitudes toward Russia during the Balkan wars.
justified. Such a reorganization of Austrian administration would be infinitely preferable to becoming part of a great Russian Empire. Russia was a useful balance against Germany, but would not necessarily be a beneficial ruler. One only had to compare rural conditions in Russia with those in Bohemia to realize the better status of Czech farmers.

As the Reichsrat’s 19th session continued into 1909, crownland finances, the budget, minority schools, and civil service appointments were the issues that dominated the debates. During this session the Czech Agrarian Party proposed a controversial solution to resolve the question of the number of Czechs to be employed by the government bureaucracy. Czech agrarians proposed that Czechs be employed, not only on the basis of population strength, but also on the basis of their cultural development and their consequent importance to the state and society. This recommendation meant that Czech agrarians had adopted German arguments to justify greater Czech influence in the empire; previously their arguments had been supported almost exclusively by population figures. This proposal


40 It may seem strange that a rural party was concerned with the national composition of the bureaucracy, but farmers had a vital interest in the number of Czechs employed. Railroads, in particular, employed farmers’ sons when the farm became too small to support them. For the rationale of the agrarian national proposal see Venkov issues for July, 1909.
marked the first attempt by Czech agrarians to take an independent national stance (without Young Czechs). Heretofore, Czech agrarians had generally followed Kramar's lead on national issues, but with electoral victories and experience they sought a more important role. The national legislation that the Czech agrarians were advocating failed to pass in the Reichsrat. Neither Germans or other minorities were sympathetic to the agrarian proposal. Kramar was against it, because he felt it only increased German national feeling and raised questions among Slavs about Czech intentions. Czech agrarians, seeing the negative reaction, allowed the bill to be tabled. But this agrarian proposal was linked to another growing issue—import regulations.

The Austrian government had asked the Reichsrat to ratify several trade treaties with the Balkan states, a move which all agrarian interest groups in the empire regarded as a threat, because they would permit the influx of cheap agricultural goods which would undermine domestic agricultural production. Since the Czech Agrarian Party was the strongest and best organized agrarian party in the Austrian half of the empire, the government sought to win its support by promising not to permit the importation of cattle; however, foodstuffs would be imported if approval of the Reichsrat was
forthcoming. The Czech Agrarian Party joined Slovene agrarian-interests to block the passage of the trade treaties, much to the ire of Social Democrats and other urban-oriented parties. The rejection of the compromise was due to the fear of a rural depression if competition from foreign markets was allowed. Moreover, there was hope that because of their rejection, the government might make more concessions to achieve the bill's passage.

The Czech Agrarian Party's position on tariff protection might be construed as another indication of its middle class orientation, especially if one assumes that protection is a class policy of medium-sized farmers to protect their economic interests. However, this protectionist policy was also well-received by poorer farmers, because they had the most to lose from foreign competition. An example of this can be seen with regard to agrarian support of high duties on imported cattle. In 1911 46% of all cattle in Bohemia were owned by farmers with less than 10 hectares of land; 24% by farmers owning between 10 and 20 hectares; and 30% owned by farmers with more than 20 hectares of land. While it is clear that poorer farmers did not own a share of the cattle proportionate to their

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41 S.P.O.A. February 4, 1909, pp. 8583-89; June 3, 1909, p. 1181; June 30, 1909, p. 2429; July 2, 1909, p. 2489. The government also promised Czech agrarians that Bohemia would get the largest part of a planned cattle subsidy.

42 Cep, October 13, 1911, p. 3.
numbers (landless and small farmers represented 80% of the rural population yet they owned only 46% of the cattle), the cattle they did own were crucial to their livelihood. One cow a year brought to market and sold by a small farmer might give him the extra money necessary to balance his income or buy some clothing or equipment. While foreign competition would certainly hurt wealthier farmers, its impact would have a greater effect on a small farmer who did not have the financial or technological resources to adjust to a more competitive market. Thus, protectionism was welcomed by all segments of the rural population.

By the fall of 1909 the Czech Agrarian Party had become the chief obstructionist party in the Reichsrat, attempting to block economic legislation that was not to its liking by proposing national legislation that divided nationalities and political parties. The basic cause of its obstinacy was the fear that immanent trade treaties would erode the well-being of rural society. As long as the possibility of passing such trade treaties existed, Czech agrarians were not concerned whether the Reichsrat functioned smoothly or not. The national proposal of the agrarians was submitted out of fear that various urban-oriented parties were holding secret negotiations to pass the trade treaties, because they wanted to lower the price their own constituents would have to pay for bread. One way of assuring the defeat of such a compromise was to escalate national feeling. If national tensions were increased, a Czech nationalist,
such as Kramář, would find it difficult to cooperate with Germans or Social Democrats. Therefore, the Czech agrarians, in this instance, used nationalism to break up what they felt was an urban alliance. In addition to the trade treaties, certain domestic political actions by the Austrian government were also used by Czech agrarians to justify their tactics. The German agrarian, Dr. Schreiner, had been appointed Ministr krajana, and Czech agrarians were accusing him of biased employment practices, especially on the railroad line between Tachov and Domažlice.43

In the spring of 1909, the Czech Agrarian Party increasingly found itself aligned with the most radical Czech parties, which were blocking Kramář's attempts to build cooperation in the Reichsrat and to establish a neutral cabinet for Prime Minister Bienerth.44 As long as Czech agrarians feared the ramifications of trade treaties, they were unlikely to act properly in the Reichsrat and docilely follow the lead of Kramář. Eventually various urban-nationalist parties combined with the Social Democratic Party to end agrarian obstruction, and passed a budget and approved the trade treaties.45 As a result Czech agrarians grew distrustful of urban

motives, and were critical of the Czechs who voted for the treaties.

As the new year of 1910 began Germans continued their obstruction in the Zemský sněm, forcing Czech agrarians once again to work in the Reichsrat where their strength was much more diffused. In June the Czech Agrarian Party proposed another controversial national law which heightened German fears of Czechification in Bohemia. The proposed law stated that in a crownland Muttersprache (mother tongue) would be considered Umgangssprache (colloquial language) for the entire crownland if at least 20% of the crownland's population spoke that Muttersprache. The proposed law would also force government authorities in mixed national crownlands to use the language of the individual with whom the authority had to deal. Moreover, the proposed legislation was to be executed by the respective diets of the crownlands and not by the Reichsrat, and if the diet was unable to meet, the Executive Committee of the diet would implement the law. In Bohemia this committee was dominated by Czechs (and especially Czech agrarians), causing Germans in Bohemia to worry about how their status would be protected.

Germans regarded this law as another attempt by Czechs to dominate Bohemia, and moreover, as Germans saw more and more Czech farmers migrating into the historic German areas of Lower Austria and

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46 The proposal was never submitted to the Reichsrat, but instead was announced in agrarian and Viennese newspapers as a trial balloon in June, 1901. Konirsh, Struggle, p. 458.
Vienna, they saw the likelihood of Czech being used in these traditional German areas. Also the proposed legislation raised the possibility of the central government and army having to use eight different languages. Again Czech agrarians found most politicians opposed to the bill, and it never was submitted to the Reichsrat. Young Czechs felt that it only increased German fears, and since Bienerth had initiated exploratory talks between Czechs and Germans, there was the possibility of Czechs gaining some of their national demands through negotiation. Although Young Czechs were prepared to participate in Czech-German negotiations, Czech agrarians refused to join the talks. The Czech agrarians wanted the language issue settled not by provincial discussions, but through discussions with all nationalities of Cisleithania participating. Since such a conference would have even greater difficulty succeeding than a German-Czech conference, it appeared the Czech Agrarian Party was blocking an attempt to solve the national question. Czech agrarian obstruction was a result of its relative powerlessness in the Reichsrat. The party had fewer than 30 seats out of 516, and could not block the will of a determined united urban coalition unless it could raise national issues that would keep such a coalition from

47 Rodný kraj, November 11, 1911, p. 1. Josef Dürich, "Vídeň," Rodný kraj, December 23, 1911, p. 1. This fear continued to haunt Germans until the outbreak of World War I.

48 Konirsh, Struggle, pp. 460-61.
forming.

As a result Czech agrarian deputies often voted with the most radical Czech nationalist faction centered around Klofáč, in spite of the fact that Klofáč's support came from urban areas. Klofáč's adamant national stand was based on his desire to see Bohemia totally independent of Austria, setting him apart from the vast majority of Czech politicians who saw federalism as the solution. Czech agrarians, unlike Klofáč, never called for total independence for Bohemia—only autonomy.

Czech agrarians cloaked their economic aims beneath eloquent national rhetoric that spoke of the common good and humanitarian and democratic advancement of the Czech nation. Czech agrarian politicians believed that the major goal of the agrarian movement was to better the lot of the farmers, which in turn would lead to benefits for the entire nation. Often national demands were viewed as a means to achieve this goal. While Czech agrarians were sincere in their national demands and státní právo position, they always saw the broader rural-economic implications of their national policy and programs.

Throughout 1910 Prime Minister Bienerth organized his government bureaucracy without paying special attention to including representatives of each nationality. Moreover, his attempts at initiating German-Czech negotiations floundered, and by the beginning of 1911 he found his government under severe criticism from both Czechs and
South Slavs who felt he had ignored them when organizing his ministry. Czech agrarians viewed his government as pro-German and anti-agriculture. Thus, when Bienerth proposed the annual budget, growing Slav hostility resulted in parliamentary obstruction, forcing Bienerth to call for new elections.

Military allocations in the budget had particularly rankled Czech agrarians. They felt much of the money going to the military could be better spent on economic improvements; they also felt a disproportionate number of rural as opposed to urban citizens were being drafted into the army. The Czech agrarians were not pacifists, but they feared the military as a Germanizing force.

By April, 1911, the pre-election campaigning for the Reichsrat was underway. The Czech Agrarian Party slated 42 candidates in Bohemia and 17 more in Moravia and Silesia. The Czech agrarians faced strong challenges from Clericals and Social Democrats in several districts, and therefore much of their effort was spent criticizing these groups for their respective national and economic positions. Clericals were regarded as being controlled by Vienna

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49 Plzeňský kraj, January 13, 1911, p. 1. Czech agrarians also felt he was too pro-industry and would be controlled by a German-Polish coalition that would seek to dictate to other nationalities in the empire. SUA. PM, 1901-10. 8/4/3/134(Censored article in Cep, July 16, 1909).

50 Obrana(v Louněch), February 3, 1911, p. 1.

51 Rodný kraj, September 6, 1912, pp. 1-2. Speech by František Udržal before an assembly in Mladá Boleslav. Also Cep, September 6, 1912, p. 1.
through their church connections while Socialist were stereotyped as urban internationalists who had no concern for rural needs or improving the Czech political position. The Vienna government was again attacked for its pro-German policies, its failure to improve rural economic life, and even for the stalemate in the Zemský sněm.52 Also the Czech Agrarian Party demanded the establishment of a second Czech university in Brno, an end to Austrian favoritism toward urban interests, and less taxation.53 Most of the 1907 platform's economic goals had been achieved in the Reichsrat, although not always to the exact wishes of the party (see page 115); thus, the 1911 platform tended to stress more the goal of general improvement in the quality of rural life and plans for more effective rural insurance (it also proposed anti-cartel legislation).54

In June the elections were held and the Czech agrarians elected 26 candidates in Bohemia, 6 in Moravia, and 2 in Silesia, raising the combined total to 36 deputies for the new Reichsrat.55 In the rural

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52 Obrana (v Lounoch), April 21, 1911, p. 1. These criticisms were part of a speech given by František Udržal before an assembly in Opatovice. Also see Rodný kraj, June 10, 1911, pp. 1-2.

53 Plzeňský kraj, June 9, 1911, p. 1. Agrarian campaign proclamations always stated the economic planks and demands first and listed the national demands near the end.

54 Rodný kraj, June 10, 1911, pp. 1-2.

55 Cep, June 16, 1911, p. 1; June 22, 1911, p. 1. Two independent agrarians, Prášek and Zahradník, were also elected. These men had bolted from the party over economic differences and party goals.
districts the Czech Agrarian Party obtained 178,000 votes, Social Democratic candidates 158,000 votes, and the Clericals 72,000 votes. The Czech Agrarian Party not only increased the number of mandates it held, but also received an even greater proportion of rural votes than it had had in 1907.\textsuperscript{56} It had succeeded in taking two seats from the Social Democratic Party and five seats from the Clericals. During the campaign the agrarian stereotyping of Clericals as lackies of Vienna and Social Democrats as men advocating collectivization had apparently brought results.

In the years between the 1911 election and the outbreak of World War I, the conduct of Austrian foreign policy, the protection of Czech minorities, the reopening of the Zemský sněm, and the rural economic conditions of Bohemia became the chief concerns of the Czech Agrarian Party. The period was marked by increasing national rivalry, which made it more difficult for agrarians to pass economic legislation and forced them to pay even more attention to national goals and issues.

Throughout the years after 1911, attempts were made by several Habsburg officials to work out a compromise between Czechs and Germans

\textsuperscript{56}Cep, June 22, 1911, p. 3. The statistics for rural mandates were:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lcc}
 & 1907 & 1911 \\
Agrarians & 150,450 & 177,554 \\
Social Democrats & 188,379 & 157,946 \\
Clericals & 82,011 & 72,088 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
and to reestablish the orderly functioning of the Zemský sněm. On September 20, 1911, the Governor of Bohemia called the Zemský sněm into session, and tried to impress on both Czech and German politicians the necessity for resolving their rivalry for the sake of the future development of Bohemia. The Czech agrarians were amenable to reopening the Zemský sněm, and the Czech agrarian deputy, Václav Kotlář, demonstrating the agrarian desire to see the Zemský sněm resume functioning, undertook to propose a bill to give aid to farmers who faced crop failures that year. Czech agrarians were willing to contribute to stability in the Zemský sněm, since it would permit them to work for favorable legislation. However, the German political parties, including the German agrarians, refused to end their obstruction until their demands for autonomy within the Kingdom of Bohemia were met—a demand no Czech agrarian or nationalist would ever accept, since preserving the historic boundary of Bohemia had become for them almost a religious crusade. In spite of the obstruction of the Zemský sněm negotiations between Germans and Czechs continued with Švehla playing a large role. He had become Chairman of Czech Deputies to the Zemský sněm after the death of the Young Czech Škarda.

57 Rodný kraj, August, 5, 1911, p. 1.
Czech agrarians wanted the Zemský sněm to function in order to receive agricultural allocations from the budget, but they were not willing to give in to German demands that sacrificed the státní právo principle. Throughout 1912 there were intermittent negotiations between Czechs and Germans, though neither side yielded to the other. Finally, in April, 1913, negotiations collapsed entirely. About the same time a financial crisis, created by the inability of the Zemský sněm to appropriate money necessary for the conduct of provincial government, came to a peak. Prime Minister Stürghkh was forced to suspend the Zemský sněm and govern by Imperial Decree. All Czechs, including agrarians, regarded this act as a violation of the 1861 October Patent, and throughout the summer of 1913 many protest demonstrations against Stürghkh's regime occurred. Protest meetings culminated during the week of September 8th, when the Czech Agrarian Party alone organized 3,000 protest meetings against the administrative commission that had replaced the Zemský sněm.\(^5^9\) Czech deputies in the Reichsrat also reacted to these developments by forming a new united Czech club in order to give the Reichsrat a dose of obstructionism. Czech agrarians regarded this crisis as once again demonstrating the need for Czech autonomy so that German outrages such as this one would never again interfere with the orderly functioning of the

\(^5^9\) Frankenerberge, Švehla, p. 326.
Throughout the crisis the agrarian leader, Švehla, talked about the necessity of all Czechs to act jointly in the struggle for autonomy. He envisioned the Czech Agrarian Party leading in the fight for national rights, succeeding where the Young Czechs and Old Czechs had failed.

Švehla indicated in an interview with a reporter from the Agrarische Korrespondenz (Agrarian Correspondence) on October 1, 1913, that the Czech agrarians and the Czech National Council were willing to negotiate again with the government. On the 13th of October the government invited spokesmen for the Czech agrarians, Young Czechs, Old Czechs, and German national parties to a meeting scheduled for the 15th. The Czech Agrarian Party asked the government to include members of all Czech national parties, but the government refused. The Czech agrarians wanted representatives of the Czech National Socialist Party to participate, but the government replied that no socialist party would be permitted to participate. The government recognized that the Czech National Socialist Party was one of the most rabidly nationalistic of the Czech political parties, and

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60 Plzeňský kraj, July 25, 1913, p. 1.
61 Frankenberger, Švehla, p. 326.
62 Ibid., p. 328.
successful negotiations would be less likely to result if it were included. Nevertheless, Czech agrarians joined the negotiations, although by December they concluded the talks had gone nowhere and announced that they would work for autonomy independent of the negotiating sessions. After two years of negotiations agrarians concluded that Germans were not serious about the discussions, so the agrarians began once again to resort to an obstructionist policy in the Reichsrat. When Prime Minister Stürghk tried to use an interim budget to finance governmental functions, he created greater resentment among all Czechs who resorted to the cry "No Zemský sněm, no Reichsrat". Czechs joined by Ruthenes finally caused a complete breakdown of the Reichsrat in March, 1914, and Stürghk was forced to prorogue it. When war erupted in the summer Stürghk governed through emergency powers.

Throughout all the political maneuvering that occurred in German-Czech negotiations following 1911, the Czech Agrarian Party was found to be cooperating more closely with the Czech National Socialist Party than with the Young Czech Party. Following their common opposition to the military reform laws in 1912, they began cooperating more closely, often obstructing the Reichsrat while the

64 Dr. Karel Vižkovský, "O politické situace," Rodný kraj, March 27, 1914, p. 1.

Young Czechs were advocating cooperation. There were several reasons for the growing collaboration of agrarians with National Socialists. First, Young Czechs were not willing to join united Czech clubs which agrarians tried to organize under their leadership; agrarians were understandably upset by this. Czech agrarians remembered the many times they had joined Young Czech clubs for the sake of national unity, although they may have been the stronger party; consequently, when Young Czechs refused to join agrarian-led clubs, agrarians decided Young Czechs were not truly concerned about national unity.

The Czech Agrarian Party was also assuming positions in the national struggle that were more radical than that advocated by Young Czechs. The Czech Agrarian Party wanted the restoration of the Zemský sněm for both economic and national reasons, but particularly for the economic gains the party could wrest from the provincial legislation it submitted. As German obstruction of the Zemský sněm continued, it frustrated agrarians who looked for economic relief; German obstruction in turn forced agrarians to obstruct more in the Reichsrat in the hope that it would force the government to halt German obstruction. For Young Czechs the Zemský sněm had no economic

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68. SUA. PM, 1911-20. 8/5/43/1 (Resolution 13.X.10).
raison d'être; they continued to feel that the Reichsrat was a better place to work to achieve national aims. Thus, while agrarians increasingly advocated obstruction in the Reichsrat, Young Czechs were not tempted to do so. In addition, Švehla's early background as a Czech National Socialiast may have oriented him more toward its national positions than those of the Young Czechs.

In spite of the growing emphasis on national problems in the years from 1910 to 1914, the Czech Agrarian Party continued to lobby for the improvement of rural conditions. Its attempts were crippled by the stalemate in the Zemský sněm which in turn prevented them from using their strength in this legislative body to pass high agricultural budgets. It was difficult for them to pass sympathetic legislation in the Reichsrat, but on the other hand, it was also such a cumbersome legislative body that a loose coalition of agrarians of all nationalities could generally block legislation they did not like. Czech agrarians also felt that the Minister of Agriculture did not have the necessary power or influence to be effective in promoting rural interests. Thus, while it could not wield the strength to pass desired social and economic legislation, it wielded sufficient strength when combined with other protectionist parties, for example.

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69 Again their philosophy, as stated earlier, was that without economic improvements there would never be real freedom. Jiří Rorejs, "Pracujeme k našemu hospodářskému osamostatnění," Rodný kraj, June 7, 1912, p. 1.

70 SUA. PM, 1901-10. 8/5/42/14(Poděbrady Report).
to prohibit the importation of Argentine beef into the empire.71

Another confrontation between the Czech agrarians and the government was averted by the outbreak of World War I. It had to do with the expiration of an Austrian commercial treaty. The party began preparing for these negotiations during the autumn of 1913 and favored strong protective tariffs with one exception. Agrarians wanted low duties on iron and machinery, because they felt low duties would permit cheaper and faster mechanization of agriculture.

For the breakdown of the legislative process before the start of World War I, Czech agrarians blamed everyone from German nationalists and industrialists to Socialists.72 Agrarians felt German nationalists kept the national issue seething, while industrialists and Socialists were regarded as the chief roadblocks of the Czech agrarian economic program.

Before World War I the Zemědělská rada was also becoming increasingly ineffective because of growing national rivalries. Following 1910 nationality problems in mixed districts became more prevalent and bitter. The Zemědělská rada received letters from many of these districts announcing that the districts were Czech and that no communication should be sent in German. Other letters arrived

71 Rodný kraj, July 29, 1911, p. 1. German agrarians also supported them. SUA. FM, 1911-20. 8/5/17/33 (Report 18.11.12).

72 SUA. FM, 1901-10. 8/5/42/14.
stating that these districts were German and that no letters written in Czech need be sent. As a result these district administrations became less orderly, frustrating the functioning of rural agencies.

Czech agrarians became increasingly involved in minority questions after 1911, when the party, because of its strength began to feel obligated to defend the entire Czech nation. As a result the party began to emphasize the need to protect Czech minorities as part of their national program. Also, as the party grew its organization came to include farmers in these border areas, forcing the party which sought border area votes to look after their needs. Finally, some of these areas in question were good agricultural areas, which Czech agrarians felt would benefit the standard of living of Czech farmers.

73 A.A. Z.R. No. 317. The districts with the greatest problems as indicated by the number of letters were: Nová Paka, Opočno, Žamberk, Turnov, Ústí nad Orlicí, Rychnov nad Kněžnou, and Rakovník. According to the Sudetendeutscher Atlas (München: Verlag der Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Wahrung sudetendeutscher Interessen, 1954), pp. 7-9, these areas were overwhelmingly Czech according to the 1930 census. The 1910 census indicated that Žamberk barely had a Czech majority while the others were predominantly Czech. Alfred Bohmann, Das Sudetendeutschum in Zahlen (München: Sudetendeutscher Rat, 1959), p. 21.

74 Dr. Antonín Boháč, "Menšinová otázka a česká politika," Rodný kraj, September 27, 1912, p. 3. Dr. Antonín Boháč, "Menšiny zemědělské," Plzeňský kraj, April 5, 1912, p. 2.

The Czech Agrarian Party believed that the direction and results of Austrian foreign policy exemplified the ineptness of the Austrian government and proved the need for Czechs to act as a restraining force on government actions. Czech agrarians still feared the growing reliance of Austria on her German alliance, and were concerned that this dependence would strengthen the German element in Austria, creating a tendency for Austria to become involved in risky foreign adventures. Czech agrarians wanted a more neutralist foreign policy which would lessen the chances of war and would allow Austria to be on good terms with all her neighbors, including Russia and the South Slav states. Furthermore, the party feared that Austrian foreign policy was being influenced too much by the military, which could lead to dangerous consequences, such as a military confrontation with another state. Improving rural domestic life was the primary goal of the Czech Agrarian Party and it had no desire to finance costly foreign operations at the expense of rural improvements. While the party advocated Austria following a more pro-Slavic policy in the sense of lessening its reliance on Germany, it did not, on the other hand, advocate any alliance with Russia.

76 They also had very little faith in Foreign Minister Aehrenthal and considered him anti-Slav. Rodný kraj, March 11, 1911, pp. 1-2.

77 Cep, September 6, 1912, p. 1. Also the party felt that with a growth in the power of the military, there would be eventual increases in taxation. Rodný kraj, January 20, 1912, p. 1.
After 1910 the Balkans were the leading arena for Austrian diplomatic actions. The Balkan Wars erupted in October, 1912, when Serbia and Bulgaria and their allies attacked the Ottoman Empire. When news arrived in Prague of these events, the Czech Agrarian Party hoped that Austria would remain uninvolved and not try to influence the outcome. Although in economic matters the Czech Agrarian Party wanted tariff barriers in Austria to prevent the importation of cheaper Balkan agricultural products, it still had an interest in what was happening to fellow Slavs. When it became apparent that Austria was intriguing to diminish the growing influence of Serbia, the Czech Agrarian Party rallied to support Serbian political rights. Austria wanted a weak Serbia dependent on Vienna, and following the success of the South Slav war against the Ottoman Empire, Vienna tried to implement a policy which would check Serbian ambitions. The crux of the problem for Austria was to prevent Serbia from obtaining a port on the Adriatic sea, and to this end she backed the creation of an independent Albanian state along the Adriatic shore. A Serbian port would lessen Serbian dependence on Austrian markets and permit Serbia to be more immune to Austrian influence. When Czech agrarians realized that Austria was blocking Serbian expansion, they supported the Serbs. The party rejected

78SUA. PM, 1911-20. 8/4/15/64(Report 27.XI.12).
Vienna's argument that Austria was only promoting the national and political rights of Albania, by asking why Austria had not permitted Slavs within her own territory to exercise these rights. 79 An agrarian, František Udržal, stated his belief that it was an economic necessity for Serbia to have her own port, and that it was chiefly Austrian industrial interests which wanted to keep Serbia dependent on her northern neighbor. 80 Czech agrarians envisioned a Serbian port as a positive factor in opening up Serbian agricultural products to world markets, which, of course, also would mean less competition for Bohemian farmers. Udržal speculated that Austrian policy regarding the port issue was possibly another of the army's Germanization efforts. 81 Moreover, the fact that 400 million Crowns were spent on mobilization did not make the agrarians any happier with the events of the fall of 1912. 82

During the Balkan Wars, agrarians viewed Turks as despotic heathen; 82 they censured Austrian actions; and they praised or criticized Russian actions depending on how such actions affected the

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80 Cep, November 22, 1912, p. 1.
81 Ibid. The fear that the military might drag Austria into a Boer-type war or into a situation such as the French faced when they took over Algiers was also prevalent in agrarian ranks. Plzeňský kraj, May 6, 1913, p. 1.
82 Rodný kraj, November 28, 1913, p. 3.
South Slavs. Agrarians were especially critical of Russian attempts to cooperate with Austria at the expense of South Slav interests, because they wanted no big-power diktats in the Balkans.  

However, Czech agrarians wanted Austria to be on good terms with Russia, mostly because they did not like Austria's reliance on Germany. They believed that closer relations between Austria and Russia would offset this reliance.

As indicated earlier (see page 124ff), the Czech Agrarian Party as a whole was not Pan-Slav or seeking Russian leadership in their struggle with Vienna for autonomy. Czech agrarians wanted to attain justice and political rights within a federalized Austria and not a great Russian Empire. In a speech dealing with Czech-German negotiations Udržal stated that it was in the Czechs' best interests to have a strong Austria, but a strong Austria founded on justice for all nationalities—he only wanted equality for Czechs.  

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84 Zájmy jihu, April 19, 1913, p. 1.
86 Even Josef Dürich, one of the most pan-Slav agrarians, never went as far as Kramář in his commitment to Russian help for Czechs, because he felt that Russians were not interested in Czechs to the extent that Germans were interested in German-Bohemians. He hoped to use Russia as a balance against those German-Austrians who looked to Germany as an ally and protector, but he realized that differences between Czechs and Russians were much greater than those between Germans and German-Austrians. Josef Dürich, "Vyrovnání v Čechách a ostatní česká otázka," Rodný kraj, October 3, 1913, p. 1.
87 Právo venková, August 22, 1913, pp. 1-2.
88 Rodný kraj, August 12, 1911, pp. 1-2.
agrarian criticism of the increasing role played by the military in Vienna's policy-making was a result of the fear that "military insanity" would lead to the downfall of Austria—an event which they feared.  

Trialism was another topic which was regularly discussed before the outbreak of World War I. Trialism was a plan that called for transforming the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a triune state by creating a third autonomous political unit from territory inhabited by South Slavs. Trialism was viewed by agrarians as a means of placating South Slavs within Austrian borders, and possibly as something which might even attract the independent Serbs. Czech agrarians were suspicious of trialism. True it would check Magyar and German aspirations, but if trialism came into being, it could leave Czechs with nothing. Trialism would give the South Slavs autonomy, but probably would leave Czechs under German domination. Czech agrarians preferred an immediate federalistic reorganization of the whole empire.

During the summer of 1913 Austrian involvement in the Balkans became of secondary importance as the issue of Stürghk's suspension

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89 Rodný kraj, August 29, 1913, p. 1.

90 For an analysis of trialism see May, Habsburg Monarchy, pp. 477-79.

91 Záznamy jihu, April 19, 1913, p. 1.
of the Zemský sněm increasingly captured the attention of the Czech public. As national rivalries intensified, even the Reichsrat was unable to function by the spring of 1914. In the months preceding the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, agrarians were concerned with organizing a large agrarian congress in May. The congress was to focus on economic issues, and at the time criticism of German attitudes in Austria was intense. However, when Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, agrarian newspapers were trimmed with black. As international tension increased after the assassination, agrarian newspapers concentrated on reporting economic issues. Some newspaper editions were confiscated after war erupted in the summer of 1914, but not generally because of inflammatory anti-Habsburg expressions. The censored articles were generally those which military officials felt released too much information on military statistics and maneuvers. For all the criticism of the government and army in the preceding years, the Czech Agrarian Party was remarkably restrained, reacting to war with a wait-and-see attitude. They neither advocated independence from Austria or supported Austrian policy.

92 Rodný kraj, May 22, 1914, pp. 1-5.

93 SUA. PM. 1911-20. 8/4/10/17.
CONCLUSION

The Czech Agrarian Party from its formation in 1899 until 1914 based its raison d'être on the contention that the rural class played a central role in the development of the state and the nation. To the party the farmer represented the national and economic backbone of the Czech nation. Without the Czech farmer the Czech nation would have long since amalgamated into German culture under Habsburg rule. Moreover, without an economically healthy countryside, the Czech nation would be destined for material ruination and national retrogression. The party, therefore, had a peasantist mission—to save the nation and the countryside by building a strong rural class.

Prior to the party's formation in 1899, the noble landowning class's power over peasant farmers had been largely broken due to the efforts of Alfons Štastný. This development permitted the Czech Agrarian Party to focus on other forces that were threatening the traditional place of the peasantry in Czech society. In Bohemia two
problems were believed to be at the root of rural troubles: the contemporary emphasis on industrial development and the central government's acquiescence in that trend through its policy formation and bureaucratic decisions. With its belief that the farmer was the fundamental strength of Czech national and economic life, the task of the Czech agrarian movement became one of tempering the move toward industrialization. Czech agrarians did not attack modernization or even industrialization, but sought to give society balanced development by stressing the economic necessity of the peasant to the nation. Agrarians worked to develop a program that would build an economically sound and socially united rural society.

The Czech Agrarian Party, itself, had a vital interest in achieving some form of autonomy for Bohemia within the framework of the Austrian state. Politically, autonomy would enable the party to exert greater influence in a small geographic area and permit it to use provincial institutions to improve rural conditions by making them more responsible to the people. Within the Austrian half of the empire, the Czech Agrarian Party was limited in its power to pass sympathetic legislation because of the number of Czech and German parties; therefore, it concluded that in an autonomous Bohemia agrarian power should not be as diffused. The party agitated for autonomy, because it believed the peasantry would receive greater economic benefits if the nation was freed from the centralizing control of Vienna. And, having cast itself as the peasants'
representative, the party felt it must be actively involved in the national struggle for this was in keeping with the traditional role the peasants had played as defenders of the Czech nation and preservers of its cultural identity. In its battle with Vienna over the issue of autonomy, the party never called for complete independence for Bohemia. The party's national ideology, except for the emphasis of the role of the peasant in national development, was identical to its Old Czech and Young Czech predecessors. This stance placed them within the bounds of traditional Czech national politics, and was certainly reenforced by the Czech agrarians' realization that ties with Austria were valuable because of the markets this relationship afforded.

The Czech Agrarian Party's concern with national policy escalated as World War I approached. Although the party had always been oriented toward traditional Czech national demands, economic and social concerns had been the primary reason for the party's formation. However, as the national rivalry between Czechs and Germans intensified(particularly after 1907), the party became more vocal about nationalism. This change was, in part, caused by the growing intensity of national antagonisms, but also due to the responsibility to the nation the party felt as it became more powerful. After the Czech Agrarian Party became the strongest Czech political party, it began to view itself as the logical successor to the Old Czechs and Young Czechs as leader of the national movement.
The party also used nationalism as a tactic to divide its opponents. This ploy occurred primarily in the Reichsrat where often it was in the interest of the agrarians to inflame national rivalries in order to block legislation considered unfavorable to farmers.

Politically, the Czech Agrarian Party had a liberal democratic middle class orientation. Although the party emphasized rural needs and decried the inherent evils in the urban ideologies of capitalism and socialism, it did not take an anti-urban or anti-industrialization stand per se. The party recognized that industrialization had become a part of Czech development, and realized that time could not be turned back to some idyllic peasant utopia. The party's task, it concluded, was to point out the evils of the industrial system, attempting at the same time to maintain the dignity of the peasant in Czech society. Agrarians could coexist with industrialism if economic policy recognized the necessity of a strong agricultural base.

Czech agrarians did not represent a form of agrarian socialism, but rather advocated agrarian liberalism. The party laid great emphasis on the importance of individual ownership of the land—socialist collectivization was abhorrent to them, although cooperatives were organized. Cooperatives unified rural interests, but not at the expense of private ownership. Czech farmers had no tradition of communal organization; they were independent commercial farmers producing for the markets that had been developing in Austria since
The party remained moderate in its activities, because inherent in its middle class orientation was a dislike for turmoil and disorder, and also because it had achieved a measure of success through its organizational efforts. As long as the parliamentary and legal situation permitted the party to lobby for political and economic reform and to initiate self-help projects, there was no need to advocate revolutionary alternatives. Austrian society provided a means for effecting change, and was in this respect distinctly different from other areas of Eastern Europe and Russia where the parliamentary system did not exist or was largely a facade. Czech agrarian development was, it seems to me, unique, in reacting to the influences of its multi-national environment, its democratic middle class orientation, and to life in a rapidly industrializing area of Eastern Europe.

These developments indicate the party's middle class orientation. Yet, in addition to its bourgeois political, national, and economic outlook, it had a strong commitment to improve the quality of life for poorer farmers. The party's willingness to help small farmers reflected in part its realization that it needed their votes (especially in elections to the Reichsrat), but it also confirmed the party's belief that the countryside was a "family". Improvement of its status could only be achieved through cooperation. Moreover, its commitment was proved by deeds (e.g., successful legislation,
organization of cooperatives, etc.). As a result poorer farmers voted for agrarian candidates and made the party one of the two largest Czech political parties in the pre-1914 period. Peasants with little land perceived in the party's programs answers to their needs. Thus, in spite of its middle class orientation the Czech Agrarian Party became a party of the bulk of rural class Czechs, in part because Czech rural society had the same bourgeois outlook as the party's leaders. Furthermore, the party permitted Czech farmers to retain their hope for the attainment of Czech national rights without sacrificing their concern for economic improvements.
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