

THE RELATIONS OF THE NATIONALITIES
IN BOHEMIAN AND MORAVIAN TOWNS
BEFORE THE HUSSITE WARS

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In Bohemia, towns organized according to German Law originated around 1230 (Prague, Leitmeritz, Königgrätz), and since the middle of the 13th Century they have multiplied. In Moravia and in the Troppau region of Silesia they originate already in 1220, in association with foundations in Silesia and Lower Austria. Their appearance is at least partly to be seen in legal documents. Otherwise we can be certain of a German population on the evidence of names of individual citizens, members of town councils, and craftsmen, German or Germanized Czech place names, and occasionally also meadow names. Sometimes we find indications of the language that was spoken: in bilingual towns the church arranged that the sermon was given in both languages. So it is possible to make conclusions about the

relations between the nationalities in the towns. The national feeling of the 13th and 14th Centuries were, however, not so pronounced as at the present time.

The best sources from which we gain insight are the family names, for German and Czechs differed distinctly in this case. Complete latinizations lose their value, unless other indications lead to a decision. If we can pursue the development of family names up to the Hussite Wars, we see in the councils and communities of some towns an increase of Czech and a decrease of German names. In some the German names were reduced to a minority. In not a few cases the differences are already considerable in the second half of the 14th Century. For example, an examination of the council in Kolin in 1359 shows 11 German, no Czech and one indeterminate name. In Schlan, however, the relation in 1348 was 0:10:3, and so there is no doubt that in the middle of the 14th Century Kolin was a German governed town and Schlan a Czech governed town.

The Prague-Altstadt developed since 1230 as a German town and it was a hundred years before some Czech names appeared in the council; in 1373 they are more numerous. After 1400 German and Czech names appeared almost equal. The Decree of King Wenzel in 1413 that the council should consist of half Germans and half Czechs only legalized already valid facts.

Also, among the citizens the German element predominated but the Czech immigration increased in the 14th Century because around the town the villages were Czech. Such was the situation at the outbreak of the Hussite Wars, which initiated the expulsion of the German citizens from the Prague-Altstadt.

In the town which King Ottokar II established on the left bank of the Moldau, and which was eventually called Kleinseite, there was at first a German majority in the council. Since 1323 Czech names appeared; in 1358 the nationalities are equal, and since 1359 a Czech majority exists. The history of the two nationalities in the two towns on Prague soil offers, therefore, some differences which lasted for decades.

In the Newtown, which originated in 1343, the Czech majority was from the beginning considerable and it quickly gained power. Before the Hussite Wars the Altstadt (Old Town) was the only part not yet Czech controlled. So it is understandable that from 1420 the city was the centre of the "Utraquists".

Each town must be specially investigated since each has its own history. There were towns in which an old Czech village was merged, so that from the beginning both nationalities were represented. Such was the case in Beraun, which first had a German council, but later when the Czechs were capable of self-government they tried to be represented. In 1356 King Charles was appealed to and he decreed that half of a court jury should consist of Czechs. This is in accord with the recorded names.

There can be no talk of the exclusion anywhere of the Czechs from the Government. In the towns governed by German Law, which meant for the

Czechs a transference of a foreign institution, they could not at first take part in the council until they had learned the *modus operandi*. The main reason for the increase of the Czech population in certain towns was the distribution of the nationalities. Were the surroundings Czech then the Czech population streamed in and the Germans were merged into the population. Towns in the interior of the country, where the situation was favourable (for example, Leitmeritz, Kolin, Kuttenberg among others) maintained their German way of life until the Hussite Wars. Around Kolin and Kuttenberg there were German villages, and also the mines were in German hands. On the other hand, farming towns were Czech since 1400 or the middle of the 14th Century. Of 99 investigated towns and market-towns 35 had already lost their German majority before the outbreak of the war. In the 14th Century Czech national feeling awoke, whereas the Germans remained indifferent. The conditions during this time in some towns seem almost modern. In Groß-Meseritsch in Moravia the German language was not tolerated in the council although there was a German minority. In Iglau, which was almost completely German, the Czechs were governed by Czechs. One finds language disputes, division of the seats in the council in proportion to the national distribution of the two peoples, withdrawal of the nobles, development of the Guilds and through that of the poor citizens.

In those places where German was the only language (i. e. on the borders, around Iglau, Olmütz, and Mährisch Trübau and Brünn), the Hussite Wars could not bring a change. There the German way of life survived. But the towns in the interior without surrounding German villages or with only small isolated German-speaking areas, became Czech. The consequences of the Hussite Wars have been overrated. In some towns such as Leitmeritz, Saaz and Aussig, German minorities have survived and became since the 16th Century the kernel of a renewed national metamorphosis. The new development of the country was carried out by the Germans living there, so that there is no gap in the continuity of family names in the newly won areas. In the 14th and early 15th Centuries the two peoples struggled spiritually against one another. The Czechs prevailed over their teachers. The Hussite times accelerated a development which was already prepared in the 14th Century.