

The coalition potential of Czech parties in the Imperial Council: A comparison of the years 1907 and 1911¹

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SUMMARY

Starting in the middle of the nineteenth century, the mainstream of Czech politics, in the spirit of maintaining a national ideology, tried to sustain a single-party system of political representation. By the end of the century efforts to do so proved ineffective. A politically maturing and differentiated society demanded appropriate political representation. The composition of the political party structure, as it was formulated during this time, was long term and established the tradition of a multiparty system in Czech politics. The differentiation into separate parties took place in the context of a confrontation between traditional national parties and the newly emerging parties that reflected the demands of different segments of society (the Social Democrats, Agrarian Parties and Christian Parties). This rebirth of the party system caused a considerable degree of tension within Czech politics, but the real political battles did not begin until the voting right laws were changed and a universal right to vote established. Parties were learning on the one hand to establish clear political identities and on the other hand to form both political coalitions and loosely knit working alliances. With respect to the actual developments of the Czech political environment, the study focuses on the development of relationships among Czech political parties, as they took place within the context of the Austria-Hungarian Imperial Council. These relationships are analysed on the basis of supporting parliamentary documents (proposals or interpellations), which were submitted during two comparable periods, the parliamentary meetings after the elections of 1907 and 1911.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Czech party politics underwent a deep transformation, which we could describe, in a broader context, as the final phase in the modernization of politics in Bohemia. At that period, we can see tendencies in

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politics which ultimately changed the shape of the political scene. At the turn of the 1880s to 1890s, Czech society was represented by two burgher parliamentary parties. In addition to the formerly united and still dominant National Party (Old Czechs), the breakaway National Liberal Party (Young Czechs) was clearly gaining ground. As opposed to the conservative Old Czechs, who stagnated as a party representing exclusively the upper classes, the 'young ones' were those able to change the style of political actions and to transform their party into a mass organization. Thus, they *de facto* followed the extraparliamentary Social Democrats, who since the beginning of their existence had been oriented towards the socially weaker and still politically marginalized but nevertheless more numerous strata of society and who, on the basis of their focus, sought to achieve as wide an organization of political activity as possible.² As society matured, it became increasingly interested in the possibilities of its political effectiveness and immediate influence on public events. The Young Czech party, as a more progressive political force, tried to accommodate these tendencies and systematically worked on the transformation of its electoral base. The issue at stake was nothing less than the act of responding to the changes in the interests of the 'nation' as a specifically defined electorate of the all-national parties.

The Czech burgher political representatives based their political growth on the ideological components of a national and liberal nature in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, since these politicians, with their liberal aspirations, found themselves dangerously close to the economically stronger German party, they were compelled to define their positions in national terms. In spite of the fact that these politicians represented a narrow group of burgher intelligentsia, they derived their mandate from the will of the entire 'nation'. At that time, the concept of a 'nation' was understood as the politically conscious part of society (as defined by educational criteria) that was, at the same time, the holders of electoral rights; thus, according to the concept accepted at that period, the nation was the money-earning part of society (as defined by economic criteria). Identification of the interests of one stratum of society with the interests of the more widely defined nation was only possible until the time when the 'nation', that is, the politically active part of society, outgrew in its interests the narrow spectrum of the political interest of the newly forming elites.³ While the older political generation quite naturally perceived the interests of both the burgher elites that were newly becoming active and the traditional holders of political influence, the aristocracy, as identical with the demands of the nation, the Young Czechs had more difficulties in later decades with defending a similar concept of the nation. With the increasing political interest of society at large and the work of the Social Democratic Party in the 'non-political' strata of society, the discordance between the declared all-national party representation by Young Czechs and the actual divergence, in opinions and interests, of society as a whole was becoming increasingly evident.

² J. Malíř, *Od spolků k moderním politickým stranám: Vývoj politických stran na Moravě v letech 1848-1914* (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 1996).

³ R.B. Pynsent, *Question of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1994).

The leaders of the Young Czechs were aware of this development and, to a certain extent, they were willing to accommodate it. The supporters of the Young Czechs in the united National Party, who later became the leaders of a separate party, were the ones who openly forsook the support of the conservative aristocratic circles and called for an extension to the suffrage. They no longer needed the political support of the Czech aristocracy; 'their' nation was expanding and provided a sufficient guarantee of future political support. In addition to the vertical dimension of the expansion embracing the socially weaker groups, expansion in the horizontal dimension was also achieved. The political activity of a party went beyond the boundaries of its main centre, opened up its organizational structure to include smaller towns and attracted the local party delegates to greater activity. It was increasingly clear that besides the towns, the Young Czech Party was also trying to gain support in the countryside. The Young Czechs were able to support this favourable trend of transition from an exclusive upper-class party to a mass party with a modern style of political activity, in the spirit of which they made much better use of propaganda and canvassing than their rivals. The efforts to open up the party to popular politics paid off. In the imperial elections in 1891, the Old Czechs, for whom only one seat was left, relinquished their dominant position to their rivals from the National Liberal Party.⁴

However, the Young Czechs could enjoy their rise without worries for only a relatively short period of time. The same tendencies and the same process which they used for their rise were unstoppably turning against them. In spite of all the modernization that the party was willing to carry out, it continued to act as an all-national group without any more specific agenda and with merely general demands of all-national scope, regardless of social rank. Even though the individual leaders of the party were pointing out the need to focus on a more specific electoral base, they did not find sufficiently strong support. Czech society was maturing very quickly politically, and for some time the Young Czechs were able to absorb and channel its extended demands into a single broadly conceived programme. Nevertheless, applying the national ideology in the interest of an all-national political representation proved to be obsolete at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵ Further development of politically usable nationalism could only lead to its radical forms, and the party, as the leading national political representation, was not able and did not want to embrace such radical forms. On the contrary, in the second half of the 1890s the party got rid of the radical fractions; two groups emerged from this purgatory process: the more socially oriented Radical Progressive Party (1897) and the Constitutional Radical Party (1899). In addition to these parties, still another party group emerged in 1900 which we could label as an all-national one. The People's Party of T.G. Masaryk also did not confine its agenda to a certain interest group; conversely, it presented a programme of a very broad societal scope.

⁴ B.M. Garver, *The Young Czech Party 1874-1901 and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

⁵ L. Velek, 'Mladočeši a konec principu všenárodní strany: Volby do Říšské rady 1900-1901', *Paginae historiae* 7 (1999), pp. 126-58; V. Doubek, 'Česká politika a realismus sklonku 19. století', in *Na pozvání Masarykova ústavu*, 2 vols (Prague, 2004-5), vol. II, pp. 56-70.

The leaders of the individual parties of the all-national type undoubtedly admitted that their organizations actually represented and addressed merely a certain segment of society, which, however, these parties did not purposefully educate and which was 'left' for them after the departure of a large part of their former supporters, who joined interest-specific political organizations. This big bang, during which the political forces reshuffled on the Czech political scene, took place exactly during the 1890s when the new party groupings gained ground. The shared values of national greatness and tradition could no longer be adapted to the needs of partial interest groups. These varied groups already became much too self-confident and mature to be inspired and strengthened by the idea of a single national whole. These groups were determined to take a more separate course of action, politically justified not in an anti-national sense but with different emphases on the interests of the specific class or interest group. In addition to the long-existing parties representing the interests of the aristocracy and the interests of the Czech workpeople defined in terms of social classes (the Social Democrats, who attained at least a minimal parliamentary representation after Badeni's election reform), a number of other parties emerged during a relatively short period of time. Thus, the Czech clericals established their party. Several groups emerged on Christian-Socialist or Christian-National foundations during 1894–97. In the first few years, the party representing the 'interests of the Czech countryside', the Agrarian Party, proved to be a highly viable political force, which finally separated itself from the Young Czech Party as late as 1899. In 1897 the Czech National Socialists claimed their place under the sun as the last of the parties that defined themselves as interest-based. Nevertheless, this party represented an interesting combination of radical nationalism related to the specific interest sphere of urban workpeople. Thus, in the situation outlined above it was a remarkable hybrid.⁶ In the beginning, the disintegration of the party spectrum did not indicate any great danger for the traditional parties and especially for the Young Czechs, who held a dominant position at that time. However, as a result of the consolidation of the new party structures and primarily as a result of the change in the election system, their strength could be demonstrated in full.

The purpose of this paper is not only to draw attention to the final stage of the reshuffle of the Czech political scene that provided the foundation for the postwar party-political situation in independent Czechoslovakia. Our objective is somewhat different. Let us try to examine how the individual parties acted in practical parliamentary politics in relation to each other and whether the differences and animosities of the all-national and interest-specific parties were also manifested in their activities, which were not so clearly seen by the electors and therefore may be a more reliable indication for evaluating the degree of reciprocal cooperation. Temporally, we will focus on the period during which all the relevant party-political groups were able to manifest themselves in parliamentary work without any formal restrictions imposed by the election system based on different groups of electors electing the Members of Parliament. In order to be able to compare possible changes in the rela-

⁶ J. Malř, P. Marek et al., *Politické strany: Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu v letech 1861–2004*, 2 vols (Brno, 2005).

tions among individual parties and in the approach of the Czech politicians to party work in general, we will focus on two election years and the parliamentary sessions immediately after the elections, that is, on 1907 and the first elections to the Imperial Council based on the general suffrage (eighteenth session) and on 1911, when the last elections to the Imperial Council took place and resulted in the twenty-first parliamentary session.

According to the text of Section 12 of Act no. 94 of 12 May 1873 of the Imperial Code (to be found in the *Reichsgesetzblatt*), it was necessary to support the interpellations and proposals of MPs in the House of Deputies of the parliament with the signatures of 15 supporters, so that the document concerned could be presented for further discussion. Therefore I based my research on the ancillary series *Anhang zu den stenographischen Protokollen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrates 1907-1912*,⁷ which records the full wording of the presented documents as well as the names of the signatories. As concerns the contents, I shall try to document the degree of cooperation of the Czech political parties by showing their reciprocal support of the presented documents. I hold the opinion that these lists of supporters of individual proposals and interpellations can serve as a sufficient indication of such support.

When the support for the individual documents was negotiated, various personal ties and preferences undoubtedly played their role; the MPs could support a great number of texts with their signatures every day, without being actually familiar with their detailed contents. In this sense, signatures could be completely dependent on the personal will and willingness of the particular MP concerned. On the other hand, party discipline did not permit crossing the borders of reciprocal disagreements too often; therefore the systematic support of the activities of MPs from other party groups can best serve as evidence of a cooperative relationship. In the great number of documents that were processed during the analysis, individual manifestations of support by MPs from some other party were found to be rare. Nevertheless, in order to minimize the impact of individual support, we recorded the support of individuals only in the case of small parties, that is, such parties whose representation in the House of Deputies of the Imperial Council did not exceed ten MPs. I did not otherwise include these individual manifestations of support in the final overviews.

The overviews are based on two types of cooperation. We recorded all proposals and interpellations presented in the House of Deputies by the members of the Czech political parties and the support reciprocally provided by the members of these parties (this is why the support by non-Czech MPs was not recorded and differentiated in terms of party affiliation). In addition to these presented documents, we also recorded the proposals and interpellations, which were formulated by non-Czech MPs and which Czechs only passively supported with their signatures. In the former case, cooperation among Czech parties might have been expressed. In the latter case, involving the passively supported documents, we succeeded in recording the 'escape activities' of the parties, which more or less coordinated with their parliamentary cooperation with non-Czech party organizations. The individual parties

⁷ 25 vols (Vienna, 1908-12).

were aware of their strength or closeness of opinions and consequently had already formed variously formalized cartels and coalitions already before the elections. However, we will try to examine these parties in terms of the original differentiation between them, subject to the single condition that they survived both of the monitored periods and sent their representatives to the parliament in 1911 as well as in 1907.

With their election results in 1907 and 1911, the examined Czech political parties became divided into three groups according to the number of seats obtained. In the first and weakest group were parties that obtained a maximum of ten parliamentary seats in the elections. From our point of view they were disadvantaged because their MPs were unable to meet the requirement for the minimum of 15 signatures for implementation of a presented document and were compelled to secure significant support from among the MPs of other friendly parties, whether Czech ones or those associating MPs of other nationalities. Such parties included the Progress Party led by T.G. Masaryk (formerly known as the Popular Party, also called the Realist Party, hereinafter referred to as the 'Realists' – in 1907 they had two seats; in 1911 they only had one seat); the Constitutional Progressives (three and four seats, respectively) formed another party; this party associating the radical constitutional and constitutional progressive fractions did not come into being until 1908, but the candidates of both of these groups had already run in the elections together in 1907. The same category of numerically weak parties included the Old Czechs (seven seats and one seat, respectively), who entered the elections already in union with the Young Czechs; the Moravian Popular Party (four and five seats, respectively) was completely merged with the Young Czechs in many statistics (this party was a sort of off-shoot of the Young Czech Party in Moravia; in spite of that it will be interesting to examine its activities separately); National Socialists also got into the parliament as a party with a weaker potential, but four years later they increased their gain from six to 13 MPs.

Thus in 1911 the National Socialists made their way into the set of party groups having between ten and twenty seats. The MPs of these parties had the possibility of ensuring complete or at least very strong support for their documents by using the signatures of their own fellow party fellow members and consequently were not so urgently compelled into broad cooperation and reciprocity. The Christian Socialists dropped to the very boundary of this set of parties owing to their election losses in 1911 (from 17 seats in 1907 to ten seats); the security of a medium-sized group, which, however, meant loss of the former position of the dominant Czech political group, was also retained by the Young Czechs (14 and 13 seats, respectively). The strongest group of parties, which obtained more than 20 seats in both elections, included the groupings described as interest-specific: the Social Democrats (24 and 26 seats, respectively) and the Agrarians (28 and 38 seats, respectively). Whenever necessary, these parties had so many MPs that they did not have to seek coalition assistance and become involved in inter-party reciprocal support.

In general terms, we can say that the activities of the Czech political parties and their delegates in the parliament strongly changed during the two examined periods. In spite of the fact that the number of elected Czech MPs remained the same (together with the independent ones, their number totalled 108), their activity dropped

significantly, in both the active presentation and the passive support of documents. As compared with 461 proposals and interpellations presented in 1907, the Czech MPs only presented 302 documents during the twenty-first session of the Imperial Council in 1911. This sharp decline in the activity of the Czech MPs was even more marked in supporting documents presented by the MPs of other nationalities: while Czechs supported a total of 388 proposals and interpellations in 1907, they only supported 176 documents four years later. Thus, in this respect the activity of the Czech MPs decreased by more than a half. If we examine the history of this trend in individual political organizations in greater detail, we can find different causes in each party, which, however, in our opinion have a common denominator. We can see the general explanation in a certain disappointment about the possibilities and the meaning of the work of the 'Popular House', as the parliament elected on the basis of general suffrage was called. The Czech MPs entered a 'new' representative body with obvious zest and zeal, but some of them also with excessive notions of the effectiveness of a radical opposition struggle. Insufficient diligence of the parliament, ineffectiveness of interpellations to which the relevant ministers either did not respond at all or responded *en bloc* to a number of related questions (which was quite understandable owing to the number of the questions) – all this had a reducing effect on the activity of the Czech MPs, and not only the Czech ones. Some sobering was already apparent as early as between the summer and autumn months of the eighteenth session in 1907, but it was obvious primarily in comparison with the following developments. While during the first month of the parliament's session in 1907 the Czech MPs supported a total of 124 documents presented by their colleagues from Galicia, Styria and other parts of the empire, in the autumn of the same year it was a mere 78 documents over a period of one month; in 1911 the monthly average of supported texts was 50.

In spite of this decrease in interpellation activities, the documents presented by the MPs continued to have great significance for their overall parliamentary work and remain documents with considerable informative value for us, especially for examination of the most important tendencies under investigation. Therefore let us take a look at how some selected Czech political parties and their MPs behaved. If we start with the weaker parties, the least numerous group, the Realists, might attract our attention. In spite of the fact that this party only had two MPs and later on only one MP, its results are quite interesting. For their interpellations, its MPs succeeded in obtaining very stable and yet varied support in the party affiliation of their supporters. They obtained support across the Czech political spectrum, with the lowest support being found with the Christian Socialists (only in one case) and, surprisingly, also with the Old Czechs (one). Conversely, the Realists themselves approached the initiatives of the MPs of these parties differently. While they did not support the Christian Party even once during the two examined years, the Old Czechs could rely on the Realists' support relatively often, especially during the first period when both Realist MPs supported eight of their 31 presented documents. Regarding support by other Czech parties, the Realists were most systematically supported by the Constitutional Progressives; in 1907 their support was almost absolute. National Socialists also provided very strong support. Unlike other parties, the Realists repeatedly succeeded in obtaining support for their documents from

the otherwise highly reserved Social Democrats. The Realists themselves supported the activities of other parties to a varying degree. They participated most diligently in the documents of the National Socialists. In 1907, they supported their materials in 42 cases (31 per cent of the total number of the presented documents) and Masaryk as the single MP representing the Realists also supported National Socialists in 28 cases in 1911 (28.3 per cent). However, Masaryk most reliably participated in supporting documents presented by members of the Moravian Popular Party in 1911 (88.9 per cent of the presented documents). There is one more remarkable fact, which indicates that the Realist Party, in spite of its support of some Czech organizations, changed its strategy over time. In the examined years, a decrease proportionate to the decrease in the number of Realist MPs is reflected in the support rendered to all other Czech parties. However, the data on the support of interpellation activities by MPs of other nationalities are completely different. While both Czech Realists only supported 19 such documents in 1907, Masaryk alone supported 76 such documents four years later. In the second electoral term, Masaryk maintained his support of the radical parties on the Czech scene but he clearly directed his core activities beyond the Czech scene to support the activities of Austrian parties. In this respect, the Realist Party was unique among the Czech parliamentary parties; as indicated above, in all other parties the support of the activities performed by parties of other nationalities was gradually declining.

Among the other smaller parties of the Czech political spectrum, electoral unions and post-election unions of various strengths were created, of which some were formalized. Let us take a look at the confirmation of the unions in the form of parliamentary cooperation. Among these unions, the strongest seem to be in the circles of Young Czechs, who were to be sure of support especially from the Moravian Popular Party and the Old Czechs. It needs to be stressed that this cooperation really worked fairly well but only in a sort of bipolar relationship and for a certain period of time. The MPs representing Old Czechs could be absolutely sure of support from the 'young ones' because their documents were supported by the Young Czechs in all cases during both examined sessions. Reciprocal cooperation was also clear. Conversely, there was a visible and, in some respects, thorough division in the relationship between the Young Czechs and the members of the Moravian Popular Party. While in 1907 the Young Czechs supported nearly all the documents of the Moravian Popular Party and reciprocal support was very frequent too, in 1911 many things were different. In that year, the Young Czechs entered the election contest on the basis of preliminary agreements with the Old Czechs and the National Socialists. In the following parliamentary session, the willingness of the members of the Popular Party to render support both to the Young Czechs and the National Socialists clearly decreased.⁸ The other way around, it was even clearer. While in 1907 the support of the Young Czechs and the National Socialists rendered to the activities of the Popular Party was very stable (almost 100 per cent support by the party of the Young Czechs), in 1911 the members of these parties did not

⁸ However, in this case, the support provided in 1907 was relative because it was largely based on the individual activity of František Reichstädter, a member of the Popular Party.

support the members of the Popular Party in a single case. (In that year, a sufficient number of supporters was obtained by the Popular Party members from among the Agrarians and Constitutional Progressives, Christian Socialists and Masaryk from the Realist Party.) In the former trilateral union of the Young Czechs, Old Czechs and Popular Party characterized by reciprocal support, the tie between the two latter parties was the least secure one. Reciprocal support among the MPs from these parties was already very limited at that time and in 1911 it was completely insignificant.

The gradual change in coalition policy had a somewhat adverse effect on yet another group which had cooperated in 1907. This group was based on the reciprocal support of the National Socialists and the Constitutional Progressive Party. During the eighteenth session, their reciprocal support proved very successful. The National Socialists systematically supported the activities of the MPs from the Constitutional Progressive Party, who returned this support. However, the situation changed in 1911. Although the Progressives succeeded in obtaining one additional seat, they were unable to keep pace with the successful growth of the National Socialists and their parliamentary activities clearly stagnated. In spite of the higher number of their MPs, the number of documents presented by them dropped from 93 to 28. And this sluggishness was also evident in the support of their former allies. In absolute terms it still remained strong, but if we take a closer look we can see that of the total of 86 supported documents of the National Socialists (86.9 per cent of their total number), more than one third were only signed by one of the Progressives because the support was primarily based on the individual willingness of Karel Baxa.

In the examined years we can see a change in supportive activities in some of the relatively strong ties among parties with a low or medium number of MPs. If we compare the percentage support that was provided by other Czech parties for the activities of individual parties, we get an interesting picture of the coalition potential. If we set 50 per cent of party documents countersigned by the MPs of some other party as the threshold for strong support, then we can document the following results for 1907. From among the parties that were entering into significant cooperation relations in that year, the Christian Socialists appeared to be the organization with the lowest coalition potential. The attitude of this party to the support of others was relatively favourable and it provided more than 50 per cent support for the proposals of three other parties, but did not receive similar systematic intervention (the ratio of obtained and offered ties, based on more than 50 per cent support, amounts to 0:3). The Christian Socialists were not interesting enough partners for the others, even though they themselves were willing to cooperate. Better positions were held by the Old Czechs (2:2) with balanced reciprocal support and by the National Socialists (2:3), who supported the initiatives of three Czech parties to an above-average degree even though this support was reciprocated only in two cases. In other instances the possibilities for individual parties were higher. With regard to received and provided support, the Constitutional Progressives were also passive (3:4), but their ties to other parties were already highly varied and adequately reciprocal. In the same year of 1907, the other parties regarded cooperation with this party as necessary and useful. This group, with a low number of members, was able to offer its support but collected adequate gains in exchange.

There were also parties with a highly active coalition potential. We might expect that this position would be held by the Young Czechs, previously a dominant force, which still retained considerable influence on the political events in the country and was aware of its significance. The Young Czechs (4:2) were strongly supported in their parliamentary activities by four political organizations but they only rendered reciprocal support to two of them. During this period, even more distinct and remarkable gains were obtained by the Realists (4:1), who were low in numbers. Their coalition potential was highly active because they reciprocated the support they received only in the case of one party (the Constitutional Progressives). This fact indicated the authority which the Realists had and which allowed them to make use of support without having to return it to other parties. However, the party that enjoyed the highest support and consequently was the organization with the broadest coalition potential was the Moravian Popular Party (5:4). This party was found acceptable for cooperation by virtually all weaker and medium-strong political organizations. Thus, on the basis of these ties, there were only two parties – the Constitutional Progressives and the Moravian Popular Party – where we can see a certain predisposition for the coordination of political work. In their activities, these parties created a basis for centres of certain cooperation where their willingness to cooperate was returned to an equal or even higher degree.

However, some relationships underwent marked changes during the following years. The number of ties increased as a result of the fact that the largest parties, the Social Democrats and Agrarians, participated in cooperation activities to a greater degree, even though this concerned support offered by them but which was not returned. In 1911, too, the party of Christian Socialists (0:3) remained a sad figure in Czech politics. It remained willing to support others without having any hope of their willingness to reciprocate. However, the National Socialists came conspicuously close to their position. This party, which markedly surpassed the Christian Socialists with its number of seats as well as in its overall activity and the number of presented documents, was losing strong and stable allies because of its radicalism and in spite of the pre-election cartel agreement. The National Socialists (1:5) were rendering a level of over half support to five parties for their proposals and interpellations, but reciprocity was very weak in this case. There was only one party (the Constitutional Progressives) that was willing to demonstrate reciprocity, primarily thanks to the already-mentioned strong individual and isolated support from Karel Baxa.

Nevertheless, this trend influenced a large part of Czech politics. During the period after the elections in 1911, we can virtually no longer speak about the existence of some wider coordination or coalition ties. The will to practise more general reciprocal cooperation was disappearing from Czech parliamentary politics and the tendency grew for those parties that either received or granted marked support to become isolated. During this period, this was true for the one-man parties, specifically for Neumann, an Old Czech (5:1), and for Masaryk, a Realist (4:2), as well as for the Young Czechs (4:1) and for the Moravian Popular Party (5:2), which we described as the group with the highest coalition potential in the previous period. In this period, the Constitutional Progressive Party was the only party to retain a relatively higher steady coalition potential (3:5). This fact is all the more surprising if we consider that we have already stated that this party manifested distinct overall

decline in its activity in comparison with the previous period. This decline was counteracted primarily by the individual activities of A. Kalina and K. Baxa.

Thus, in addition to the absolute decrease in the number of presented and supported documents, we can also record another general trend among the MPs of Czech parties. The activities of smaller and medium-sized parties, which we have defined as all-national ones in the basic political spectrum, were losing their effective ability to create and maintain ties; the intensity of reciprocal support among individual parties was becoming weaker in favour of two different tendencies. Especially in the case of numerically weaker parties, we can see a wider distribution of supporting attitudes to several parties at the expense of intensive systematic support of a limited number of allies. If we differentiate the above-half reciprocal support into marked support (50–70 per cent) and strong support (more than 70 per cent), then the ratio of proved support among individual parties in 1907, amounting to 14:6, changed into a ratio of 9:12 in favour of marked alliance ties as compared with strong ties in 1911, when the phenomenon commented on above occurred: the broader alliances among parties were clearly loosening and were being transformed into narrower unions, which hinted at the slimming down of the Czech political scene.

According to the data from 1911, the trend of the parties to divide into parties that were unilaterally supportive or, conversely, neglected by the others continued. This meant that the extreme positions of organizations that were receiving distinctly more support than they provided (Young Czechs, Realists) or vice versa (National and Christian Socialists) continued to grow more extreme. This tendency was also confirmed by the fact that narrower but also more intensive alliances were formed among parties that were willing to provide completely consistent reciprocal support. The absolute support of all presented documents was rendered by the Young Czechs to the Old Czechs, by the Agrarians and Constitutional Progressives to the Moravian Popular Party and by the Constitutional Progressives to the Realists in 1911.

The Christian Socialists were pushed outside the scope of these originally wider but subsequently more closed alliances. Other data also indicate their position as a cooperative but undesired coalition ally. In relative terms, this party was producing a fairly steady number of documents, for which their authors sought and found varied but not systematic support from other parties (for 16 documents in 1907 and for 11 documents in 1911). However, in the first period the party still had a sufficient number of MPs to present documents supported exclusively by its own MPs, supplemented only by the support of favourably inclined non-Czech MPs – the number of such documents totalled 38 in 1907. In 1911, the party lost the necessary number of seats for independent interpellation activities but, at the same time, it refused to obtain the missing votes from ideologically congenial parties from outside the Czech spectrum. In that year its MPs presented a mere eight documents, which were not supported by any members of other Czech parties. However, we have not recorded a similar trend in relation to non-Czech political parties. In the first year, Christian Socialists supported 95 documents of Italian, German, Slovenian and other MPs with their signatures; in 1911 they supported 51 documents. This decrease approximately corresponded to the decrease in the number of the MPs in this party from 17 to ten. In other words, the MPs of this party retained stable relations with their ideological

allies outside the Czech political field, but they were unable to secure sufficient support for their documents among Czech political parties. Their coalition potential among Czech organizations was very weak and, as we have shown, one-sided. The party was willing to cooperate but did not find any reciprocal response. This fact is also confirmed by other figures. In 1907, the MPs of this party succeeded in obtaining the support of their Czech colleagues from more than two parties for a specific interpellation in a single case only. In 1911, we cannot find a single similar case.

While the Christian Socialists on the Czech scene were artificially manoeuvred into a position that they did not seek, the situation of the two most numerous Czech political parties, the Social Democrats and Agrarians, was somewhat different. Both parties were so strongly secured by the number of their members in both of the examined years that they did not have to seek reciprocal support from other Czech parties. Nevertheless, we can find marked differences in their parliamentary strategy. In 1907, the Czech Social Democratic Party, representing a part of the united all-Austrian Social Democratic Party at that time, clearly acted as an organization avoiding almost any cooperation with other Czech parliamentary parties. Its MPs supported the interpellation proposals of their Czech colleagues in very rare cases. In that year the Realists were the only party in relation to which the Social Democrats showed more substantial willingness to support another party. Conversely, the Social Democrats rendered intensive support to party co-members and ideologically congenial MPs from different national environments outside the spectrum of Czech parties. The number of these instances of nationally unrelated support reached 113 documents. This was the second highest support for non-Czech MPs; surprisingly, the National Socialists, holding strong national views, were most diligent in this respect because they supported non-Czech MPs in 139 cases in 1907. It could be said that it was only a natural response of the other Czech political parties when their MPs did not support a single interpellation or proposal presented by the Social Democratic Party. All 164 documents which the Social Democratic MPs from the Czech lands presented during the session in 1907 were supported exclusively by the members of this party or with the help of MPs of other nationalities. The reasons were naturally more deep-rooted and were derived from the long-term development of relations between the Social Democratic Party and other political parties.

Disagreements within the party itself caused a change in the way these circumstances were reflected in its parliamentary work and cooperation. Long-term efforts aimed at an autonomous course of action in relation to the all-Austrian Social Democratic Party led to a split in the party on the eve of the elections in 1911. The consequences of the conflicts between the 'centrists' and 'autonomists' inside the Czech Social Democratic Party and the unclear attitude to comrades from the all-Austrian Party were inevitably reflected in the subsequent parliamentary activities of the party. The Social Democratic Party clearly remained the most closed party. Even during the twenty-first session, MPs from no other Czech party supported a single parliamentary action of the Social Democrats. The absolute number of their documents somewhat increased; during the session, the Social Democratic MPs presented a total of 171 documents and had to promote them on their own or with the cooperation of favourably inclined non-Czech MPs, but this cooperation was

visibly becoming weaker. The chilling of relations with the all-imperial Social Democratic Party was also markedly reflected in the number of documents which the Czechs were willing to support. The decline in the indicators of this support was very steep; if we set aside individual manifestations of support in such a large party, then as compared with the 113 documents of non-Czech MPs, which the Social Democrats from the Czech lands supported in 1907, they only demonstrated their willingness to provide support in a mere fifteen cases, which was the lowest number among all Czech parties. On the other hand, the willingness of the MPs from this party to support parliamentary initiatives presented by other Czech parties somewhat increased. Their support was neither intensive nor extensive; it was focused on the documents presented by Masaryk, a Realist, and the Moravian Popular Party; in both cases, the Social Democrats supported more than 50 per cent of the initiatives presented by these parties. The parameters of the coalition potential of the Social Democratic Party were also influenced by the consequences of its long-term evolution outside parliamentary structures; this party was 'accustomed' to its isolation and, owing to the number of seats it held at the time when it made its way into the parliament, it did not even then have to break this isolation. Nevertheless, the crisis which developed inside the party compelled the party to re-evaluate its parliamentary strategies and gradually to establish closer relations with the circles of at least some other Czech political organizations.

In this respect, the position of the Agrarians, the strongest Czech parliamentary party, was different. This party evolved from the former burgher political representation and focused on the electoral groups whose specific interests had not been covered in the agendas of the other parties, and in this sense the Agrarians were perceived as an organic and compatible party right from the time when it came into being and entered parliament. This party undoubtedly concentrated on the interests of the Czech lands, even to the extent of weak cooperation with MPs of the parties of other nationalities. Nevertheless, owing to the number of its seats in the parliament, it was not compelled to a substantially active cooperation. Therefore its shift to greater openness to other parties was a manifestation of a more general strategy, which did not have to overcome any substantial obstacles. Thus, on one hand, with the Agrarians we can find a large portion of proposals and interpellations which were supported solely by their own members or possibly as well by non-Czech parliamentary colleagues. In both examined years, the proportion of separately presented initiatives amounted to approximately 80 per cent of all the documents prepared in the workshop of the 'party of the Czech countryside'. Nevertheless, as concerned the remaining 20 per cent, the support by the MPs of other Czech parties was very varied; the Agrarians were evenly supported by the entire spectrum of parties, except for the Social Democrats. This passive support by other parties was stable throughout the two examined years. By comparison, the support rendered by the Agrarians to other Czech parties changed. The Agrarians, too, did not support the Social Democrats but they doubled or even tripled their percentage support for all other parties in 1911, with a single clear exception: as compared with the previous period, the Agrarians reduced their support for the Christian Socialists. In its parliamentary activities, the Agrarian Party acted as an organization that retained a certain distance and autonomous position, which it could afford owing to its size. On the other hand,

it was a cooperative party which over the course of time increased its openness to other parties and obtained their steady support.

On the basis of the collected data, it is possible to summarize a number of partial conclusions. However, in connection with the introduction of this paper, we think it is most essential to emphasize two general tendencies. First, the different approach of parties which we have described as all-national or interest-specific parties according to their evolution and focus was confirmed. Even if we take into account the circumstance that all the 'all-national' parties received low or medium support from electors in both elections and consequently were not able to rely solely on their own parliamentary resources, we can state that these parties were showing substantially greater will to cooperate and tried to create wider coalitions in their parliamentary activities. Especially in 1907 we can see the still-persisting effort to create wide cooperating blocks. However, later on this will to cooperate was disappearing and the tendency to concentrate on the internal integrity of partisan individualities and to establish closer ties with previously loosely associated partners prevailed. In spite of the fact that we observed a dwindling potential for wide coalition groups in the second examined period, their reciprocal accommodation and support remained incomparably higher than in relation to the interest-specific parties or than in the case of reciprocal relations among the interest-specific parties. We should not forget that the all-national parties had originated from the tradition of united representation and therefore cultivated within themselves a certain feeling of general responsibility for Czech politics as such. This characteristic was undoubtedly true for the Young Czechs, the formerly dominant political force. In spite of the fact that their MPs formed a relatively strong parliamentary group and that they were able to reach the required number of signatories for support of individual documents on their own, they sought highly varied support and usually obtained it. This can be documented by an example of a certain integrating force of this party. Its MPs were not the most active ones; if we calculate the ratio of the number of presented proposals and interpellations to the number of seats, we will find that they presented approximately 7.9 and 4.8 documents, respectively, per MP during the two examined sessions. (In these statistics, the National Socialists with a count of 22.5 and Constitutional Progressives with 14.7 documents per person clearly dominated during the first period. Nevertheless, the MPs of both of these parties 'became more disciplined' during the second examined period, and their activities decreased to averages of 7.6 and 3 proposals per person.) Notwithstanding, the Young Czechs (and in 1907, the Old Czechs, too) were successful in exerting a certain uniting authority, which was indicated by the general support of the proposals and interpellations presented by them. While some parties remained completely isolated and some others could rely on the support of one or two parties, the two said parties exceptionally succeeded in obtaining the support of seven out of eight possible parties for their proposals. Both of these parties were able to bring about this remarkable unity among the MPs of other Czech parties three times in 1907; in 1911, a similar feat was repeated only by the Young Czechs in a single case. Regarding the activities of interest-specific parties and their MPs, a certain reserved attitude was obvious at first sight. As the Christian Socialists confirmed, the reason for this attitude did not lie solely with their confidence based on the number of their seats and their practice of relying on their own

resources. The Christian Socialists and Agrarians had a certain limited coalition potential; the Social Democrats only had active potential because they were willing to provide cooperation in individual cases but did not receive any; in spite of that, the integration of the activities of these parties with other Czech parties or between each other was minimal and non-systematic.

This result of our analysis might have been expected and it confirmed a certain relationship between the political principle of regarding politics as work for the common good of the entire nation and another political principle of advocating an interest more concentrated on partial segments and interest groups of the society. However, other data produced surprising results. Setting aside the categorization into all-national and interest-specific parties, we can compare activities along a different scale. In the manifestations of some of the Czech parties, Czech politics were clearly becoming more radical already during prewar times; the interest in belonging to Austria was declining. The politicians of these parties openly emphasized consistently opposition-oriented work practices in their statements. The National Socialists, the Constitutional Progressives and partly the Realists, too, can be regarded as parties of this type. As opposed to this, the circles of the Young Czechs (the Young Czechs, Old Czechs, and Moravian Popular Party) as well as the Christian Socialists or the Agrarians were pursuing activist policies loyal to the state at that time. And in spite of being an opposition party, the Social Democrats also declared their clear interest in maintaining Austria-Hungary as well as in addressing and developing their agendas within this state. Therefore, it might have been expected that these 'imperial parties' would perform their parliamentary activities across the parliamentary spectrum. It might also be expected that this would be all the more true for the interest-specific parties from whom we might expect cooperation with other ideologically congenial parties in the empire. And from this point of view, this should have applied conversely, which means that the radically oriented parties, which emphasized their specific national interests so much, should have tended to be closed within the political spectrum of the land concerned. However, the analysed materials proved the exact opposite. At least as concerns the Czech parliamentary parties, it has become apparent how markedly wider the coordination and cooperation with other political organizations in the parliament were in the case of the consistently and radically opposition-oriented parties. They were less willing to pursue pro-state pro-Austrian activism than were the parties which declared their loyal positions and pro-state policy but were unable to implement and promote it across the spectrum of the parties in the House of Deputies and confined their activities and cooperation to the limited radius of their land.

The activities of the Social Democratic MPs were undoubtedly specific in another respect. During these years this party underwent a crisis which resulted in its becoming even more closed by nature. The steep decrease from 113 documents of non-Czech MPs supported by the Czech Social Democrats in 1907 to 15 similar documents in 1911 can serve as an eloquent commentary on its abandonment of an empire-wide concept of political activity. Conversely, an opposite and relatively marked change in policy can be found with the Realists, who supported 34 documents presented by the MPs of non-Czech parties in 1907 and increased the number of such documents to 76 in 1911. In all other parties, the support rendered to the

parties representing nationally different groups was maintained, at least roughly, at comparable levels. This shows a certain universality of radicalism where the strongest cooperation at the imperial level was clearly demonstrated by the National Socialists and Constitutional Progressives, while the activist pro-Austrian parties, to which the parties from the Young Czech circles or the Agrarians were thought to belong, maintained these contacts across the House of Deputies to a minimal extent. While, for example, the National Socialists supported the documents of non-Czech MPs in 139 and 60 cases, respectively, during the examined years, the Agrarians provided this type of support in 40 and 28 cases, respectively, and the Young Czechs merely in 9 and 25 cases, respectively. These parties concentrated on the Czech political spectrum in their actions and the 'imperial' dimension of their policies was clearly limited.

In conclusion, we can state that Czech party politics underwent a relatively turbulent period of evolution during the years before the outbreak of the First World War. It maintained its integrity primarily in the cooperation among the 'all-national' parties. The overall activity of parliamentary work was declining over the course of time but still remained at a relatively high level. However, the orientation of these activities was not unidirectional. While the activist parties loyal to the state, including the opposition Social Democrats, focused their activities solely or predominantly on the Czech political spectrum, the parties which we could describe as consistently opposition-oriented parties with lower willingness to respect the integrity of the empire were pursuing their activities in more varied supportive alliances across the imperial parliament. Nevertheless, for further elaboration of this conclusion an analysis of the topics of the individual proposals and interpellations would be very useful.⁹

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