

INTRODUCING INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL
HISTORY TO THE HISTORY OF EVERYDAY LIFE:
MULTIETHNIC COHABITATION AND JEWISH
EXPERIENCE IN FIN-DE-SIÈCLE BOHEMIA

A few years ago, in the framework of his comprehensive study of perceptions of ethnicity and identity in Habsburg Austria and the Austrian Republic from 1880 to 1938, the Austrian historian Michael John developed a number of revealing insights concerning the dynamics of interethnic relationships in fin-de-siècle Habsburg society. When specifically discussing the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary (Cisleithania), John stressed that one of the key events that determined the cultural nature of this area in the period in question was related to the multiethnic internal waves of migration which in the period from 1880 to 1910 swept over not only urban centers such as Vienna, Prague, Trieste, Cracow, Lemberg and Czernowitz, but also outlying areas that had previously had a manifestly German character, such as border areas in Upper and Lower Austria as well as Southern Bohemia and Moravia.¹ As a result of this internal migration, these locations became arenas for encounters between a range of ethnic groups, encounters accompanied by constant tension between two opposing tendencies: a national-assimilating one, and a multicultural one. To conceptualize this dynamic, John proposed a "melting pot" vs. "mosaic" model, whose two components were intended to express these two tendencies. While the national-assimilating tendency, the "melting pot" variety, was represented by the national movements which sought to construct a socio-cultural space within a set of homogeneous national camps, the multicultural tendency of the "mosaic" was expressed in the strengthening of identities lacking a pronounced national consciousness which did not accord with efforts directed at ethno-national demarcation.²

The approach underlying John's study of issues of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness in fin-de-siècle Habsburg society strikingly reflects a significant and ongoing development in the recent generation of Austro-Hungarian historiography. There is a gradual undermining of the tendency to see Habsburg Eastern/Central Europe through a teleological prism of the disintegration of the multiethnic empire in the wake of World War I, and in light of this to divide its prewar population into groups possessing a clearly defined ethno-national consciousness.³ The development of a

¹ John, Michael: "We Do Not Even Possess Our Selves": On Identity and Ethnicity in Austria, 1880-1937. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 30 (1999) 17-64, here 22.

² *Ibid.* 30, 32.

³ Some of the most striking revisionist studies in this respect include *Verdery*, Katherine: *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1983. – *Deák*, Istvan: *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and*

critical approach to this retrospective view is certainly to be ascribed to one of the basic changes in the modern historiography of Europe (and not only Europe) generally, relating to the shifting of the research emphasis from political history to social, cultural history, and in particular to the history of day-to-day life. It is indeed true that while the examination of the political aspect of the history of the post-1848 Habsburg state has always resulted in a fairly clear picture of the dichotomous polarized relationships between different ethnic groups throughout the Empire, looking into the social, cultural and everyday life that takes place beyond institutional and organizational settings has managed to reveal to researchers aspects of the interethnic and intercultural contacts and interactions in the multiethnic population fabric.

Historiographic developments such as these had an inevitably impact on research on interethnic relations in the Czech lands in the period in question. Thus, in his pioneering study, dating back over two decades, about the history of the German community in Prague in the period from 1861 to 1914, Gary Cohen for the first time drew attention to the degree of mingling between Germans and Czechs in everyday life.⁴ In his opinion, despite ever-widening Czech-German polarization that occurred in the public and political sphere in the waning years of the Habsburg dynasty, day-to-day contacts between Czechs and Germans in the Bohemian capital took place not only in the area of employment, commerce and school education, but also in the framework of mixed neighborhoods. Even in neighborhoods with a particularly high German concentration, Cohen emphasizes, German families shared buildings with Czech families.⁵ However, although he neatly identified the gap between the political and the everyday aspect of interethnic relationships in Bohemia, Cohen failed to carry out the requisite examination of the issue of the tension between politics and everyday life. On the contrary, what is striking in his book is precisely the lack of any connection between the political and ideological history of the Czech-German national struggle and *Alltagsgeschichte*.⁶ As a result, a number of the fundamental questions that emerge in the light of Cohen's empirical finding have gone unanswered. Examples of such questions include: to what extent is the experience of multiethnic neighborhoods likely to influence the way that individuals and groups see themselves and their philosophy of life? Does this experience constitute a challenge to the politics of ethno-national polarization? Or to put things in terms of Michael John's "melting pot/mosaic" model: Can we identify contradictions between the unifying ethno-national discourse that constructs the categories of "Germans" and "Czechs" as two polar ethnic-cultural entities (the "melting pot"

Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918. New York 1990. – Judson, Pieter: *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914*. Ann Arbor 1996.

⁴ Cohen, Gary: *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*. Princeton, New Jersey 1981, 123-139.

⁵ *Ibid.* 134.

⁶ See also: *Idem*: *Deutsche, Juden und Tschechen in Prag: das Sozialleben des Alltags, 1890-1914*. In: Godé, Maurice/Le Rider, Jacques/Mayer, Françoise (eds.): *Allemands, Juifs et Tchèques à Prague, 1890-1924*. Montpellier 1994, 55-69.

tendency), and a mixed ethnic reality involving a constant potential for the daily breaching of the ethnic boundaries (the "mosaic" tendency)?

Unlike Cohen, Karl Bahm did not simply acknowledge the absence of ethnic barriers in the everyday experience of fin-de-siècle Bohemia, but also sought to investigate the influence that this experience had on the awareness and views of those who were part of it. In discussing the issue of the everyday lives of the lower classes in Northern Bohemia, an area which is viewed in historiography as the bastion of German ethnic nationalism in Bohemia, Bahm shows that the facade of absolute German homogeneity conceals a far more complex bilingual and multiethnic socio-cultural reality.⁷ This reality, according to Bahm, emerged in the wake of the waves of internal Czech migration from the rural areas in Central and Eastern Bohemia to its industrialized areas in the north and west, which were largely inhabited by a German population. This internal migration, which peaked in demographic terms in the 1880s and 1890s, therefore brought about a multi-dimensional encounter between the German-speaking and Czech-speaking populations, an encounter which was accompanied not only by ethnic rivalries and pressures to assimilate, but also by intercultural interaction, which in particular put its stamp on patterns of linguistic usage and the inhabitants' self-identity. Drawing on two rare autobiographical essays written by father and son Wenzel and Heinrich Holek, two lower-class men from the Aussig/Ústí nad Labem area born in 1864 and 1885 respectively, Bahm demonstrates that in the last two decades of the nineteenth century Bohemian society, at least in its lowest classes, was characterized by amorphous and ambivalent Czech-German identities, a kind of "ethnic goulash," as he puts it, which faithfully reflected everyday bilingual and bicultural existence.⁸ True, with the escalation of the Czech-German conflict at the beginning of the twentieth century a gradual erosion occurred in such hybrid identities, with increasing penetration of two particularist ethno-national identities – the German and the Czech. At the same time, heterogeneity and interethnic overlapping on the everyday and conscious level did not entirely disappear, continuing to constitute a thorny challenge to both Czech and German nationalism.⁹

In light of Bahm's research, a new paradigm can be formulated for an understanding of interethnic relations in Bohemia at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth: a paradigm which will suit the "melting pot/mosaic" model proposed by John for the whole of the Habsburg society. This paradigm, based on the desired integration of political, intellectual and cultural history on the one hand, with the history of everyday life on the other, will facilitate a two-dimensional reading of relationships between Czechs and Germans in the period in question. On the one hand, we are speaking of the more obvious dimension of interethnic relations, including the socio-economic, cultural, ideological and political con-

⁷ Bahm, Karl: *Beyond the Bourgeoisie: Rethinking Nation, Culture and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe*. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 29 (1998) 19-35, here 22-28.

⁸ *Ibid.* 25.

⁹ *Ibid.* 28-29.

frontation between two institutionalized ethno-nationalist entities, Czech and German. On the other hand, we are made aware of another – concealed – dimension, focusing on the way that Czech and German nationalisms jointly coped with the manifestations of national ambiguousness and cultural ambivalence in inhabitants' everyday lives, or in other words, in John's terms, the clash between the "melting pot" tendency and the "mosaic" tendency.

As for what historiography has to say about the three-way Czech-German-Jewish relationship, it would appear that most of the research that focuses on the Jewish side of the triangle has not yet found a way to bring together research on Jewish awareness with research on the Jews' everyday experience in a multiethnic setting. In this sense it may be said that the historiography concerning the Jews of Bohemia in the era of modern nationalism is rather backward compared with that about Czech-German relations. In fact, the main prism through which research examines the history of Jewish society in Bohemia is none other than the prism of the national political conflict between the Czechs and the Germans. In this setting, Jewish society is described as a kind of political battlefield between agents of the two rival peoples – "the German Jews" or "the Czech Jews."¹⁰ In other words, if we wish to shed light on this historiographic picture using the "melting pot/mosaic" model, we can argue therefore that according to it, the main regional forces acting on Jewish society were those of the "melting pot," German on the one side and Czech on the other. True, at one and the same time as this dichotomous perception, many researchers basically recognize the factors of bilingualism and national ambiguousness among the Jews, i.e. the phenomena of the Jewish "mosaic" in Bohemia, even going so far as to acknowledge that such phenomena characterized Bohemian Jewry even more than the non-Jewish environment.¹¹ However, in the absence of any focused and sufficiently in-depth treatment of issues relating to everyday Jewish life, the mere acknowledgment of the "mosaicity" of Jewish existence has no real value. After all, without a discussion of questions of the social, cultural and everyday contexts of the linguistic and cultural "mosaic" phenomenon among the Jews, references to this in historiography will remain a mere footnote to the political history of the Czech-German conflict in a Jewish society context. In other words, Jewish individuals'

¹⁰ *Kestenberg-Gladstein*, Ruth: The Jews Between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands, 1848-1918. In: *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia 1968, 21-71, here 21. – *Cohen*, Gary: Jews in German Society: Prague, 1860-1914. In: *Central European History* 10 (1977) 28-54, here 34. – *Iggers*, Wilma: The Flexible National Identities of Bohemian Jewry. In: *East Central Europe* 7 (1980) 1, 39-48, here 43-45. – *Hahn*, Fred: The Dilemma of the Jews in Historic Lands of Czechoslovakia, 1918-1938. In: *East Central Europe* 10 (1983) 1-2, 24-39, here 24. – *McCagg*, William: A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670-1918. Bloomington, Indianapolis 1989, 177-179. – *Wistrich*, Robert: The Jews and Nationality Conflicts in the Habsburg Lands. In: *Nationalities Papers* 22 (1994) 1, 119-139, here 127. – *Pawel*, Ernst: Der Prager Zionismus zu Kafkas Zeit. In: *Krolop*, Kurt/*Zimmermann*, Hans Dietrich (eds.): *Kafka und Prag*. Berlin 1994, 33-43, here 34. – *Luft*, Robert: Nationale Utraquisten in Böhmen: zur Problematik "nationaler Zwischenstellung" am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. In: *Godé/Le Rider/Mayer* (eds.): *Allemands, Juifs et Tchèques* 37-51, here 47 (cf. fn. 6).

¹¹ See, for instance: *Cohen*: The politics of Ethnic Survival 90 (cf. fn. 4).

bilingualism and dual Czech-German culture are the exception that proves the rule, i. e. the centrality of the German and Czech "melting pot" phenomenon in the context of the Jewish experience.

From this point of view, Hartmut Binder's comprehensive article about the three-way relationships between Jews, Czechs and Germans in Prague on the eve of World War I as well as in the postwar period is an outstanding piece of research.¹² It is the first research effort to situate fin-de-siècle Prague intellectual history, and in particular the birth of the "Prague Circle" of Jewish writers and thinkers, in the context of the multiethnic everyday way of life. In so doing, Binder was the first to fundamentally challenge the "triple ghetto" thesis of the Prague Jewish writer Pavel/Paul Eisner (1889-1958).¹³ After examining interethnic relationships in Prague in the private sphere through a new reading of memoirs and texts, both literary and journalistic, Binder comes to the conclusion that ethnic and religious boundaries among the Bohemian capital's population were fairly blurred.¹⁴ Nonetheless, even in the wake of this study it is still necessary to discuss issues of everyday life in Bohemia on the eve of the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy, and first and foremost the issue of relations between neighbors to which Binder relates very fleetingly only, and without drawing on relevant archival sources.¹⁵ I shall try below to make up for this deficiency, my primary purpose being to show that research on multiethnic propinquity can potentially shed fresh light on a number of important aspects in the intellectual, cultural and political history of Bohemian Jewry, such as Jewish-German literature in Prague at the beginning of the twentieth century, Jewish nationalism, and antisemitism.

Multiethnic Cohabitation and German-Jewish Literature: The Case of Max Brod

Das alte österreichische Prag war eine Stadt, in der [...] drei Nationen standen im Kampf gegeneinander: die Tschechen als Majorität, die Deutschen als Minorität und die Juden als Minorität innerhalb dieser Minorität.¹⁶

This schematic presentation of the multinational experience in the city of his birth that the Jewish-German writer Max Brod (1884-1968) gives in his autobiography (*Streitbares Leben*) belongs to the same type of descriptions of Prague towards the

¹² Binder, Hartmut: Paul Eisners dreifaches Ghetto: Deutsche, Juden und Tschechen in Prag. In: Reffet, Michel (ed.): *Le monde de Franz Werfel et la morale des nations*. Berne 2001, 17-137.

¹³ According to Eisner, during the period in question the Jews of Prague were, so to speak, surrounded by a kind of double wall: on the one side, as the faithful supporters of *Deutschtum*, the Jews were in a position of profound alienation relative to their Czech majority surroundings, while on the other side, their German affinity being cultural and intellectual only, they had no social contacts whatsoever with the population of Bohemia's ethnic Germans, to a large extent even despising the provincial German "riff-raff" of the Sudetenland. Eisner, Paul: *Franz Kafka and Prague*. New York 1950, 35-37.

¹⁴ Binder: Paul Eisners dreifaches Ghetto 81-84, 125-137 (cf. fn. 12).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 125-126.

¹⁶ Brod, Max: *Streitbares Leben*. Autobiographie. München 1960, 7-8.

end of the Habsburg dynasty that we saw above in Pavel/Paul Eisner.¹⁷ Like Eisner, albeit not in the same sweeping terms of a "triple ghetto," in his memoirs Brod conjures up a picture of a Prague divided and polarized between two distinct national entities, the Czech and the German, with Jews, mainly being affiliated with the city's German minority in both social and cultural terms. As far as the relationships between the Germans and the Czechs in the city are concerned, Brod's description matches the picture that is painted in the memoirs of a number of his Prague Jewish contemporaries, such as famous journalist Egon Erwin Kisch (1885-1948) and the renowned scholar of nationalism, Hans Kohn (1891-1971). Both placed special emphasis on the mutual alienation in everyday existence between the Czech majority and the German minority, and the impression is even given that these were two communities hermetically sealed off from each other and with practically no social contacts whatsoever between them.¹⁸ In Brod's case, this aspect of Czech-German alienation is strengthened all the more in the image of Jewish existence in Prague: as a "minority within a minority," the Jews would appear to run their social and cultural lives in a kind of "German bubble," utterly ignoring and completely separate from the Czech majority surroundings.¹⁹

When reading Brod's autobiography itself, it does indeed seem as if Prague's tri-national existence was characterized by the existence of clear-cut partitions between peoples and cultures, as sketched in general lines in the introduction. When it comes to aspects of Brod's own life, these appear to constantly go round in a kind of closed German-Jewish circle. Individuals educated in the spirit of German culture, for the most part Jewish men, remain his close companions, from his school days at the German gymnasium in Stephansgasse/Štěpánská, through the German Karl-Ferdinand University and German-Jewish intellectual circles in pre-World-War-I Prague, right into the period of the post-1918 first Czechoslovak Republic. But at the same time, against the continuum of this Germanocentric story of Brod's life, here and there we catch a glimpse of significant cracks, which make us wonder about the real state of affairs. It turns out that Brod had intensive contacts with Czech

¹⁷ *Eisner*: Kafka and Prague 35-37 (cf. fn. 13).

¹⁸ *Kisch*, Egon Erwin: Deutsche und Tschechen. In: *Idem*: Marktplatz der Sensationen. Mexico 1942, 81-91. – *Kohn*, Hans: Living in a World Revolution: My Encounters with History. New York 1964, 8-10.

¹⁹ As far as the actual ethnic composition of the Bohemian capital at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century is concerned, attempts to estimate the demographic breakdown between Czechs and Germans on the basis of contemporary statistics runs into an insuperable difficulty, because the only criterion used by the Austrian government to define any individual's national affiliation was "everyday language," which will be discussed below in greater detail. In any case, following this logic in 1900 Prague had 415 000 "Czechs" (i.e. speakers of Czech as an everyday language) and 33 776 "Germans" (speakers of German as an everyday language), and Prague's 27 289 Jews were divided between these two groups, 55% "Czech Jews" (i.e. speakers of Czech as an everyday language) and 45% "German Jews" (speakers of German as an everyday language). *Tramer*, Hans: Prague – City of Three Peoples. In: Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 9 (1964) 305-339, here 305. – *Kieval*, Hillel: The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870-1918. New York 1988, 62.

intellectuals, was extremely well-versed in matters of Czech literature and art, and was even frequently involved in internal Czech disputes over matters on literature, music, and drama. It was Brod who "discovered" Jaroslav Hašek, wrote a glowing review of his "The Good Soldier Švejk" even before the whole of the book was published, and vehemently attacked Hašek's Czech critics who denied "Švejk" any literary merit.²⁰ Similarly, during World War I, Brod was active in efforts to improve the reputation of the Czech composer Leoš Janáček in the Czech music world, becoming embroiled in passionate confrontations with the Czech musical establishment which for a long time persisted in ignoring this composer's works because of his leanings towards folklore.²¹ In addition he translated into German the libretto for "Her Foster-Daughter", Janáček's rustic opera which after translation became known in the world by the name of "Jenůfa", as well as a goodly number of his other songs and choral works.²² On the other hand, what is not sufficiently clear from the autobiography, for example, is where Brod acquired his knowledge of Czech on a level that enabled him to be involved in Czech cultural life. Another question is why somebody like Brod, who was born into a bourgeois German-Jewish family and ostensibly grew up in an atmosphere of extreme alienation between the German and Czech settings, should be at all interested in developing ties with *Deutschtum's* rival culture in Bohemia? After all, in broad circles of Bohemian Germans the Czechs were presented as people of an inferior culture, so much that precisely the same terms were used vis-à-vis them that the Europeans used to describe African indigenous population;²³ and even in the days of the first Czechoslovak Republic during the interwar period, most Germans had no more than a very basic command of Czech, even those who were deputies at the Czech parliament.²⁴

Unlike the "Germanocentric" narrative of his life in "Streitbares Leben", in Brod's book "Der Prager Kreis", which is also a composition of a clearly autobiographical nature, we are given a more balanced and varied picture of the socio-cultural way of life of the writer and his fellow Jewish authors who wrote in German. Bilingualism and exposure to the two surrounding cultures in parallel are seen here to be fundamental to the identity of the Prague Jewish intellectuals who were his contemporaries, and not marginal phenomena on the fringes of the story of German acculturation. As Brod puts it:

Mit den Tschechen hielten wir gute Nachbarschaft [...] da gab es überhaupt nichts, was wie Grenze oder Absonderung abgesperrt hätte. Wir alle beherrschten die tschechische Sprache vollständig, die uns nicht weniger als die deutsche sagte.²⁵

²⁰ Brod: *Streitbares Leben* 416-417 (cf. fn. 16).

²¹ *Ibid.* 419-420.

²² *Ibid.* 425-426.

²³ Judson, Pieter: *Inventing Germans: Class, Nationality and Colonial Fantasy at the Margins of Habsburg Monarchy*. In: *Social Analysis* 33 (1993) 9, 47-67, here 47-48.

²⁴ Balling, Mads Ole: *Zur soziokulturellen Struktur der deutschen Abgeordneten in der Tschechoslowakei und anderen ostmitteleuropäischen Ländern*. In: *Bohemia* 36 (1995) 39-56, here 43-44.

²⁵ Brod, Max: *Der Prager Kreis*. Stuttgart 1966, 180.

Brod's "Germanocentric" self-portrayal that we are given in "Streitbares Leben" will be further weakened if we listen to the voice of the young Brod talking to us directly from early twentieth century Prague. This is "A Czech housemaid" (Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen), his 1909 novella. This short novel, which is basically a story of a young German civil servant's love for the Czech girl from the countryside, is first and foremost a biting satire directed against the isolationist lifestyle of the German minority in Prague. The protagonist, a Viennese-born German man, suffers from a kind of psychological defect: he lacks a basic ability to grasp and relate to the concrete reality around him, although he is capable of recognizing the world of abstract concepts. To cure him of this defect, his father has sent him to Prague, of all places, since here, as his father puts it,

[...] deine Gleichgültigkeit gegen die Umwelt [...] wird allmählich schwinden [...] in einer Stadt, die sich mit ihrer Geschichte so aufdrängt und wo zugleich etwas so Seltsames vor unsern Augen Geschichte wird, der Kampf der beiden Nationen.²⁶

Apparently, however, all has been in vain: in Prague, the hero saw no signs whatsoever of a second culture, and did not hear a single word of Czech. He was surrounded exclusively by Germans:

[...] meine Zimmerfrau [...] ist eine deutsche alte Jungfer [...] deutsch ist auch mein Chef [...] wie auch alle seine Angestellte [...] sogar der kleine Junge, der mir das Mittagessen bringt.²⁷

Only after he suddenly encounters a young Czech maidservant, with whom he falls in love, is the hero rescued from his isolation in the hermetically sealed German camp, confronted by a reality of the existence of another people side by side with the German people, in this way also acquiring an ability to see the concrete world. In addition, through the story of how the girl he loves left her poverty-stricken Czech village, the hero discovers that in fact the Czechs are also breaking out of their isolation.

[...] ich sehe, wie es [das tschechische Volk – D. S.] bedrängt von einer agrarischen Krisis in die Städte flüchtet, und ringsum die deutschen Lande stürmt. [...] Und ich sehe die heißen Städte Böhmens vor mir, die Bauernschaft kommt durch die Tore [...].²⁸

This is a dynamic picture of the course of Czech migration to the industrialized parts of Bohemia which began at the end of the nineteenth century, in the wake of which, "the German land" of Bohemia, including Old Prague, became a region with a patently bicultural nature.

This reality, as portrayed in Prague in the eyes of Brod's hero, is very far from idyllic. However, neither is it split between two isolated ethnic entities, as Brod would go on to describe it retrospectively in some of his autobiographical writings, such as in "Streitbares Leben". This is indeed "der Kampf," but the battle is a very complex one, including both rivalries and fertile mutual influences. Prague is thus a city that

²⁶ *Idem*: Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen. Leipzig 1909, 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 20-21.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 118.

[...] in der Zweisprachigkeit besteht, in abwechselnd deutsch und tschechisch geführten Gesprächen voll Unregelmässigkeit und unerhörten Nuancen, in einer massigen Wechselwirkung und in einer seltsamen Doppelkultur, die ihresgleichen in der Welt nicht hat [...].²⁹

True, "der Kampf könnte etwas lächelnder geführt werden, liebenswürdiger, nicht so verbittert und von allen Seiten erhitzt,"³⁰ which is the hero's dearest wish. On the other hand, he too can see no way out of this *Kampf*, and most importantly, he sees no need whatsoever to retreat into separate camps and mutual isolation.

Is this reality, how would the cultural scene have been perceived by somebody who grew up as part of the "minority within this minority," in a kind of German-Jewish "bubble"? Scott Spector, for example, in his "Prague Territories" compares the circle of Prague Jewish intellectuals who wrote in German, including Brod, to a "German-Jewish" island which, given the steady erosion of German hegemony and the flourishing of the young Czech culture, "belonged no longer to the past, and could find no place for itself in the future."³¹ Spector sees "The Czech Housemaid" first and foremost as an expression of a kind of German-Jewish colonial fantasy, expressed in terms of the discourse of gender and nationality: "It is the first source to look to for a clue to the morass of issues of desire and patronization, longing and disdain, in the German-Jewish gaze to the East."³²

However, if we delve into the young Brod's actual everyday experiences, we come to realize that the significance of "The Czech Housemaid" goes much further than constructing a quasi-orientalist dichotomy between a masculine, rational, and "western" "Germanness" and a feminine, primitive, and "eastern" "Slavness." Thus it emerges that, unlike the hero of "The Czech Housemaid", the Brod family's landlady was not "eine deutsche alte Jungfer," but a Czech Catholic couple. The Brod family lived in an ethnically moderately mixed building, housing three Jewish families, three Czech families, and two German Catholic families.³³ In other words, at least as far as the Brod family's housing arrangements are concerned, the image of Spector's "island" as a reflection of the ostensibly isolated situation of Prague's German-speaking Jews is completely unfounded. When he mocks the tendency of Prague's Germans to ignore and deny the existence of their Czech neighbors, Brod is therefore speaking from a distinctly multiethnic neighborhood, a microcosm of that self-same Prague of *Zweisprachigkeit* and *Doppelkultur* which is suddenly revealed to the hero of his novel.

As shown by the sample taken by Gary Cohen for his study, mixed residential patterns of the type described above were not common among Prague Jewry on the eve of World War I. Generally speaking, the Jews preferred to have their co-religionists as their neighbors in the buildings where they lived.³⁴ How, then, can we

²⁹ *Ibid.* 119.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 118.

³¹ Spector, Scott: *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle*. Berkeley 2000, 19.

³² *Ibid.* 174.

³³ Archiv hlavního města Prahy [Archive of the City of Prague, below: AHMP], fond sčítací operáty [Collection of Census Returns] I - 527, 1900.

³⁴ Cohen: *Jews in German Society* 49-51 (cf. fn. 10).

explain the Brod family's choice of a mixed residential building owned by a Czech family, particularly since the building itself at 527 Schaulengasse/Skořepka Street was located near Ferdinandova Esplanade/Ferdinandstrasse, *the* place for the Czechs to gather and pass the time?³⁵ After all, this was one of the city's most prosperous Jewish families, and its head, Adolf Brod, held the position of the director of the United Bohemian Bank. It may reasonably be assumed, therefore, that if the Brod family had wished to reside in the upper-class "German-Jewish" neighborhood near the "German" Am Graben/Na příkopě esplanade, it could have readily done so.

It would appear that there was nothing remotely fortuitous in the Brod family's foothold within a multiethnic everyday environment. This is attested to by a number of relevant passages in Brod's memoirs, which in combination with archival facts about his family's pattern of residence can shed light on his father's outlook concerning interethnic relations in the city of his birth, as well as the family's day-to-day existence in conjunction with this aspect. It seems that Adolf Brod was characterized by a fundamental opposition to German ignoring of the Czech surroundings, as well as demonstrating an unswerving aspiration to bring up his children in an atmosphere of openness to the neighboring culture. Thus, from his father's personal story of how he suddenly became aware of the fact "that there is indeed another people in Prague which also possesses a sophisticated culture and great ability," a story not devoid of self-irony,³⁶ the young Brod learned of the gradual weakening of the ephemeral feeling of German cultural supremacy among certain parts of the city's Jews. These were lovers of the theater and music in the Jewish public, including Brod's father, who following the establishment of the Czech National Theater became enthusiastic supporters of Czech opera. This circle's leisure culture, until recently subject to absolute German hegemony, gradually assumed manifestly bicultural forms, and dividing time between the two theaters – the German and the Czech – became standard.³⁷ Deliberately deciding to live in a mixed Czech-German-Jewish building was therefore entirely in accordance with the Brod family's general pattern of conduct, based on an outlook that espoused openness to the two local cultures.

In addition, the young Brod's desire to strike a balance between his affinities with the German environment on the one hand and the Czech on the other is evident even during his studies at the German gymnasium in Stephansgasse/Štěpanská. For example, it turns out that the young Brod belonged to the minority of students (9 out of 31) in his class who, although they had German as their mother tongue, took Czech as one of their optional subjects throughout all of their eight years of studies.³⁸ The

³⁵ *Kisch*: Marktplatz 86 (cf. fn. 18).

³⁶ *Brod*, Max: *Memoirs from the Period of Assimilation*. In: *Weltsch*, Felix (ed.): *Prague and Jerusalem*. Jerusalem 1954, 52-56, here 53 (Hebrew). – See also *Brod*: *Streitbares Leben* 178 (cf. fn. 16).

³⁷ *Idem*: *Memoirs from the Period of Assimilation* 54 (cf. fn. 36).

³⁸ Hartmut Binder asserts that Czech studies at German gymnasia in Bohemia were a "relativ obligater Lehrgegenstand," and that in general German-speaking students tended to learn the Czech language (*Binder*: *Paul Eisners dreifaches Ghetto* 116, cf. fn. 12). However, in the case of Brod's class, only a minority of his year chose to study Czech, and the same applies to most of the instances which will be discussed below. Furthermore, according to statisti-

group of Czech learners with whom he studied comprised 15 students, and constituted an informative multicultural framework – eight Jewish students who had German as their mother tongue, four Jews with Czech as their mother tongue, two Czechs and one German.³⁹ In other words, Brod's "mosaic" experience in his home setting had something of a follow-up in his school environs too.

It would thus appear that observing the details of the everyday life of Brod and his family is a quite essential step in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of Brod the writer as the author of "The Czech Housemaid". No sooner does Brod transcribe the discourse of Czech-German polarization in gender terms, than he undermines the very foundations of this discourse by showing a bilingual and bicultural everyday experience as lived by him by virtue of being subject to a multiethnic environment in the frameworks of the neighborhood where he lived, his gymnasium, and his family's leisure culture. This is not just giving literary expression to Brod's personal multiethnic experience, but also a statement by somebody with a particular political message:

Wie anders stellt man sich gewöhnlich das Volk vor, als es wirklich ist. Man klebt ihm die Gefühle, die es kaum bewusst wie eine Ahnung im Innersten trägt, ganz äusserlich an; man will es in einer ewigen Sehnsucht nach der Heimat, indessen wandert es fröhlich noch mit weissen Haaren nach Amerika aus.⁴⁰

As somebody who observed from close up the demographic and socio-cultural changes taking place in Prague in the wake of the Czech migration from the villages, and who grew up and was shaped in light of the dynamic and tempestuous process of daily encounters between Czechs and Germans, Brod explicitly disagrees with unvarying, essentialist definitions of the concept of the *Volk*. As far as he is concerned, "the people" is not a static body chained to a particular geographical entity, but a dynamic assemblage of all kinds of diverse individuals whose day-to-day conduct depends on changeable environmental circumstances. Brod is thus pointing at the very heart of early twentieth-century Czech-German ethno-national discourse, known as the "national assets" discourse (nationaler Besitzstand/národní držba), in the framework of which demographers and politicians on both sides of the divide strove to chart "German assets" and "Czech assets" in the economic, geographic and demographic spheres,⁴¹ ostentatiously ignoring the extent of interethnic overlap in everyday reality. By providing a written portrayal of "Czechness" and

cal data related to the middle of the first decade of the 20th century, there were only 38,6 % out of all students of Bohemian German gymnasia who chose to study Czech: Hellmut, Konrad: Die Gymnasien und Realschulen in Böhmen im Schuljahre 1906-07. In: Deutsche Arbeit 7 (January 1908) 4, 244.

³⁹ AHMP, fond školní katalogy, Gymnasium německé státní, Štěpánská ul., 1-8 třída, 1894-1902/K.k. Staatsgymnasium, Prag Neustadt, Stephansgasse Hauptkatalog, 1894-1902 I-VIII Klasse.

⁴⁰ Brod: Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen 119 (cf. fn. 26).

⁴¹ Cornwall, Mark: The Struggle on the Czech-German Language Border, 1880-1940. In: The English Historical Review 109 (1994) 433, 914-951, here 919. – Albrecht, Catherine: Economic Nationalism among German Bohemians. In: Nationalities Papers 24 (1996) 1, 17-30, here 21-23.

"Germanness" that are in constant interaction ("in einer massigen Wechselwirkung," as he puts it⁴²), Brod demonstrates to both sides of the political conflict exactly how far this mapping exercise still is from actually being realized.

Multietnic Cohabitation and Jewish Identity: Jewish Nationalism in Prague

The contradiction between the presentations of Prague as an ethnically-culturally polarized entity on the one hand, and its presentation as a multiethnic and multi-cultural fabric on the other that emerges explicitly from Brod's various memoirs is also characteristic of the autobiographical texts written by other Jewish intellectuals who were his contemporaries and from his city. Hans Kohn, for example, who on the eve of World War I was one of the leaders of the Zionist movement in Prague, has provided us in his autobiography with one of the most extreme dichotomous descriptions of Prague society in the early twentieth century ever given by somebody from the period. As he puts it:

[...] in Prague the two national groups lived strictly separated lives. There was little, if any, social or cultural contact between them. Each had its own schools and universities, theaters and concert halls, sport clubs and cabarets, restaurants and cafés – in all fields of life and activity there reigned a voluntary segregation, a kind of tacitly acknowledged "iron curtain" which separated two worlds living side by side, each one self-contained, scarcely communicating.⁴³

As for his self-presentation relative to this bipolar pattern, Kohn clearly places himself at the German pole. However at this stage, when he begins to relate explicitly to his individual experiences, the picture of hermetic separation between the two national camps is suddenly undermined:

We did not feel isolated. We felt perfectly at home in Prague and in the Czech countryside around the city. All this was our land, too; we breathed its air and loved its contours.⁴⁴

The picture of Prague depicted in the memoirs of journalist Egon Erwin Kisch also presents a society which is profoundly divided between the Czechs and the Germans:

Mit der halben Million Tschechen der Stadt pflog der Deutsche keinen aussergeschäftlichen Verkehr. Niemals zuendete er sich mit einem Streichholz des Tschechischen Schulengründungs-Vereins seine Zigarre an, ebensowenig ein Tscheche die seinige mit einem Streichholz aus einem Schächtelchen des Deutschen Schulvereins. Kein Deutscher erschien jemals im tschechischen Bürgerklub, kein Tscheche im Deutschen Casino. Selbst die Instrumentalkonzerte waren einsprachig, einsprachig die Schwimmanstalten, die Parks, die Spielplätze, die meisten Restaurants, Kaffeehäuser und Geschäfte.⁴⁵

And yet, when through his general description of the situation of absolute segregation between the Czechs and the Germans Kisch touches upon details of his own personal experience, just like Kohn he undermines the dichotomous narrative previously outlined by him. It turns out that, while working for the German nationalist

⁴² Brod: Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen 119 (cf. fn. 26).

⁴³ Kohn: Living in a World Revolution 10 (cf. fn. 18).

⁴⁴ Ibid. 9.

⁴⁵ Kisch: Deutsche und Tschechen 85-86 (cf. fn. 18).

newspaper "Bohemia", which was openly hostile to the Czechs, Kisch would have telephone conversations with his fellow Czech journalists in their language. True, when he cites this example Kisch emphasizes his German fellow journalists' strong reactions to his behavior, which they viewed as a form of dangerous encroachment:

Meine Kollegen knurrten: "Wie können wir verlangen, dass man auf den Ämtern deutsch sprechen soll, wenn unsere eigenen Herren tschechisch sprechen!"⁴⁶

What Kisch is trying to do, therefore, is to present his personal example as the exception that proves the rule, in other words as somebody who blatantly flouts the conventions of the surroundings, an image that accords with his exploits and escapades after World War I, from leading the Communist conspiracy in Vienna in 1918, to going off to the Soviet Union for a while and taking part in the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁷ We would, however, be best advised not to accept this figure at face value, but to assume that Kisch was probably not the only person on the "Bohemia" editorial staff to be reprimanded by his nationalist German colleagues for his willingness to speak Czech, and perhaps his socio-cultural surroundings, in which he acquired a perfect command of both languages and which were not as *einsprachig* as he tried to show.

Contradictions of this type, between descriptions of the general public and political atmosphere in Prague on the eve of World War I and the details of the narrators' own personal experiences on the level of everyday life, do not detract in the slightest from the value of these texts as important historical sources for studying interethnic relations in Bohemia. On the contrary, it would appear that the gap between these two levels of narrative faithfully reflects the actual tension that prevailed in Bohemian society between the ethno-linguistic (German and Czech) discourses of coalescence on the one hand, and everyday bilingualism and multiculturalism on the other, i.e. between the "melting pot" tendency and the "mosaic" tendency, to use Michael John's terms.⁴⁸ True, because they were written from a retrospective viewpoint through which the Austro-Habsburg monarchy looked like a group of nascent nation states, these writings focus excessive attention on the atmosphere of national-political polarization, while paying marginal attention only to the reality of everyday overlap between *Deutschtum* and *Tschechentum*. This imbalance thus results in the impression that this Czech-German polarization applied to every single area of the lives of all of Bohemia's inhabitants generally, and that this – and only this – was also responsible for patterns of consciousness and everyday conduct of Bohemia's Jews specifically. We must therefore correct this impression by revealing once again the tension of the "melting pot"/"mosaic" in retrospective texts of this type, by re-reading them and in parallel examining relevant contemporary sources and texts.

Such a critical approach to sources relating to the history of Bohemian Jewry in the period of modern nationalism is absolutely vital when it comes to decoding the nexus between the experience of propinquity and co-existence in the multiethnic

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 91.

⁴⁷ Segel, Harold: Egon Erwin Kisch. The Raging Reporter. West Lafayette, Indiana 1997, 4-8.

⁴⁸ John: On Identity and Ethnicity 32 (cf. fn. 1).

area and the rise of a Jewish national consciousness in Prague at the beginning of the twentieth century. On the face of it, no two issues could be further apart than the issue of multiethnic propinquity and the subject of Prague Zionism. The only framework of discussion that is used by the overwhelming majority of studies investigating the phenomenon of Zionism in Prague focuses on the issue of Czech-German polarization in the political, public, and institutional spheres, with practically no reference to the sphere of everyday life. This approach is also responsible for the standard formula used to explain the reasons and circumstances of the rise of Prague Zionism, which to a marked extent serves as a paradigm for an understanding of the growth of Jewish national consciousness in conflict-ridden multiethnic societies. According to this formula, the Zionist movement in Prague and Bohemia is no more than a movement of people who were disappointed with assimilation – German and Czech alike – who, having failed to blend into the German and Czech peoples, apparently wanted to integrate anew within bipolar Bohemian society as a separate “third people.”⁴⁹ There are, admittedly, major differences between researchers in their perception of Prague Zionism which are to be found on the level of how the phenomenon is described. Thus Ruth Kestenbergl-Gladstein sees Prague Zionism as a rebellion by student youth against the everyday routine of “assimilation” that is leading to a moral and spiritual decline of the Jewish individual;⁵⁰ Hillel Kieval presents it first and foremost as an attempt at a particularist nation-building according to an ideological pattern present in the region;⁵¹ while according to Spector, Zionism in Prague is equivalent to the general retreat of the city’s German-Jewish intellectuals to a narrow circle of preoccupation with cogitation and creativity.⁵² Yet regardless of the forms of expression used to explain this phenomenon, broad-based agreement is to be found between researchers, with Zionism basically being explained as the outcome of an existence split between “Germans/German Jews” and “Czechs/Czech Jews.”

The story of Max Brod’s Zionist “conversion” that he recounts in his “Streitbares Leben” does indeed look like something of a paradigmatic account of fleeing in this way from polarized, conflict-ridden surroundings to a Jewish national sanctuary. It must therefore be re-examined, both in light of what we already know about the internal contradictions in this essay generally, and also because Brod’s turning to Zionism was not unrelated to the story of his novel “The Czech Housemaid” that we discussed in the previous section relative to his experience of multiethnic propinquity. Unsurprisingly, “The Czech Housemaid” triggered sharp criticism first and foremost from the advocates of German and Czech nationalism, but the Zionists’ reaction was not particularly sympathetic either. It was Leo Hermann (1888-1951),

⁴⁹ Kestenbergl-Gladstein, Ruth: The Origins of Bar-Kochba. In: Weltsch (ed.): Prague and Jerusalem 86-110, here 86-87 (Hebrew; cf. fn. 36). – Borman, Stuart: The Prague Student Zionist Movement: 1896-1914. Ph.D. Dissertation. Chicago, University of Chicago 1972, 156. – Kieval: The Making of Czech Jewry 107 (cf. fn. 19) 96. – Spector: Prague Territories 162 (cf. fn. 31).

⁵⁰ Kestenbergl-Gladstein: The Origins of Bar-Kochba 92-94 (cf. fn. 49).

⁵¹ Kieval: The Making of Czech Jewry 107 (cf. fn. 19).

⁵² Spector: Prague Territories 29 (cf. fn. 31).

chairman of the Prague Zionist Bar Kochba association in 1908-1909 and later general-secretary of Keren Hayesod, who in his review that appeared in the Prague Zionist weekly "Selbstwehr" and later in the "Jüdische Volksstimme" (published in Brno/Brünn), ridiculed what he saw as Brod's naïve perception of the problem of the national conflict between the Czechs and the Germans. Given the depth of the abyss separating the two peoples in conflict, Hermann argued, there could be no consideration of the possibility of close contacts between their representatives.⁵³ When commenting on this incident in "Streitbares Leben", Brod tells us that at first Hermann's review made him very angry, because it presented his ideas in an extremely simplistic fashion. Infuriated and embittered, Brod immediately initiated a meeting with the critic in order to clear things up and engaged in a lengthy debate with him. However, in the wake of this conversation, Brod apparently became convinced that the picture of relationships between Czechs and Germans that he had conveyed in "The Czech Housemaid" was very far from the Prague reality. Moreover, in retrospect he also understood, as he put it, that he had unintentionally described in the figure of the protagonist the figure of a Jew, and once he understood that, he gradually found his way to the Zionist movement:

[...] ohne zu wollen, hatte ich [...] einen allem Natürlichen entfremdeten Typ geschildert, wie er damals unter Grosstadtjuden wohl häufiger als unter Nichtjuden anzutreffen war. [...] Auch mochte in der auf dem Höhepunkt der Erzählung eintretenden restlosen Verständigung zwischen zwei dem Stande nach wie auch völkisch einander fremden Personen, einem Deutschen und einer Tschechin, unbewusst etwas von jener prophetischen Ursehnsucht mitschwingen, die nach Universalismus strebt, nach dem höchsten Gut einer Versöhnung aller Menschen. Nur wer die tiefgehende, das ganze Alltagsleben durchdringende, gegenseitige Verhetzung der Völker in Böhmen miterlebt hat, kann es verstehen, dass mein Buch mit seiner so einfach menschlichen Lösung und Verliebtheit etwas der damals in Prag herrschenden Stimmung durchaus Entgegengesetztes brachte, das überraschte und viele schockierte.⁵⁴

In this retrospective description there is not the slightest hint of that complexity of relationships between Czechs and Germans that Brod at the time presented in "The Czech Housemaid", a complexity that included rivalries and attraction, conflict and biculturalism. Only the national polarization remains, trying in vain to build bridges between the sides but very soon about to sober up and discard its illusions and to find refuge in Jewish nationalism. Brod's affirmation of his Jewish identity, therefore, is something of a result of his recognition of the fact that Bohemian reality was profoundly split between two polarized entities.

Nevertheless, at one point in "Streitbares Leben", as well as in his earlier autobiographical remarks "Memoirs from the Period of Assimilation", Brod gives a completely different explanation for Bohemian Zionism, as well as for the fact that he turned to Jewish nationalism. What he writes here clearly shows that the national identity of Bohemia's Jews increasingly came into focus at the turn of the nineteenth century due to the bilingual nature of their socio-cultural surroundings. He argues

⁵³ Hermann, Leo: Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen. In: Jüdische Volksstimme, April 20, 1909, 9.

⁵⁴ Brod: Streitbares Leben 344-345 (cf. fn. 16).

that as many Jews struggled unsuccessfully with the question which of the two surrounding cultures would eventually gain the upper hand, they learned to adapt to the German and Czech cultures alike. In so doing they maintained a Jewish self-awareness, and this made it therefore easy for some of them to find their way to Jewish nationalism.⁵⁵ In other words, Jewish nationalism is not a counter-reaction to a socio-cultural reality split between two assimilating societies. On the contrary, what drives Jewish identity is the "mosaic" bilingual experience and the need to integrate two linguistic-cultural bonds – the German and the Czech – notwithstanding the escalating national conflict. In a seemingly paradoxical fashion, the extent of recognition of Jewish identity relates directly to the extent of exposure to the multiethnic environment.

Unlike the dramatic story about Leo Hermann, "The Czech Housemaid" and the escaping from the Czech-German conflict, an explanation which connects Jewish identity with bilingualism – fits in with everything previously known to us about the everyday experiences of Brod and his family. The fact that the family lived in a mixed Czech-German building, going to both the German and the Czech theaters, choosing to study the Czech language at the German gymnasium – all of these facts about Brod's pre-Zionist life expressly attest to the fact that this was a comprehensive strategy, based on the principle of striking a balance between the two cultures. The constant need to maintain dual cultural links with the surroundings and countering situations of mono-cultural assimilation, was what helped Brod indirectly to maintain his Jewish identity. Unquestionably, Brod sought to impart heightened ideological significance to this circumstantial nexus between Jewishness and a multicultural way of life when he referred to the "Jewish" attribute of the hero of "The Czech Housemaid" as the striving for *Universalismus* and the *Versöhnung aller Menschen*.⁵⁶

The experience of multiethnic cohabitation, which would appear to have been responsible for the nexus between Brod's bilingualism and his Jewish nationalism, also lay at the center of the everyday experiences of other prominent figures in Prague Zionism. Thus the linguistic-cultural composition of the occupants of the building at No. 15 Perštýn/Bergstein where Hans Kohn grew up was extremely diverse: three Czech-speaking Christian families; two German-speaking Christian families; one German-speaking Jewish family; a French-speaking émigré from Geneva with his Czech Christian wife.⁵⁷ It is, incidentally, instructive to see that in the 1910 census, all of the Kohn family members declared Czech to be their everyday language.⁵⁸ If we avoid unfounded speculation that they did so because of pressure from Czech nationalists, we can give this datum a straightforward reading, perceiving it as attesting to the fact that Kohn's parents, who originated from the Czech villages, continued to use the Czech language side by side with the German language, and their children did likewise. What this means is that we have here a Jewish family which is manifestly bilingual, having ties with the German and Czech surround-

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 70-71. – Brod: *Memoirs from the Period of Assimilation* 52 (cf. fn. 36).

⁵⁶ *Idem*: *Streitbares Leben* 344 (cf. fn. 16).

⁵⁷ AHMP, fond sčítací operáty, I-349, 1911.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

ings alike. Robert Weltsch (1891-1982), Hans Kohn's close friend and one of the heads of the Prague Zionist movement on the eve of World War I, lived in a building situated at No. 125 Mikulášská třída/Niklassgasse with a heterogeneous population, although there was a pronounced Jewish majority: nine Jewish families, two Czech Catholic families, and one German Catholic family. To this must be added the large number (11) of Czech maids and nannies who lived with the Jewish families.⁵⁹ There was a different situation, however, in the building where Hugo Bergmann's family lived. Bergmann (1883-1975) was one of the founders of the Zionist movement in Prague at the beginning of the twentieth century. This building, located at No. 131 Linhartské náměstí/Leonardplatz, was "Czech-Jewish" – three Jewish families, four Czech families, and also one German family.⁶⁰ However, because the overwhelming majority of Prague's Jews were educated at German educational institutions,⁶¹ it must not be imagined that the only language spoken by the building's occupants was Czech. The experience of living side by side with Czech neighbors therefore supplemented Hugo Bergmann's experience as a student at the German gymnasium, making it a single everyday multicultural experience, as in the cases of Brod, Weltsch and Kohn. And like Brod, Bergmann, Weltsch and Kohn also chose to study the Czech language as one of their optional subjects at the German gymnasium. In the case of Weltsch's class, half of the students in his year did so,⁶² while in the case of Kohn⁶³ and Bergmann,⁶⁴ those who took Czech were a minority of the students.

The indirect connection between a bilingual way of life and Jewish identity which constituted, according to Brod, the basis of the circumstantial background of Jewish nationalism in Bohemia, became closer in the framework of Zionist activities in Prague. The need to continue to integrate German and Czech socio-cultural ties was viewed by the heads of Prague Zionism, such as Hugo Bergmann, as one of the most important issues on the Jewish-national agenda in Bohemia. In this context reference must be made to Bergmann's "Prager Brief", which was published in 1904 in the "Jüdische Volkstimme". In it the author presents his basic understanding of how the goals of Zionism relate to the lives of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia. In Bergmann's opinion, Zionism's most tangible aims are to be viewed in light of the significant socio-cultural process taking place at the time among his country's Jews – the process of "Czechization" (Tschechisierung). It must be stressed that in using this expression the author does not mean the process of "assimilation," nor the

⁵⁹ AHMP, fond sčítací operáty, V – 125, 1901-1910.

⁶⁰ AHMP, fond sčítací operáty, I – 131, 1900.

⁶¹ *Cohen: Jews in German Society* 38 (cf. fn. 10).

⁶² AHMP, fond školní katalogy, Neměcké st. gymnasium, Staré Město, 1-8 třída, 1901-1909/ K.k. deutsches Staats-Gymnasium Prag, Altstadt, 1901-1909, Klassen-Katalog, I-VIII Klasse.

⁶³ AHMP, fond školní katalogy, Neměcké st. gymnasium, Staré Město, 1-8 třída, 1902-1910/ K.k. deutsches Staats-Gymnasium Prag, Altstadt, 1902-1910, Klassen-Katalog, I-VIII Klasse.

⁶⁴ AHMP, fond školní katalogy, Neměcké st. gymnasium, Staré Město, 1-8 třída, 1893-1901/ K.k. deutsches Staats-Gymnasium Prag, Altstadt, 1893-1901, Klassen-Katalog, I-VIII Klasse.

process of "Czech transformation," as Hillel Kieval believes.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, he made this point on the basis of a kind of exposure or familiarity on the part of the Jews with the cultural life of the Czech people, its language and its creative output.⁶⁶ For Bergmann, this process is an important and necessary one, because through it those Jews who have been educated in the German culture can extricate themselves from the hermetic ghetto-like circle of *Deutschtum* and find themselves in a dynamic, vibrant cultural experience motivating them to seek the meaning of Jewish existence.⁶⁷ Given these processes, Zionism must first place the new cultural situation of Bohemian Jewry on a full and authentic footing with a genuine bilingual and bicultural character. It must do so, not as a demonstration of political neutrality in the national conflict – a kind of lip service to the opposing sides, but as part of the needs of Judaism's internal cultural existence.⁶⁸

Bergmann's "Prager Brief" allows us a glimpse into one of the fascinating paradoxes of Jewish nationalism in fin-de-siècle Prague, which arose out of the circumstantial link with the experience of everyday life in a multiethnic setting. On the one hand, like any national movement, Prague Zionism placed a marked emphasis on fostering a particularist Jewish awareness. On the other hand, this specific form of Zionism was committed to providing a response to the tangible everyday distress of those Jews who wished to continue with the routine of their bilingual lives notwithstanding the escalating national conflict, and as such it also strove to heighten in the Jewish populace the aspect of openness to the two surrounding cultures. This being the case, the movement that called for a particularist nationalism was in fact an outcome, not to say an agent, of processes involving the adaptation of the neighboring cultures in the framework of the Jewish experience.

Solving this paradox was bound up with a dialectical process of molding the special variety of Jewish nationalism, which defined as one of Judaism's particularist national attributes the Jews' ability to conduct dialogue with the neighboring cultures and peoples, and even to build bridges between them. Thus Brod saw the mission of conciliation between the Czechs and the Germans as one of the basic goals of Jewish nationalism in Bohemia,⁶⁹ while Bergmann, who together with Hans Kohn and Robert Weltsch consistently expressed the binational outlook in Zionism, viewed the mission of establishing an Arab-Jewish community in Palestine as such a goal.⁷⁰ A number of new interpretations have recently been advanced which, drawing on the dichotomy between experience and awareness, attempt to shed light on just such a universalist national outlook that was advocated by these Prague Zionists – an outlook for which Brod later coined the expression *Nationalhumanismus*.⁷¹ Against this background, the Zionist figures such as Brod and Bergmann are pre-

⁶⁵ Kieval: *The Making of Czech Jewry* 113 (cf. fn. 19).

⁶⁶ Bergmann, Hugo: *Prager Brief*. In: *Jüdische Volksstimme*, January 15, 1904, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 4-5.

⁶⁹ Brod, Max: *Zionismus*. In: *Selbstwehr*, September 13, 1918, 3.

⁷⁰ Bergmann, Hugo: *Die wahre Autonomie*. In: *Der Jude* 3 (1918-1919) 368-373, here 373.

⁷¹ Brod: *Streitbares Leben* 74 (cf. fn. 16).

sented as a group of idealist intellectuals who devised their conciliatory, bridge-building outlook as a deliberate contrast to the split ethno-national reality of life in which they grew up in their Bohemian homeland.⁷² However, in light of our investigations into the issues relating to the everyday lives of this group's members, we can state that such an explanation does not stand the test of their actual experiences, which far from being split, were based on a fabric of socio-cultural ties. Their vision of the purpose of Jewish existence as an intercultural bridge-building activity therefore faithfully reflected their own tangible everyday existence in Prague, which was itself bound up with the constant need to adapt to a multiethnic environment and to live in the midst of disparate cultural tendencies. The history of everyday lives, therefore, helps us to gain an in-depth understanding not only of the circumstantial background to Jewish national identity in multiethnic Prague, but also of ideological attributes of Prague Zionism.

Multiethnic Cohabitation, Bilingualism, and Antisemitism

One can of course believe what Hugo Bergmann wrote in "Prager Brief", when he maintained that the Bohemian Jews' call to enhance their bilingual ties was not tantamount to a utilitarian position adopted for reasons of political neutrality in respect of the national conflict between Czechs and Germans. True, in the area of everyday life, bilingualism was a vital asset that served many Jews in adapting to co-existence with the multiethnic surroundings. And yet when it came to the political sphere, the Jews' bilingual tendencies were at the center of public debate and criticism in the framework of the Czech-German conflict. The background to this state of affairs was to be found in the character of the political ethno-national discourse in the Austro-Hungarian state generally and Bohemia specifically, which was based on the equation of the concepts of "language" and "nation." This originated in the fact that the sole criterion used by the Austrian regime for determining an individual's national affiliation was "everyday language" (Umgangssprache). Given this state of affairs, statistics about everyday language use by the monarchy's subjects played a paramount role for conducting national-political propaganda.⁷³ As far as Bohemia specifically was concerned, the representatives of the two national camps, the German and the Czech, aspired to a redefinition of linguistic ties as an external marker of ethno-cultural difference. For this purpose they exploited census figures about inhabitants' everyday language use in order to draw imaginary geographical boundaries between Germans and Czechs. From here there evolved the somewhat ambiguous concept of "language border"⁷⁴ (Sprachgrenze/jazyková hranice). On the one hand, both sides, the German and the Czech, aspired to absorb rival linguistic enclaves within "its" linguistic space. On the other hand, on a basic level patterns of linguistic usage were

⁷² *Spector*: Prague Territories (cf. fn. 31). – And especially *Ratzabi*, Shalom: Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom, 1925-1933. Leiden 2002.

⁷³ *Brix*, Emil: Die Umgangssprachen in Altösterreich zwischen Agitation und Assimilation: Die Sprachenstatistik in den zisleithanischen Volkszählungen 1880 bis 1910. Wien 1982.

⁷⁴ *Cornwall*: Struggle on the Language Border 914-922 (cf. fn. 41).

perceived in utterly essentialist terms, like the term "pigment" in racial theory.⁷⁵ This then was a dialectical process characterized by a form of linguistic expansion and redrawing of the "language border" that was largely complicated by the confusing phenomenon of bilingualism, which was prevalent among considerable portions of fin-de-siècle Bohemian residents. The problem was the bilingual nature of Bohemian Jewry, a state of affairs which was clearly reflected in the frequent combination of a pattern of being educated in the German language and having everyday communication with the Czech neighbors in their own language. This situation could be readily identified in the framework of demographic-political studies of the time, simply by cross-checking the data about the education of Jewish children and the census findings about the *Umgangssprache* of the members of the Jewish faith. The data set for the Bohemian capital is indeed clearly indicative of the dual linguistic-cultural affinities to be found among the Jews: in the 1900 census around 55 % of Prague's Jews declared the Czech language to be their everyday language, while some 91 % of Jewish children were educated at German public schools.⁷⁶ Thus Prague's Jews, as well as the Jews of Bohemia generally, in this way found themselves embroiled at the very center of the Czech-German ethno-national discourse as a particularly problematic population in all matters relating to determining the group's linguistic "essence."

Most surprisingly, the question of the relevance of this state of affairs to the issue of German and Czech antisemitism in Bohemia has never been the focus of key studies that have addressed Bohemian-Jewish history during the period in question. Partly at least this would appear to be because the issue of antisemitism in fin-de-siècle Bohemia, as well as the issue of Jewish nationalism there, are generally looked relative to processes of assimilation or monocultural (German and/or Czech) acculturation, which were viewed as central tendencies in the lives of Jewish society in Bohemia. Bohemian antisemitism, whether Czech or German, is therefore primarily explained as an attack on Jewish assimilators. Standard explanations for Czech antisemitism see it as a reaction to the pro-German assimilationist position of the establishment and the socio-economic and political elite of Bohemian Jewry (and sometimes also as Czech nationalist politicians' opposition, of all things, to Czech-Jewish attempts to assimilate), while German antisemitism is presented as a counter-reaction by pan-German circles to German-Jewish assimilation.⁷⁷

However, as far as the Jews of the Bohemian capital are concerned, in light of the data set regarding their patterns of education and everyday language, attesting to a combination of German and Czech socio-cultural affinities, it must be said that the

⁷⁵ Judson: *Inventing Germans* 48 (cf. fn. 23).

⁷⁶ Cohen: *Jews in German Society* 38 (cf. fn. 10). – *Kieval: The Making of Czech Jewry* 25-27 (cf. fn. 49).

⁷⁷ Riff, Michael: *The Assimilation of the Jews of Bohemia and the Rise of Political Anti-Semitism, 1848-1918*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London 1974, 241. – *Kieval: The Making of Czech Jewry* 66, 71-77 (cf. fn. 19). – *McCagg: A History of Habsburg Jews* 174-180 (cf. fn. 10). – Křen, Jan: *Konfliktní společenství: Češi a Němci 1780-1918* [Society in Conflict: Czechs and Germans 1780-1918]. Praha 1990, 319. – *Wistrich: Jews and Nationality Conflicts* 128-129 (cf. fn. 10).

monocultural idea of "assimilation" or even "acculturation" does not fully reflect the everyday behavior of many Jews. Furthermore, even in cases where German education coincides with German as the everyday language, for example such as in the case of the Brod family discussed above, this does not necessarily indicate that we are dealing with an assimilating "German-Jewish" family. Firstly, there is the fact that the Brod family lived in a mixed Czech-German neighborhood, in a building which had a Czech-speaking majority (apart from which this was, after all, a city with a pronounced Czech majority) – a fact which constituted something of a constant challenge to the German "melting pot" tendency. Secondly, and even more importantly: in light of the extremist nationalist politicization of the concepts of *Deutschtum* and *Tschechentum* in early twentieth century Bohemia, one of the key parameters of being "a German-Jewish assimilator" or a "a Czech-Jewish assimilator" was demonstrating identification with one of the two sides of the political national conflict. However, what characterized most of Bohemia's Jews was precisely their undefined position vis-à-vis the conflict. Hillel Kieval, who advanced this argument in his article about the dissemination of blood libels in Czech political discourse at the turn of the nineteenth century, asserted that as a result of this position, the Jews "[...] were neither obviously German nor obviously Czech," and in his view this contributed to them being presented in Czech consciousness as "unreliable partners in the (national) struggle."⁷⁸ However, accuracy is called for, in my view, and what should therefore be said is that the reality that above all influenced this representation, in both the Czech and the German public consciousness, was precisely that Jews were both "German" and "Czech," since their dual linguistic (i. e.: national, in terms of the contemporary political discourse) affinities were the salient aspect in the eyes of nationalist demography. And it is here therefore that we come to one of the most important elements of antisemitic discourse in Bohemia: the link between the Jews' bilingualism and the image of their national duplicity, an element which should not be seen as a reaction to Jewish "assimilation," but on the contrary to the "mosaic" socio-cultural position of the Jews.

One of the instructive episodes for studies of rhetoric of this kind is the demographic-political debate between Prague's two ranking demographers at the beginning of the twentieth century, the German Heinrich Rauchberg, a professor of demography at Prague's German University and an eminent figure in Prague's German community, and the Czech Jan Srb, head of Prague's Municipal Bureau of Statistics. In the framework of this debate, which basically focused on the 1900 census results regarding the everyday languages of the residents of Bohemia and their implications for the demographic situation of the two peoples in the province, a special discussion took place on the issue of Jewish bilingualism. In his comprehensive book "Der nationale Besitzstand in Böhmen", Rauchberg inter alia addressed the problem of the gradual decline in German speakers in Prague in light of the 1880, 1890 and 1900 censuses, relating to aspects of bilingualism in the city and analyzing its implications for the position of the German community. He argued that since

⁷⁸ Kieval, Hillel: Death and the Nation: Ritual Murder as Political Discourse in the Czech Lands. In: Jewish History 10 (1996) 1, 75-91, here 76.

quite a large number of Prague's inhabitants were capable of mastery of both languages, many of them had no problem when it came to "converting" their everyday language from one census to the next, thereby frequently concealing their "real" linguistic-cultural affinity for opportunistic reasons. Rauchberg's observations are directed first and foremost at those former proponents of *Deutschtum* who at one and the same time had an excellent command of the Czech language as well and defected to the Czech camp in light of the Czech national movement's increasing political strength. The focus of this linguistic Utraquism, which led to a constant shrinking of the German language area, was identified by Rauchberg as being among the Jews of Prague, who he said stand out by virtue of their outstanding bilingualism. If truth be told, Rauchberg said, they belonged to the German culture, since most Jewish children enjoyed a German education, but for utilitarian reasons, and as a result of their bilingualism, more than half of them chose to identify themselves in the 1900 census as Czech speakers in everyday life.⁷⁹

Rauchberg's attempt to cast doubt on the achievements of the Czech absorption among Prague's Jews triggered a sharp response from Srb. Like Rauchberg, Srb also saw the phenomenon of bilingualism as a special feature of the Bohemian capital's Jews, commenting, "everyone knows that the Jews of Prague, with few exceptions, are fluent in both languages, Czech and German."⁸⁰ He argues that, as a rule, the Jews do not develop a mental commitment to the peoples in whose midst they dwell, nor do they become attached to the language other than to the extent that it is useful to them. Precisely because of this fact, however, he considers the change in direction made by many Prague Jews toward adopting the Czech language as their spoken language to be authentic insofar as it reflects their pragmatic, adaptive nature: with the increasing demographic and economic strength of the Czech people, so more Jews wish to identify with them.⁸¹ Nonetheless, since the Jews still view a German education as *the* way to climb the social ladder, it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of Prague's Jews continue to educate their children in German. This consummate ability on the part of Prague's Jews in both languages, Srb continues, frequently serves German political elements which are trying to increase the proportion of Germans in the city on the basis of statistics about patterns of elementary and secondary education, subverting the real demographic picture which is faithfully portrayed in the census data.⁸² However, Srb cautions, if the Germans wish to base their hold over Prague on help from the Jews, they will soon be bitterly disappointed.⁸³ Just because the Jews make a point of giving their children a German education, this does not mean that they have a genuine cultural identification with the German

⁷⁹ Rauchberg, Heinrich: Der nationale Besitzstand in Böhmen. Vol I. Leipzig 1905, 151-152, 391.

⁸⁰ Srb, Jan: Obcovací řeč jako prostředek sesilující národní državu německou v zemích koruny české zvlášť a v Rakousku vůbec [Language of Everyday Use as a Means for Strengthening of German National Assets in the Lands of Czech Crown in Particular and in Austria in General]. Praha 1909, 93.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 71.

⁸² *Ibid.* 86-93.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 91.

people, as Rauchberg is convinced, but merely an out-and-out utilitarian affinity. When the time comes, when the Czechs' demographic power is translated into genuine political might, this affinity will be increasingly weakened and undermined.

In themselves, these texts contain no antisemitic barbs whatsoever. On the contrary, each of the parties seemingly expresses a strong desire to "add" as many Jews as possible to its "national assets" showings, and for this purpose it breaks down the aggregate of the Jews' linguistic affinities into two components, German and Czech, attaching decisive weight to one component and dismissing the significance of the other component out of hand. However, precisely because we have here two approaches which are driven by political vested interests to allocate the Jews, as it were, to the national camp that each of them represents, it should be stressed that they both contain a view of the Jews as quintessentially unstable creatures, chameleons devoid of principles whose existence involves constantly adapting to their surroundings.

In the case of explicit antisemitic propaganda, Czech and German alike, this motif of the Jews' Czech-German duplicity is a constant in a number of its striking expressions at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. For example, Prague Jews' desire to integrate both linguistic affinities – the Czech and the German – in their lives received a violent tongue-lashing from Jaroslava Procházková, the author of an antisemitic pamphlet entitled "The Czech People and the Czech Jew" (1897), which was distributed by key circles in the Czech national movement who were identified with the Young Czech Party.⁸⁴ The Jews' linguistic inconstancy and their unusual ability to simultaneously maintain a number of national loyalties are of an exaggerated scope, according to the authoress, which is intolerable from the point of view of the Czech people: the self-same Jew who declares the Czech language to be his everyday language, and even takes part in the activities of a Czech national organization par excellence such as the Sokol gymnastic club, at the same time also speaks German at home and is a member of the German schools association (Schulverein).⁸⁵ This state of affairs reflects, according to Procházková, the quintessential character trait of the Jews, viz. the ambiguousness of their position relative to their surroundings. True, the Jews are likely to form bonds with the people hosting them and to see this people's homeland as their own homeland as well. However, this type of bond is a partial one only, for at the same time they tend to also develop ties with the languages and cultures of other peoples. The Jews' actual homeland will therefore always be extended further than that of the host nation.⁸⁶ In the case of Bohemia and Moravia, this conduct by the Jews is in sharp contrast to the supreme efforts made by Czech nationalism to extirpate the use of German among the Czechs and to ensure that Czech society returns to using the Czech language and nothing else:

⁸⁴ *Kieval: The Making of Czech Jewry* 69 (cf. fn. 19).

⁸⁵ Procházková, Jaroslava: *Český lid a český Žid* [The Czech people and the Czech Jew]. Praha 1897, 18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 19.

For them [the Jews – D.S.] language differences are not the slightest obstacle. Even the most patriotic Jew will never feel the same internal opposition to the use of German that the Czech feels.⁸⁷

While the bilingual Jews were accused by the Czech side of striving to erode Czech society's linguistic-national unity from within, we find similar rhetoric on the German side as well. Thus in 1909 the organ of Georg von Schönerer's pan-German movement – "Egerer Neueste Nachrichten", a publication which appeared in Eger/Cheb, a town in Western Bohemia with a marked German majority⁸⁸ – published a journalistic investigation into Czech-Jewish "settlement" (Niederlassung) in the town.⁸⁹ The newspaper reports on the arrival in town of a new Jewish inhabitant by the name of Ernst Sütz, who had inherited the business from his late father-in-law, a long-time local resident in the city. It turns out, according to the paper's inquiries, that this man Sütz was no other than a Jew from the Czech locality of Nimeritz, and in the last census (the one from 1900) had even identified himself as speaking Czech in his everyday life. Moreover, the paper emphasizes, Sütz' father, the proprietor of a factory outlet for clothing in another German locality, was known to use the Czech language to run his business. His father's first name was Bedřich, and the son's real name was not his German name Ernst, as he introduced himself on his arrival in Eger, but Arnošt, an out-and-out Czech name.⁹⁰ While the residents, as the paper puts it, were in the meanwhile managing to stem the manifest demographic threat emanating from the Czechs, as shown by the fact that many Czechs had left town in recent months,⁹¹ the Czech-speaking Jews, passing themselves off as Germans, were again rendering worthless the German effort to maintain Eger's absolute German character. As in the case of the "Young Czechs" antisemitism in Prague, the pan-German antisemites from the Sudetenland therefore brought up the same representation of a Jew – viewing him as an element who has ties with "Germanness" and "Czechness" simultaneously, and who thereby upsets the process of delineation and demarcation between the two peoples.

Continuing to examine the pan-German antisemitic rhetoric in Eger/Cheb, it is particularly instructive to look at one of its most important documents from the days when the Czech-German confrontation was at its climax in Bohemia in 1897, when the famous Badeni ordinances were promulgated and revoked.⁹² On Novem-

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 18.

⁸⁸ In 1900 Eger/Cheb had 20 202 Germans and just 158 Czechs, whereas in 1910 there were 23 038 Germans and 133 Czechs; the number of Jews in the town totaled around 550 individuals in these years: *Sturm*, Heribert: *Eger: Geschichte einer Reichsstadt*. Augsburg 1951, 228. – *Chmelíková*, Jitka: *Osudy chebských Židů: Chebští Židé od 2. poloviny 19. století do současnosti* [The Fate of Cheb Jews: The Jews of Cheb from the Second Half of the 19th Century to Contemporary Times]. Cheb 2000, 36.

⁸⁹ *Niederlassung eines tschechisch-jüdischen Schneiders in Eger*. In: *Egerer Neueste Nachrichten*, May 26, 1909, 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² The Badeni Ordinances for Bohemia and Moravia, published on April 5 and 22, 1897 respectively, gave the Czech language equal status with that of German in the bureaucratic sphere in Czech majority areas, including it in the category of "official internal language"

ber 5 of that year, at the peak of Bohemian Germans' rioting against the Czechs (known as *Furor Teutonicus*), the "Egerer Nachrichten", the forerunner of the "Egerer Neueste Nachrichten" referred to above, published what it claimed was a complete list of the Czech families living in Eger. This list's most important feature, as its authors make a point of highlighting, was specifying names of landlords who rented their houses, or apartments, to Czechs.⁹³ And in this context the Jews among these landlords were particularly singled out, although in point of fact, they constituted an insignificant minority in the total of those who provided accommodation to Czechs. According to this actual list, there were just eight Jews out of the 79 landlords who dared to rent their property to Czechs.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the Jewishness of the Jewish renters was emphasized by the use of bold lettering, thereby giving the impression that those responsible for the presence of the Czech in this German town were the local Jews. The Jews are thus presented as the good neighbors of the Czechs, those who must bear responsibility for Eger's multiethnic fabric.

Our discussion of the relationship between the Czech and German antisemitic rhetoric and the bilingual and multiethnic way of life in Bohemia would be incomplete if we were to fail to direct our attention to one of the key elements in the antisemitic discourse that goes beyond the specific issue of the Jews. While the vehement attack on the Jews is, of course, at the center of the antisemitic sources examined above, in point of fact those who composed them directed their barbs first and foremost at particular phenomena characteristic of their own societies, whether Czech or German. The Jews are attacked therefore as those who saliently represent these phenomena, as well as those who willfully engineer their widespread dissemination, but in the eyes of the antisemitic observer these phenomena are not limited to the Jewish public. Thus Jaroslava Procházková in her "Czech People and the Czech Jew" does indeed devote most of her discussion to attacks on the linguistic and national inconstancy of "the Czech Jews," but in the same breath she stresses the fact that what she considers to be the dangerous phenomena of bilingualism and national ambiguousness is also widespread among the Czech population of Prague. With great regret bordering on a feeling of profound despair the author speaks about thousands of Czech businesses and stores whose owners still use both languages, Czech and German, in advertising and retail trade.⁹⁵ True, she lays most of the blame at the door of the Jews as those who have infected Czech society with this sickness. However, once the sickness spread among the Czechs, and they themselves began to

of the imperial civil service, i.e. a language in which all those matters involving applications by the public would be discussed on the bureaucratic level. The raging debate that erupted in the wake of the ordinances' publication, concluding with their revocation and Badeni's resignation in December of the same year, were accompanied by German attacks on the Czechs and damage to Czech property in towns with a German majority in the north and west of Bohemia, and conversely by similar anti-German rioting in Prague and towns with a Czech majority. Garver, Bruce: *The Young Czech Party, 1874-1901 and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System*. New Haven, London 1978, 237-257, esp. 238-239, 254-255.

⁹³ *Zahlreiche Aufforderungen*. In: *Egerer Nachrichten*, November 5, 1897. I am grateful to Jitka Chemlíková for showing me this source.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Procházková: Český lid a český Žid* 51-53 (cf. fn. 85).

show signs of "Judaization" (*sežidovštělost*, as Procházková calls it),⁹⁶ the most disgraceful of which was the tendency "to Germanize" their first names to suit the needs of the surroundings – this then became a general Czech phenomenon, which the author calls "Czech semitism" (*český semitismus*).⁹⁷

In a similar fashion, the German antisemitic "investigative reporter" from Eger, who informed his readership about Czech-Jewish "settlement" in his town, does not stop at denouncing the Czech-German-Jewish pretender, but also points an accusing finger at the indifference of the Eger German population, because of whom this settlement has been possible. Just as in Procházková's hands the terms "semitic"/"Semite" and "Jewish"/"Jew" are used to denote manifestations of Czech-German ambivalence in Czech society as a whole, the author of the investigation from Eger in this way also uses the derogatory expression "*koschere Gesellschaft*" not only in relation to the local Jews who welcome the Czech-Jewish "settler," but also relative to the Germans of Eger generally, most of whom turn a blind eye to the gravity of the matter.⁹⁸

When it comes to the list of the Czechs from Eger in the *Furor Teutonicus* period that took place from November to December 1897, it is above all obvious that its authors' attack on the Jews and the Czechs is combined with overt incitement against those Germans who accommodate the Czechs in their houses.⁹⁹ Antisemitism here is one of the components of an overall system, which is intended to address the multiethnic fabric of propinquity as such. Those who were supposed to be the targets of the German mob's riots, which broke out in Eger against a background of inflammatory remarks of this kind, were the representatives of the three peoples – the Czechs, the Jews and the Germans – who were "guilty" of having homes in the same building. This was probably also true of the Czech riots against the Germans and the Jews in Prague, which broke out in December 1897 following the revoking of the *Badeni* ordinances. In any event it is clear that the same stone which at that time smashed the window in the apartment occupied by Max Brod's family, which was perceived by the rioters as a "German" family,¹⁰⁰ also damaged the property of the Czech landlords who rented their apartment to a German-speaking family. Here too, as in the other cases discussed above, antisemitism cannot be dissociated from the context of the general struggle that was being waged by the Czech and German nationalist propagandists against linguistic-national ambiguousness in everyday life, including mixed residential patterns.

Concluding Remarks

In attempting to re-examine the Jewish side of the Czech-German-Jewish triangle on the eve of World War I using a methodological combination of intellectual and political history on the one hand and the history of everyday life on the other, we are

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 53.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 52.

⁹⁸ *Niederlassung eines tschechisch-jüdischen Schneiders in Eger* (cf. fn. 89).

⁹⁹ *Zahlreiche Aufforderungen* (cf. fn. 93).

¹⁰⁰ *Brod: Memoirs from the Period of Assimilation* 54 (cf. fn. 36).

obligated as our first step to specifically make a fundamental distinction between the dominant political discourse in Bohemia at the time and the everyday lives of its residents, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Both the Czech and the German political discourse promoted a simplistic picture of the profoundly polarized reality as being divided between Czechs and Germans like two linguistically and culturally monolithic entities, but in actual fact the day-to-day existence of Bohemia's population was based on an infinitely more complex fabric of relationships, involving intertwined interethnic frictions and interactions. This distinction between the unifying ethno-national discourse (or the "melting pot" tendency) and the everyday bilingual and multiethnic reality is particularly vital when it comes to the Jewish experience in Bohemia. Because of the solid link that existed in fin-de-siècle Bohemia between the politics of the national conflict and debates over the "Jewish question," historiography tended for the most part to scrutinize Jewish society in Bohemia and Prague through the dichotomous prism of the contemporary political discourse. The division of Bohemian Jewry into two assimilating or acculturated groups – "German Jews" on the one hand and "Czech Jews" on the other – which emerged from this way of seeing things, created the misleading impression that most of Jewish society had internalized the Czech-German polarization as a faithful reflection of the reality of life in their surroundings, and had become integrated accordingly within the polarized discourse, adhering to one of the two national-cultural positions, whether the German or the Czech. There is indeed no doubt that certain parts of the Jewish public in Bohemia and its capital identified firmly with one of the two sides, the German or the Czech. This holds true in particular of those Jewish figures who had a pronounced institutional attachment to public and political bodies, whether German or Czech. And yet, once we look at the everyday experiences of ordinary bilingual Jews, we find a way of life of a different nature, one based on a kind of integration of German and Czech socio-cultural affinities. The experiences and positions of such Jews, whom I have elsewhere called "Czecho-German Jews,"¹⁰¹ cannot be analyzed in a dichotomous conceptual framework of the discourse of Czech-German polarization, such as that of "German assimilation/acculturation" versus "Czech assimilation/acculturation," because their very way of life in the multiethnic environment was in sharp contrast to the logic of cultural unification.

One can of course wonder whether it is misleading to present such figures as Max Brod, Hugo Bergmann or Hans Kohn as "ordinary people," given the fact that they were outstanding and widely known intellectuals. And yet, if for the moment we ignore the halo that they later come to assume in Jewish historiography as the spokesmen of Kafka's mysterious Prague, and focus instead on their position in the contemporary Prague context, we will see before us figures that occupy a marginal place relative to the dominant political discourse. This is not only because the names of Brod and Bergmann were, probably, less familiar to the general Prague public than the names of those Jews who were involved in the public and political con-

¹⁰¹ *Shumsky, Dimitry: Historiography, Nationalism and Bi-Nationalism: Czech-German Jewry, the Prague Zionists, and the Origins of the Bi-National Approach of Hugo Bergmann. In: Zion 69 (2004) 1, 45-80 (Hebrew).*

frontation between the Germans and the Czechs, such as the president of the "German Casino," Otto Forchheimer, or the "Old Czech" party representative on the City Council, Bohumil Bondy; but first and foremost because the course of their everyday lives ran along a kind of "seamline" between "Germanness" and Czechness," while the political and public arena in Bohemia represented as it were a picture of an unsurmountable chasm between the two peoples and cultures. On the other hand, as far as the position of these Czech-German-Jewish intellectuals is concerned relative to the general Jewish public, it turns out that their everyday conduct in their neighborhood and school settings fits in with the way of life of many of Prague's Jews, a way of life that was based on bilingualism and a plethora of ties with their Czech-German surroundings.

At this stage, having explored the details of the everyday experience of a number of Jewish intellectuals from Prague as residents of mixed Czech-German-Jewish buildings, and as students of the Czech language at the German gymnasia, more in-depth insights into their creative output and thinking can now be given. Thus Brod's "The Czech Housemaid" will no longer look like a semi-utopian, semi-colonialist fantasy, but rather the reflection of a complex bilingual and bicultural existence experienced by the author himself since birth. Whereas the Zionist outlook of Bar Kochba association members such as Bergmann – an association which was committed to bilingualism and aspired to impart a universalist dimension to Jewish nationalism – should no longer be interpreted as an "escape" from the polarized reality on the ground, but on the contrary as an attempt to provide their multicultural Jewish experience with a cognitive framework, as well as to develop a comprehensive *Weltanschauung* that would help the Jews to adapt to situations of co-existence with other ethnic groups, whether in East-Central Europe, or in the future Middle East.

When Brod referred in "Streitbares Leben" to the matter of his "Czech Housemaid", he tried, it will be remembered, to present this novel as nothing other than a simple love story, with no political message whatsoever, whether overt or covert.¹⁰² It is also possible that, had he been asked on some occasion for details of his multicultural everyday experiences, such as his choice to study the Czech language at the German gymnasium, unlike most of his fellow students, he would have once again refrained from political interpretations about the matter in question. However, if we consider the actual text of "The Czech Housemaid", what we have here is a composition that openly challenges the dominant discourse of polarization, since beneath the picture of a Bohemia subject to bipolar dispersion between the Czechs and the Germans the work conjures up an alternative picture, that of a bilingual Czecho-German Bohemia. Moreover, it appears that the issue of the Czech language studies at German gymnasia was not devoid of political dimension either. Thus for example, Paul Kisch, Egon Erwin's brother, who was in the same class as Bergmann and Kafka at the Altstädter Gymnasium, and who later became known for his atypical allegiance to the Jews of Bohemia in a pan-German nationalist outlook, refrained from

¹⁰² Brod: *Streitbares Leben* 342–346 (cf. fn. 16).

studying the Czech language throughout all of his eight years at gymnasium.¹⁰³ Ernst Forchheimer, the son of Otto, the German Casino president, also did not study Czech when attending the German gymnasium in Stephansgasse/Štěpanská, in the same class as Brod.¹⁰⁴ In light of the profound ties that Paul Kisch and the Forchheimer family had with the German-Bohemian national cause, it may be assumed that we have here decisions which on the surface would appear to hint at shunning the Czech culture. Hence choosing to study the Czech language had the significance of subverting the logic of boycott and polarization, even if students like Bergmann and Brod had no intention whatsoever of making a protest in so doing. In any case, irrespective of whether Czecho-German Jews such as these intended through their everyday conduct to challenge the polarization/coalescence discourse, in the eyes of both its German and its Czech promoters they were viewed as out-and-out subversives. The Jews' bilingualism and their desire to strike a balance between German and Czech affinities in the framework of everyday life were presented in this discourse as markers of a corrupt and immoral Jewish essence, whilst the phenomena of national ambiguousness and cultural ambivalence that were widespread among the general population were described as "Jewish" phenomena. And indeed, if we for a moment neutralize the venomous antisemitic language in these images, we can say that in this case the picture of Bohemian reality that was painted by the nationalist politicians on both sides was, for a change, not far from the truth: the bilingual Jews of the province were indeed from one point of view the Bohemian population most indifferent to the propaganda of ethno-nationalist polarization, but in this they represented a more general phenomenon among the non-Jewish inhabitants, one which amounted to indifference to separatist nationalist slogans in the area of everyday life.

¹⁰³ AHMP, fond školní katalogy, Neměcké st. gymnasium, Staré Město, 1-8 třída, 1893-1901/K. k. deutsches Staats-Gymnasium Prag, Altstadt, 1893-1901, Klassen-Katalog, I-VIII Klasse.

¹⁰⁴ AHMP, fond školní katalogy, Neměcké st. gymnasium, Štěpanská ul., 1-4 třída, 1894-1898, K.k. Staatsgymnasium, Prag Neustadt, Stephansgasse Hauptkatalog, 1894-1898 I-IV Klasse.