

Pavel Kladiwa

NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION IN THE POLITICS
OF THE STATE CENSUS. THE BOHEMIAN LANDS
1880-1930¹

This study compares several aspects of national politics in the Bohemian lands under two different political and ideological regimes, Habsburg Cisleithania and the First Czechoslovak Republic. I focus specifically on those aspects of politics which affected the ways in which the two regimes approached the definition and determination of relevant statistical data in censuses. Cisleithania belonged to a supranational state, which had to respond to the fact that during the 19th century the national idea established itself as the new leading form of collective identification. The Czechoslovak Republic thus defined itself as “the nation state of the Czechs and Slovaks,” although in reality it incorporated sizeable ethnic minorities.

At the outset it is important to emphasize the basic methodological pitfalls into which one is in danger of falling in approaching the issue of ethnicity and nationality: Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper warn against an approach that views ethnic or national groups as the basic units of social life – seeing such groups as homogeneous, i.e. externally defined. They view key terms of the social sciences and history such as “nation,” “ethnicity” and “race” as at once categories of social and political practice and categories of social and political analysis. These identity-related terms have been used by agitators in everyday life during various periods of history, and it is the task of the social sciences to explain the processes and mechanisms by which they have been transformed into a powerful and convincing “reality.”² Brubaker emphasizes that the formal institutionalization and codification of ethnic and national categories tells us nothing about the depth, repercussions and force of these categories in the experience of the individuals categorized. He considers it important to address the question of how everyday ethnicity is, or is not, influenced by the politics of nationality on the local and national levels. He considers the everyday activities of urban dwellers to be insignificant factors in the concept of ethnicity; the common population cannot be easily mobilized for national conflicts initiated by elites – indeed the common population is largely indifferent to such conflicts.³

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² *Brubaker, Rogers/Cooper, Frederick: Beyond “Identity.”* In: *Theory and Society* 29 (2000) 1-47, here 4.

³ *Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnizität ohne Gruppen.* Hamburg 2007, here 10, 83.

Jeremy King has criticized the approach taken by Central European historiography to the topic of national movements and nationalism. He has termed this approach “ethnicism”:

Ethnicism is a vague, largely implicit framework that holds the nations of East Central Europe to have sprung primarily from a specific set of mass, mutually exclusive ethnic groups defined by inherited cultural and linguistic patterns. National Germans, for example, thus developed out of ethnic Germans, and national Czechs out of ethnic Czechs. Every national Czech is necessarily an ethnic Czech too, the argument continues, but the reverse does not hold true; to qualify as a national Czech, the ethnic Czech must add a strong dose of political consciousness to his or her cultural and linguistic characteristics.⁴

King emphasizes that “the forebear to nationhood was not nonpolitical ethnicity but nonnational politics.”⁵

Similarly, in an article criticizing the national categories and constructs that are traditionally dominant in historiography, Tara Zahra explores the potential of the concept of national indifference as an analytical category in the history of modern Central and Eastern Europe. In her opinion, scholarly discourse which avoids viewing national identity as a powerfully attractive phenomenon has the potential to help rescue the citizens of Habsburg Central Europe once and for all from the “prison of nations” (“*Völkerkerker*”).⁶

It is true that the scholarly literature exploring national movements and nationalism focuses primarily on political elites and national agitators – a fact that also applies to recent literature. Nevertheless, it is clear that we cannot simply assume that the nationalization of the political discourse of elites reflects the intensity of national allegiances or polarization in the daily life of ordinary people.⁷ For a considerable part of the population of the Bohemian lands at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the answer to the question of who was a Czech, a German or a Pole⁸ was not nearly as trivial as it may appear at first sight. For a substantial part of the population national identification was unimportant, and for a small number it was actually unclear (especially in the case of bilingual individuals).

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that complete national indifference was not possible even among individuals without any clear sense of their own nationality. Such an attitude would have required such individuals to be linguistically indifferent, which could never be the case; complete bilingualism was not possible,

⁴ King, Jeremy: The Nationalization of East Central Europe. Ethnicism, Ethnicity and Beyond. In: *Bucur, Maria/Wingfield, Nancy* (eds.): *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*. West Lafayette 2001, 112-152, here 123.

⁵ King, Jeremy: *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics 1848-1948*. Princeton 2002, here 6.

⁶ Zahra, Tara: Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis. In: *Slavic Review* 69 (2010) 93-119, here 93, 94, 119.

⁷ *Brubaker, Rogers*: *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge/Mass. 2004, here 22.

⁸ During the existence of Habsburg Cisleithania, Jewishness was viewed (both in censuses and institutionally) solely in religious terms, not as an ethnic identity. According to the 1910 census around 134 000 Jews lived in the Bohemian lands, of whom 84 000 gave German and 50 000 gave Czech as their language of daily use (*Umgangssprache*).

or at least it was very difficult, and moreover bilingualism was always asymmetrical and territorially limited.⁹ It is likewise clear that the level of active national identification during the period covered by this article increased – as a result of pressure both from nationalists and from the state, which increasingly measured and defined things in terms of ethnic categories.

The qualitative and quantitative degree of “success” achieved by nationalism and national awareness is very difficult, if not impossible, to measure – mainly due to the fact that existing sources contain very little information on the attitudes and feelings of the majority of the population. The information available primarily concerns stances taken by the state apparatus and national agitators. These stances were reflected inter alia in attitudes to how language of daily use, and later nationality, was determined in censuses.

Censuses are not a form of purely scientific research devoid of a political context; rather they are a political battlefield for competing notions of “real” identities. The prize being fought over is the inclusion of a category in a census, which “scientifically” legitimizes the existence of a socially imaginable community.¹⁰ In other words, the definition of nationality (or language of daily use, etc.) in a census tells us more about the construction of categories as part of political ideologies than about the actual reality of divisions.¹¹

Censuses were not solely a means for the state to assert its dominance; they were also seized on by non-governmental political movements attempting to create their own constructs of social reality. “Armed with the latest census data about language use, nationalist activists claimed that it was possible both to delineate the precise boundaries between nations and to assess how those boundaries shifted over time.”¹²

That is the reason why this article, in addition to exploring the implementation of state “national” policy (or rather “supranational” policy, in the case of Cisleithania) in censuses, also deals with the reactions of Czech and German national activists (Polish activists are not discussed in this work). For these activists the key idea was nationality, which in the Central European context was closely connected with the question of ethnic identification. These activists were ethnicists, as they viewed nationality (similarly to the Czechoslovak Republic, unlike Cisleithania) as a clear and fixed category.

⁹ *Stourzh*, Gerald: The Ethnicizing of Politics and “National Indifference” in Late Imperial Austria. In: *Stourzh*, Gerald: Der Umfang der österreichischen Geschichte. Ausgewählte Studien 1990-2010. Wien, Köln, Graz 2011, 296-306, here 305-306.

¹⁰ *Urla*, Jacqueline: Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics: Numbers, Nations, and the Making of Basque Identity. In: *American Ethnologist* 20 (1993) 818-843, here 837.

¹¹ *Goldscheider*, Calvin: Ethnic Categorizations in Censuses: Comparative Observations from Israel, Canada, and the United States. In: *Kertzer*, David I./*Arel*, Dominique (eds.): *Census and Identity. The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses*. Cambridge University Press 2002, 71-91, here 72.

¹² *Judson*, Pieter M.: Writing the History of Cultural Borderlands in Habsburg Central Europe. In: *Lamprecht*, Gerald/*Mindler*, Ursula/*Zettelbauer*, Heidrun (eds.): *Zonen der Begrenzung: Aspekte kultureller und räumlicher Grenzen in der Moderne*. Bielefeld 2012, 17-32, here 18.

Habsburg Cisleithania

In Cisleithania, unlike in the First Czechoslovak Republic, the principle of nationality was not the basic principle underpinning the state. The Habsburg Monarchy entered the era of liberalization and democratization as a supranational empire under the cultural, social and economic dominance of its German-speaking elites. The ongoing process of modernization was accompanied by the increasing acceptance of the idea of equal rights for nations (*Volksstämme*), and the multinational Monarchy had no other option than to adapt to these developments. This gave rise to a process of balancing the interests of the various ethnic communities, each of which were undergoing a transformation into modern nations; the state authorities had to take account of the political power of these communities, though without fully aligning itself with any one group.

An important issue in the promotion of national rights was the question of the numerical strength of the individual language communities in each of the crown lands.

The well-known Article 19 of the Basic State Law on the General Rights of Citizens (*Staatsgrundgesetz über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger*, 21 December 1867) codified the equality of all nations (*Volksstämme*) and their languages in schools, government offices and public life, under the condition that the given language was in common use in the province (*landesüblich*). Right up until the end of the Monarchy in 1918, Austrian central legislation did not use the term *Nationalität*, but instead operated with the term *Volksstamm*.

In 1869 the Cisleithanian “Central Statistical Commission” (*K. k. Statistische Central-Commission*) considered introducing a section in the census in which respondents would be asked to list their “family language” (*Familiensprache*); however, due to the tense political situation at the time, its idea was eventually shelved until the next census. Three years later the International Statistical Congress in St Petersburg recognized language as an indirect criterion for nationality, and added it to the list of obligatory information to be collected by censuses. Censuses were to determine the so-called *langue parlée*. On 17 April 1880 the Cisleithanian Central Statistical Commission approved plans to incorporate information on *Familiensprache* into the following census. However – to the surprise of the Commission’s members and of parliamentary deputies – the Ministry of the Interior instead decided that the census should determine the respondents’ language of daily use (*Umgangssprache*), which corresponded to the Ministry’s interpretation of *langue parlée*. Why was this change made? An attempt to confer advantage on the German-speaking population cannot be ruled out, though the primary reason was probably the endeavour to prevent national conflicts which would have resulted from the act of determining the numerical strength of the individual nations. (From today’s perspective it is also clear that such counting would have been essentially a social and political construction of the various national movements in the state at the time).¹³

¹³ Brix, Emil: Die Umgangssprachen in Altösterreich zwischen Agitation und Assimilation: die Sprachenstatistik und die zisleithanischen Volkszählungen 1880-1910. Wien, Köln, Graz 1982, 109.

Moreover, according to Jeremy King, the Ministry of the Interior wished to emphasize still more the social, public and even territorial aspects of language.¹⁴ Bernatzik, in his 1912 work *Ausgestaltung des Nationalgefühles* (Formation of national sentiment), stated that the term “language of daily use” had been introduced into the Cisleithanian census in order to achieve legal recognition of the process of national assimilation.¹⁵

However, the Ministry’s attempts proved unsuccessful. Practically from the outset, the criterion of “language of daily use” was viewed as a substitute for the criterion of nationality (at least by nationalists). Indeed, by the time of the 1900 census, most national movements within the Monarchy equated language of daily use with nationality. When the state began to determine respondents’ language of daily use, doing so in fact helped to cement the definition of a nation primarily as a linguistic community. In pre-modern times the state had occasionally carried out surveys of its population for purposes of taxation and military conscription, but it had no interest in determining the cultural identities of the population. This meant that there was an absence of social pressure upon the population to determine its own consciousness; identities overlapped. By contrast, the creators of the modern state not only described, observed and mapped their population, but also attempted to shape and mould the population so that it would fit in with their methods of observation. In population censuses, people were thus assigned to a single category, meaning that they were conceptualized as individuals sharing a common collective identity with a certain number of other individuals.¹⁶ The census officers were instructed to ignore dialects and to disregard the phenomena of bilingualism and multilingualism. Each respondent had to choose just one standardized written language.¹⁷

Right up until the end of the Monarchy, the Cisleithanian government applied the concept of recording “objective linguistic structure,” resisting any attempts to modify this approach. This concept suited the German camp, as the economic and cultural dominance of the German-speaking community continued to motivate the process of acculturation and assimilation into the German community, which in turn made the German-speakers more statistically visible.¹⁸ Until 1918, not even the

¹⁴ King: Budweisers 58 (cf. fn. 5).

¹⁵ Brix: Die Umgangssprachen 106 (cf. fn. 13). – Bernatzik, Edmund: Die Ausgestaltung des Nationalgefühls im 19. Jahrhundert. Rechtsstaat und Kulturstaat: Zwei Vorträge gehalten in der Vereinigung für staatswissenschaftliche Fortbildung in Köln im April 1912. Hannover 1912.

¹⁶ Kertzer, David I./Arel, Dominique: Censuses, Identity Formation and the Struggle for Political Power. In: Kertzer/Arel (eds.): Census and Identity 1-42, here 2-6. (cf. fn. 11).

¹⁷ Kamusella, Tomasz: The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe. New York 2009, here 49. By contrast, censuses held in Belgium, Scotland and Ireland at the end of the 19th century enabled respondents to list more than one language of daily use, making it impossible to determine nationality from language use. In Belgium the census determined respondents’ knowledge of all three of the country’s languages; in Scotland the census determined knowledge of both English and Gaelic; in Ireland the census determined whether the respondent spoke only Irish, or both Irish and English.

¹⁸ Czech national activists rejected the concept of “recording objective linguistic structure”; in their view, it meant that some regions were recorded as German-speaking areas when in reality they were not.

Central Statistical Commission was interested in determining nationality. The Commission's fundamental argument was based on strictly statistical grounds; they stated that a census could only determine verifiable facts, whereas a question about nationality would fall into the realm of unverifiable subjective affinities. Such a question would compel citizens to state their innermost convictions even if they had no such inner conviction regarding their nationality; government institutions such as the census would thus in fact help to create such convictions, a process which would be potentially detrimental to the interests of the state.¹⁹ Moreover, the President of the Central Statistical Commission Karl Theodor von Inama-Sternegg held the opinion that the formulation of the census question in terms of "language of daily use" (*Umgangssprache*) also enabled the authorities objectively to determine the distribution of the various languages wherever it was necessary to determine such distribution for purposes of public life. When evaluating the linguistic situation, according to Inama-Sternegg, legislative and public administrative bodies should primarily take account of the needs of society – and the language spoken by the populations of individual municipalities and communities was a product of these needs. He also declared that the question regarding the language of daily use was simple, entirely comprehensible, easy to answer, and easy to verify.²⁰

The data on languages of daily use in Cisleithania between 1880 and 1910 were employed by the state authorities as a basis for addressing the increasingly difficult problem of the co-existence of a number of different language communities combined with the application of the national principle as one of the principles underlying the formation of the state. The state authorities needed information on the situation with regard to language and nationality as a basis for its administrative duties. On the surface, the government was careful to distinguish between nationality and language of daily use; however, this did not prevent all national activists in the Monarchy from viewing census responses on language of daily use as effectively a referendum on nationality.²¹

The national activists of the "non-ruling nationalities"²² felt disadvantaged by the fact that, although the Constitution guaranteed the equality of nations within the Monarchy, their specific demands ran up against the problem that the census did not determine nationality, but language of daily use; a criterion which, in their view, was being manipulated²³. The political representatives of the "non-ruling nationalities"

¹⁹ *Hirschhausen*, Ulrike von: People that Count. The Imperial Census in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Europe and India. In: *Leonhard*, Jörn/*Hirschhausen*, Ulrike von (eds.): Comparing Empires. Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century. Göttingen 2011, 145-170, here 152-153.

²⁰ *Inama-Sternegg*, Karl Theodor von: Die nächste Volkszählung. In: *Statistische Monatschrift* 1900, 455.

²¹ *Brix*: Die Umgangssprachen 14-17 (cf. fn. 13).

²² See *Kořalka*, Jiří: Češi v habsburské říši a v Evropě 1815-1914 [The Czechs in the Habsburg Monarchy and Europe, 1815-1914]. Praha 1996, 183.

²³ The statistic was indeed being manipulated, though this problem was not primarily due to the criterion itself. This is proved by the censuses in the post-1918 Czechoslovak Republic, which – although they replaced the criterion of language of daily use with that of nation-

held that censuses should determine not language but nationality, as the census data were used as a basis for specific decisions and measures (approvals of new schools, administrative and electoral reforms, appointments of officials, the determination of official languages to be used by state authorities, etc.). These representatives were well aware of the way in which the data on the numerical strength and territorial distribution of individual nationalities (under the cloak of language of daily use) were being used by the government.²⁴

The authorities did not (officially) equate language with nationality; however, the ability to exercise national rights was conditional upon language (through the concept of *Landesüblichkeit* – i.e. the extent to which the language was in common use in a particular province or district). For example, Gautsch's language decrees of 24 February 1898 defined linguistically mixed districts as those in which at least a quarter of the resident population used a language other than the one most dominant in the district. As part of the 1890 proposal for the Czech-German Compromise in Bohemia, the boundaries of the judicial districts (*Gerichtsbezirke*) were to be redrawn on the basis of nationality, in order to maximize the number of monolingual districts and minimize the number of linguistically mixed districts.

Czech political representatives and activists repeatedly protested against any attempt to redraw the boundaries of the judicial districts of Bohemia, arguing that the language of daily use was irrelevant to the actual situation with regard to nationality. According to them, the category of language of daily use tended to underestimate the actual numerical strength of the Czech nation. They were correct in asserting that the interpretation of the concept of language of daily use, together with the census-taking methodology, placed pressure upon respondents who had migrated from Czech-speaking areas to largely or completely German-speaking areas. However, Czech representatives completely rejected the notion that somebody originating in a Czech-speaking area could in fact become a German-speaker voluntarily; they automatically assumed that such a linguistic re-identification was always imposed upon the individual – the result of the unjust policies of the imperial state – and was thus essentially illegitimate. However, in reality linguistic assimilation is a common phenomenon, especially in the case of ethnic communities whose native languages possess low social prestige.

Czech national organizations vehemently criticized these trends towards assimilation; they held that the only accurate statistical depiction of a nation was one that looked towards the past, i.e. one which reflected the language of an individual's parents and ancestors.²⁵ Even if an individual did not currently use the language of his/her ancestors, or was in fact not able to speak that language to an acceptable

ality – enabled the state (via the implementing regulations) to define nationality in such a way that it restricted the free choice of any nationality except Czechoslovak. The basis of the problem lay in the fact that it was in the state's interest to select methods of census-taking which would produce the best possible results for the dominant language (the German language in Cisleithania, the "Czechoslovak" language in the post-war state).

²⁴ Brix: Die Umgangssprachen 39-41 (cf. fn. 13).

²⁵ Arel, Dominique: Language Categories in Censuses: Backward- or Forward-Looking? In: Kertzer/Arel (eds.): Census and Identity 92-120, here 99 (cf. fn. 11).

standard, this was considered to be merely a temporary aberration caused by state policy – one that would be corrected once the nation had gained its autonomy.²⁶ The Monarchy's bureaucracy took a different view: the widespread phenomenon of cultural assimilation into a different ethnic community (mainly into the German-speaking community) could only be taken into account by using the category of language of daily use. Officials at the Ministry of the Interior held the opinion that nationality was a highly subjective criterion, promoted by national activists solely in order to increase their statistical visibility and to fan the flames of national conflict.²⁷ Moreover, as emphasized by the President of the Central Statistical Commission Robert Meyer in a report submitted to the Ministry of the Interior in 1910, the roots of language disputes did not lie in the method of questioning, but in the conflicts between representatives of different nationalities. These conflicts would not be alleviated, let alone resolved, merely by introducing a new method of questioning.²⁸

In some respects, the criticism of Czech nationalist agitators was justified only in part, if indeed it was justified at all. However, it is also important to note the aspects of data collection relating to language of daily use in Cisleithania which were genuinely problematic, and which reflected the state interest in achieving the best possible results for the German language – thus maintaining its support among the politically and economically most powerful community within the Monarchy. We should start with the definition, or rather lack of definition, of language of daily use, which was conceived by the authorities as the language normally used by an individual in his/her everyday dealings. Because the central authorities did not issue any detailed implementation regulations for the census, different parties could apply different interpretations of the term “language of daily use.” German-speaking politicians and representatives of the German-speaking community viewed it as the language used by an individual in his/her employment (according to this interpretation, the only possible language of daily use in a predominantly German-speaking territory would be German, and even Czechs living in such a territory would have to be recorded as German-speakers²⁹). By contrast, representatives of the Czech community interpreted language of daily use as the language which the individual preferred to speak, i.e. the language which he/she spoke at home. This essentially meant that language of daily use was equivalent to the individual's native language.

From the 1900 census onwards, the state rejected the pro-German interpretation of the term, though this decision was de facto only internal, in circulars sent by the

²⁶ *Stourzh*: The Ethnicizing of Politics 287-288 (cf. fn. 9); *Kertzer*, David I./*Arel*, Dominique: Censuses, Identity Formation and the Struggle for Political Power. In: *Kertzer/Arel* (eds.): *Census and Identity* 1-42, here 26 (cf. fn. 11); *Arel*: *Language Categories* 102 (cf. fn. 24). According to Dominique Arel, most of the data on language of daily use in Austrian censuses reflected real linguistic assimilation.

²⁷ *Hirschhausen*: *People that Count* 150 (cf. fn. 19).

²⁸ *Brix*: *Die Umgangssprachen* 103-104 (cf. fn. 13).

²⁹ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (further quoted as AVA), collection Innenministerium-Allgemein (further MdI-Allgem.), call no. 33/1 in spezie, box 2356, file no. 9662/1901, Nordmark instructions for the completion of census forms “Die Volkszählung von 1901 und ihre Bedeutung für das Deutschtum in Österreichisch-Schlesien.”

Ministry of the Interior to the individual provincial governor's offices (*Statthaltereien*). The Ministry did not add even a brief definition to the implementation regulations for the census. The Bohemian Governor's Office responded shortly before the 1900 census by issuing an edict forbidding census officers from changing respondents' replies regarding their language of daily use.³⁰ If a respondent in a German-speaking area was not afraid of the consequences (or if such a respondent was of independent means), and if that respondent defended his/her right to have a language other than German recorded as his/her language of daily use despite the decision of the local census authorities, then the state would rule in favour of that individual. The state defined the language of daily use *de iure* as an objective criterion, however *de facto* it viewed this criterion as a subjective one, as the information on language of daily use was subject to review only in terms of whether it had been recorded accurately in accordance with the respondent's statement; it was not subject to review in the sense of verification with respect to reality.³¹

The Czech activists were mainly concerned with ensuring that the language of daily use recorded for domestic servants and manual workers was not linked in any way to the language of daily use recorded for their employers. This effort was closely related to a further controversial aspect of the recording of this census data – the method by which the census officers recorded the language of daily use of those persons who lived in a household but were not members of the homeowner's family. These persons included servants, tenants, day-labourers, and so on. The instructions issued internally by the state authorities stipulated that such persons should be allowed to state their language of daily use with absolute freedom. However, this instruction was not incorporated into the census data forms completed by census officers (*Aufnahmsbogen*) until 1910, when it became part of Section XIII of the form.³² Parallel with this development, the 1910 instructions for the notification forms completed and submitted by homeowners (*Anzeigezettel*) stated that the homeowner should ask members of the household for the required data, especially those members of the household who were not family members.³³ The instructions given for previous censuses had merely stated that the homeowner should record or notify the authorities of data for all persons resident in the household, including both family members and non-members.

The method involving the use of notification forms, containing data collected by homeowners, could only be applied in several large cities;³⁴ in other locations, wide-

³⁰ *Brix*: Die Umgangssprachen 270 (cf. fn. 13).

³¹ See AVA, MdI-Allgem., call no. 33/1 in spezic, box 2356, file no. 6481/1901.

³² "In order to determine which of these languages should be recorded as the language of daily use of the respondents, the census officer, in accordance with the instructions given in paragraph 1, should question the heads of the family or independently resident individuals; during the questioning, the officer should avoid misleading the respondent or influencing the respondent's answer to the question."

³³ See Decree no. 148 of the Ministry of the Interior, 20 August 1910, on the 1910 census.

³⁴ The "Anzeigezettel" collection method was primarily designed for provincial capitals and other large cities. The decision whether or not to use this method was made by the political authorities, taking into account local conditions. In 1900 a total of 240 Bohemian municipalities (3 %) and 73 Moravian municipalities (2,5 %) used this method.

spread illiteracy (for example in the Ostrava and Těšín/Cieszyn/Teschen area, due to the presence of migrants from Galicia) or low levels of education among some parts of the population meant that the data were instead collected directly by census officers, who recorded them on the *Aufnahmsbogen* (roughly “data gathering form”), which left far greater opportunity for data to be manipulated. Census officers were appointed by municipal councils. Their appointments had to be confirmed by the relevant District Office (*Bezirkshauptmannschaft*), which had the right to reject appointments and nominate its own candidates instead. Such rejections, however, happened only rarely (in certain linguistically mixed municipalities where officials feared that the appointment of biased nationalist agitators as census officers would potentially ignite conflicts).

Interference from nationally biased municipal councils was evidently the most serious problem affecting the collection of census data on language of daily use in Cisleithania. The state delegated considerable power to these autonomous municipal councils for purposes of the census – far more power than was enjoyed by their equivalents in neighbouring Prussia/Germany.³⁵ The Census Act of 29 March 1869 stipulated that in municipalities where data were collected via notification forms completed by homeowners (the *Anzeigezettel*), the mayor of the municipality was to receive the forms, check that they had been completed correctly and in full, and then draw up a local summary of the data (or a general summary, if the municipality consisted of more than one settlement), which would then be delivered to the District Office for a census book to be compiled. Even when the data were collected by census officers (using the *Aufnahmsbogen*), the political authority could instruct the municipality to draw up a local and/or general summary. The latter happened frequently, even though the District Office was entitled to organize the entire data collection procedure itself, with authority that included the appointment of census officers and the compilation of summaries. The third form of data collection also involved census officers appointed by the municipality, but in this case the local and/or general summary was compiled by the District Office, not by the municipality.³⁶

Complaints against the activities of municipal councils during the collection of data on language of daily use mainly concerned Bohemia, Moravia, and the city councils in Vienna and Trieste.³⁷ The differing Czech and German positions on the

³⁵ Cf. *Labbé*, Morgane: Institutionalizing the Statistics of Nationality in Prussia in the 19th Century (from Local Bureaucracy to State-Level Census of Population). In: *Centaurus* 49 (2007), 289-306, here above all 293-294.

³⁶ This method of data collection was used in 1900 e.g. in Třebenice (Trebmitz) in the Lito-měřice (Leitmeritz) area, which was the home ground of the German activist Dr J. W. Titta. The District Office doubted the objectivity of the data collection for the language of daily use in this municipality (whose council was dominated by German nationalists), so it decided to compile the local summary itself. Moreover, a state official was sent to Trebnitz to review the census operation. It proved necessary to make numerous corrections in the data in relation to the language of daily use. *Národní archiv v Praze* [National archive in Prague, further quoted as NA], collection Prezidium českého místodržitelství [Presidium of the Bohemian Governor's Office, box 4098, Z. 2926, The Bohemian Governor to the Ministry of the Interior, 6.3.1901.

³⁷ *Brix*: Die Umgangssprachen 395 (cf. fn. 13).

interpretation of language of daily use are evident from a questionnaire issued in 1911, in which municipal authorities were required to give feedback on the efficacy of the census forms. The Czech-dominated Town Council in Kroměříž (Kremsier) wrote to the Moravian Governor's Office (*Statthaltereii*) stating that Section 13 (language of daily use) of the notification form (*Anzeigezettel*) served no useful purpose and should be replaced by data on nationality, on the grounds that no useful information could be gained by recording the language of daily use. For example, the only Italian living in Kroměříž had not been able to list his language of daily use as Italian, because nobody else in the town spoke the language. The German-dominated City Council in Olomouc (Olmütz) responded that the nationality-based interpretation of Section 13 of the form had given rise to numerous misunderstandings and incorrect data, and therefore the instruction "Not to be confused with native language or nationality" should be added to the next census. The German-dominated Mayor's Office in Opava (Troppau) wrote to the Silesian provincial government stating that the definition of language of daily use was entirely sufficient for impartial persons, and that the information given in this section was accurate in most cases. Unfortunately, the state-endorsed instructions for the language of daily use section were not understood in all cases. A not inconsiderable proportion of the population failed to understand the difference between language of daily use and native language (or between language of daily use and nationality). The office of Troppau's Mayor acknowledged that it had made certain changes:

In order to conscientiously execute the official duties entrusted to them, the inspectors devoted the appropriate attention to the entries in the section on 'language of daily use', and, in cases where it was justified by the circumstances and facts, carried out the necessary corrections.³⁸

An entirely pragmatic approach was taken by the Town Council in Frýdek (Friedeck), which formed part of a trilingual area. The Council wrote to the Silesian provincial government stating that the language of daily use section of the census had failed to achieve its purpose, especially in linguistically mixed municipalities. At such locations, the language used in the household or when speaking to family members could differ from the language used in the workplace or in public communication. Many people could choose one or another language, and it was unclear which language they should choose when many of them were conversant in three languages (Czech, German, Polish).³⁹

In my opinion, the biggest failure of the state authorities was this: although on the one hand their handling of specific complaints against the nationalist-motivated coercion of census respondents did indeed reflect their (in most cases genuine) supranational approach, on the other hand they failed to stipulate mechanisms of data collection which would have been effective in protecting the populace against such practices (or which would at least have made such practices considerably more difficult). Coercion was used on respondents particularly in the second census to include data on language of daily use (the first such census, in 1880, was largely free

³⁸ AVA, Mdi-Allgem., call no. 33/1 allgem., box 2350, file no. 32532/1911 (efficacy of census forms).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

of such manipulation), yet the state authorities did not mount any effective response. They dealt with inaccuracies in the data rather than addressing the actual mechanisms of data collection, probably because the main “perpetrators” of coercive practices were to be found among the German-speaking communities, and the polling mechanisms used in the census in relation to language of daily use favoured the German language since those mechanisms were the product of political struggle (while the Habsburg state was supranational, that is not to say that it did not have to respect the political significance of individual national representatives). If coercion by municipal council, employer or homeowner did not impel the affected respondent to actually lodge a complaint, but instead simply compelled the respondent to state his/her language of daily use falsely and against his/her will (i. e. a form of involuntary “assimilation”), the majority of such cases of coercion never came to light. It is likely that the number of such cases was far higher than the number of complaints investigated. Coercion by census officers compelled many people to make ostensibly voluntary declarations of the “incorrect” language of daily use (particularly German, in the case of “Czech” and “Polish” inhabitants, and less often Czech for “Polish” inhabitants and Polish for “Czech” inhabitants – the recording of Czech for “German” inhabitants was probably far less frequent). However, it is necessary to distinguish between cases when the “incorrect” language was recorded for respondents with some national awareness, and cases in which officers influenced respondents who lacked a strong sense of national identity, though possessing certain typical features of one or another ethnic community. The latter category of case was probably more frequent.

In view of the inadequate mechanisms of monitoring and review (inspections of the *Aufnahmsbogen* completed by census officers were only carried out at random), there were cases in which a respondent’s language of daily use as recorded in the form differed from the answer that the respondent had actually given to the officer. Falsification or crossing-out of data occurred both in the *Aufnahmsbogen* and during the transfer of information to the census books. An extreme case of the incorrect recording of this information took place in the municipality of Janoušov (Janauschendorf) near Zábřeh (Hohenstadt) during the 1900 census, in which in some instances the data were arbitrarily and illegally changed so that they stated the German language instead of the Czech language, and in others not all respondents who gave their language as Czech were recorded in the local summaries. The perpetrator was not identified, and the case was only brought to light in 1906 by the Minister without portfolio deputised for the Bohemian lands.⁴⁰

The limited objectivity of the census data on language of daily use was also clear to the government authorities. However, the government took a rather passive approach in response to the problem, possibly for political reasons (in order to protect the interests of the German-speakers), or possibly due to its caution or conservatism. The government’s approach is revealed in a report entitled *Zur politischen*

⁴⁰ AVA, MdI-Allgem., call no. 33/1 in spezie, box 2364, file no. 8379/1910 (Zusammenstellung I: Anregungen zur Abänderung der Rubrik „Umgangssprache“ und Beschwerden aus Anlass der Durchführung der Volkszählung vom Jahre 1900).

Seite der Abänderung der Sprachenrubrik für die nächste Volkszählung (On the political dimension of the alteration to the section on language in the next census), written by the Ministry of the Interior in 1906.⁴¹ In my opinion the report gives a cogent account of the situation. It stated that ethnic minorities in the Bohemian border regions were indeed being assimilated into the majority community, though not to the extent claimed by Czech representatives. This process was said to affect primarily economically dependent persons who had migrated to the industrial centres of the border regions, where the large majority of industry was owned by German-speakers. The report continued by stating that Czech labourers had stated their language of daily use as German partly under coercion from their employers, and partly as a result of their indifference to questions of nationality. The situation for female servants was somewhat different: they, at least, had generally not falsely listed German as their language of daily use. The assimilation of minorities was also associated with dismissals of non-compliant individuals and economic boycotts. There had been no mass dismissals, as the organized labour unions would have been in a position to respond to such actions. Czech political representatives had complained about the situation – and with some justification, though it should not be forgotten that the same practices had occurred in Czech-dominated regions (the report particularly emphasized the practice of economic boycotting).

According to the report's author (an official at the Ministry of the Interior), the best solution in political terms would be to maintain the current practice of collecting language data. It appears that both the Czech and German sides assumed that no change would take place.

Indeed, Cisleithania retained the practice of the time – i.e. the collection of data on language of daily use – throughout its remaining years of existence. Despite this, it ultimately became necessary to lay down a more precise definition of nationality. The reason that this step became necessary was the principle of equality of nations (*Volksstämme*), which was enshrined in the Constitution and which was being implemented in various aspects of public life: in the primary education system, the composition of school boards on the local, district and provincial levels, provincial agricultural councils, and (in Moravia, following the 1905 Moravian Compromise) in elections to the Imperial Council (*Reichsrat*) and the Diet (*Landtag*). A paradox emerged: the legislation assumed that it was possible to determine nationality, although the concept of nationality did not form a part of Austrian law. This gap had to be filled by the rulings of the supreme courts – the Administrative Court of Justice (*Verwaltungsgerichtshof*, VGH) and the Imperial Court of Justice (*Reichsgericht*, RG).⁴² For many years, the findings of the VGH in cases related to the determination of nationality were based on the principle of self-declaration – i.e. an individual is a member of the nation to which he/she professes him/herself to belong (regardless of the language of daily use given in the census). However, after 1905 the VGH was forced to respond to the situation in Moravia, where the Moravian Compromise

⁴¹ AVA, MdI-Allgem., call no. 33/1 allgem., box 2347, file no. 44391/1906.

⁴² For more details on this issue see King, Jeremy: *Who Is Who? Race and Law in Liberal Austria, 1867-1914* (manuscript as yet unpublished, provided to me by the author).

had led to compulsory ethnic classification. In 1910 the VGH issued a breakthrough judicial decision pertaining to the nationality of members of local school boards.⁴³ In the text of the ruling, the court stated that if the affected party's sincerity and truthfulness with regard to national belonging were matters of dispute, nationality was to be determined on the basis of identifiable markers, and that it was permissible to investigate activities in the individual's private, social and public life where such activities could be interpreted as truthful and reliable indicators of nationality.⁴⁴ As early as 1907, the RG ruled in the case of disputes over the nationality of Moravian voters at the elections to the Diet and the Imperial Council;⁴⁵ the court found that in matters of nationality, the results of official investigations took precedence over the principle of self-declaration.⁴⁶

It was not in Vienna's interest to support nationalism – whether in its Czech, German or any other form. During the last years of the Monarchy, however, nations increasingly became one of the fundamental elements of the state and the constitutional system. Cisleithania was forced to become increasingly cognisant of nationalities by the pressures of social developments of the time. However, it did so in such a way that the state regime as a whole remained multinational, and thus – in its own specific way – non-national.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, developments in the last few years before the outbreak of war – especially in Moravia – began to take a direction similar to the way national classification was later to go in the Czechoslovak Republic from 1918 onwards. This direction involved the perception of nationality as a category that could be objectively determined and verified, a category applicable to the entire population (or at least a large majority of the population). Gerald Stourzh described the situation in Moravia after 1905 as a case of compulsory national classification of inhabitants. On certain occasions, citizens were required by legislation to be classified as members of one or another nationality. In Stourzh's view, nationality took precedence over citizenship, with the concept of state citizens (*Staatsbürger*) giving way to the concept of members of a nation (*Volksbürger*).⁴⁸

The state's emphasis on this nation-based principle appeared to be unavoidable – as if it was merely reflecting a need of society, and not actually extending this need into wider strata of society. It was not by chance that the Czechoslovak Republic chose to determine nationality in statistical terms.

⁴³ The Moravian Compromise stipulated that a local school board should consist exclusively of members of the relevant nationality.

⁴⁴ Finding of the VGH no. 11019, 30.12.1907. In: *Popelka*, August Ritter von (ed.): *Budwińskis Sammlung der Erkenntnisse des k. k. Verwaltungsgerichtshofes*, XXXIV. Jahrgang 1910. Administrativrechtlicher Teil. Wien 1911, 1748-53 (Budwiński 7846A).

⁴⁵ In accordance with the Moravian Compromise "Czechs" and "Germans" voted separately, each community in its own national curia.

⁴⁶ Finding of the RG no. 505, 15.10.1907. In: *Hugelmann*, Karl (ed.): *Sammlung der nach gepflogener mündlicher Verhandlung geschöpften Erkenntnisse des k. k. Reichsgerichtes*, XIV. Teil, 1. Heft, Jahrgang 1907. Wien 1912, 433-40 (Hye-Hugelmann 1531); *King*: *Who Is Who?* 38-44 (cf. fn. 42).

⁴⁷ This trend was cogently characterized in *King*: *Budweisers* 114-115 (cf. fn. 5).

⁴⁸ *Stourzh*: *The Ethnicizing of Politics* 68, 81 (cf. fn. 9).

The First Czechoslovak Republic

The Czechoslovak state, unlike its predecessor, identified itself explicitly with a single nationality (through its concept of a “nation state of the Czechs and Slovaks”). This approach conditioned the state’s policies on nationality, including the definition of nationality in censuses. It was in the new state’s interest to be able to show that the largest possible number of its citizens were of Czech (“Czechoslovak”) nationality, thus reducing the numerical strength of the minority nationalities as much as possible (old Austria had no ethnic majority). In matters of guaranteed rights for citizens and nationalities, the state was clearly influenced by the heritage of Cisleithania. In his 1928 book “Válka Čechů s Němci” (The War between the Czechs and the Germans), Emanuel Rádl described the issue cogently, noting that several of the measures that had been supported by Czech politicians when in opposition were quickly dropped after independence on 28 October 1918 – the measures dropped were ones whose main goal was to strengthen the position of “the non-ruling nationality.”⁴⁹ The concept of Czech-ness as a product of nature became increasingly popular; Czech-ness was viewed as being inevitably separate from German-ness, and the “natural” Czechoslovak state was contrasted with the artificial, unnatural Austro-Hungarian state.

The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic guaranteed certain rights to national, racial and religious minorities, covering language, education, and religious observance. Minorities in Czechoslovakia were also protected by international law on the basis of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, signed on 10 September 1919. With regard to minority languages, the state adopted a solution echoing Stremayr’s language decrees (which had placed Czech on an equal footing with German as a language of official use). A qualified majority necessary for the exercise of language rights by a minority was achieved if that minority reached at least 20 percent of the population of the judicial district. In other words, language rights depended to a large extent on data from censuses.

The first of the two post-war censuses took place in 1921. From 1919 it had been clear that the next census would not determine the “language of daily use” and that interference from municipal councils, employers and homeowners would be restricted in order to achieve the desired results with respect to the proportions of each nationality in the total population. Czech politicians and national activists criticized the defunct Austrian state, accusing it of having effectively failed (in some cases de-

⁴⁹ “The last forty years before the war were characterized on the political scene by the struggle for the autonomy of the population in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown, whether in terms of natural autonomy or political/state autonomy. The Czechs favoured the political/state concept of autonomy [...] The most frequent political buzzwords in the Bohemian lands included autonomy, federation, self-determination, independence, decentralization [...] After the war, the Czechs immediately abolished the autonomous political system in the interests of the ruling Czech nationality [...] The situation in this state today is a peculiar one. The Czechs, who before the war supported autonomy, are now proponents of centralism, whereas the other nationalities in the state – Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians and Ruthenians – are in favour of autonomy.” Rádl, Emanuel: *Válka Čechů s Němci* [The War between the Czechs and the Germans]. Praha 1993 (First edition 1928), 159-160.

liberately) to prevent involuntary national assimilation. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak legislation covering the census led to a paradoxical situation in which on the one hand the state managed to restrict the extent of involuntary assimilation due to coercion of economically dependent persons, but on the other was unwilling to acknowledge voluntary assimilation (at least in the case of “Czechs” who listed their nationality as German). How was this possible? The laws on the census avoided offering a legally binding definition of nationality, but they nevertheless enabled state authorities (as was the case with the 1905 Moravian Compromise) to assign nationality to a person on the basis of external (i.e. objective) features, even if the assigned nationality was at odds with the person’s own declaration of nationality.⁵⁰

Far more important than the relatively concise census legislation of 1920 and 1927 were the implementing regulations issued prior to each of the two censuses carried out by the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1921 and 1930. The fact that these censuses had the purpose of determining respondents’ respective nationalities (rather than their language of daily use) was less important than the definition of nationality and the methods by which it would be statistically determined. When the relevant committee of the “State Council of Statisticians” (*Statistická státní rada*) met to discuss the regulations for the implementation of the 1920 census, there were two major opposing views: one camp wanted to determine nationality via direct questions, while the other camp (including the two leading figures – the Czech Antonín Boháč and the German Heinrich Rauchberg) wanted to do so indirectly, by determining the respondent’s native language. In the end, the first camp won by a small margin.⁵¹ Politicians from the *Deutscher parlamentarischer Verband* (a loose association of German parties in Parliament), such as Gustav Peters, opposed Rauchberg’s view and expressed unanimous support for the direct determination of nationality – but they emphasized that respondents should state their nationality freely, i. e. in secret.⁵² This demand had been made on multiple occasions by Czech politicians before the last pre-war censuses, but it had been quietly dropped in the new political circumstances.

The difference between Rauchberg’s and Peters’ positions is only superficial. More precisely, the difference lies solely in the means by which the same goal was to be achieved: i.e. a guarantee that the state authorities would not have the opportunity to recruit “Germans” to become “Czechoslovaks.” In Rauchberg’s view, the best defence against such a risk was the concept of native language in the sense of the language “inherited” by a person from his/her parents, a property that remained fixed and immutable throughout a person’s entire life. In Peters’ view, a more reli-

⁵⁰ *Haslinger*, Peter: *Nation und Territorium im tschechischen politischen Diskurs 1880-1938*. München 2010 (Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Bd. 117), 299. The pitfalls in classifying nationality in the Czechoslovak Republic between 1918 and 1938 have been discussed inter alia by the American historians Tara Zahra and Jeremy King. *Zahra*, Tara: *Kidnapped souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*. Ithaca, London 2008, especially 118-126; *King*: *Budweisers* 164-169 (cf. fn. 5).

⁵¹ *Boháč*, Antonín: *Národnostní mapa Republiky československé* [Map of nationalities in the Czechoslovak Republic]. Praha 1926, 15-16.

⁵² *Bohemia*, 20.1.1921.

able method was the secret declaration of nationality, which would prevent coercive pressure being placed upon respondents by the state authorities, keen to maximize the figures for the Czechoslovak nationality.

However, Czech experts did not agree unanimously on whether nationality should be determined directly or indirectly in the first census, nor on whether nationality should be viewed in subjective terms (on the basis of respondents' self-declaration) or in objective terms (based on "external features").⁵³ The strongest supporter of the subjectivist viewpoint was Emanuel Rádl, who became involved in a vehement polemical exchange with the statistician Antonín Boháč. Rádl distinguished between the racial/cultural concept of nationality (nationality as a natural phenomenon) and the political concept (nationality as a product of an individual's freedom of expression). In his view, the census should determine nationality solely on the basis of free choice.⁵⁴ Boháč, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the best way of determining nationality would be to determine a respondent's native language (which served as an indicator of ethnic nationality) as well as his or her declared nationality (internal, ideological nationality). This would enable the statisticians to determine whether the individual had been assimilated. Boháč stated that if this proposal were to meet with opposition, he would favour using the respondent's native language as the best indicator of his or her nationality.⁵⁵

The Czechoslovak state eventually decided to determine nationality through the use of a direct question. However, the legislation did not define the concepts of nation or nationality, nor did it define different types of language (native language or mother tongue, language of an individual's family, etc.). The Constitution did not make it clear whether the legislators equated the concept of national minority with that of linguistic minority. The language law passed on 29 February 1920 suggested that both concepts were viewed as identical (in other words, the language law assumed that censuses would determine language use by the population).

The regulations for implementation of the first post-war census were issued in late October 1920.⁵⁶ Sections 19 and 20 were of key importance in determining respondents' nationality. Adults, and household members who were not family members, declared their nationality to the head of each household (who recorded it on notification forms, which were then submitted to officials) or to the census officer (who recorded it directly in the census form). For minors who were family members, nationality was decided by the head of the family. The information given by each respondent was subject to official verification and any corrections were carried out

⁵³ On this subject see e.g. *Krejčí*, Dobroslav: Má se při našem příštím sčítání lidu zjišťovati národnost nebo řeč mateřská? [Should the next census determine nationality or native language?] In: *Čsl. statistický věstník*, vol. I [Czechoslovak Statistical Bulletin] Praha 1920, 275-285, here 275-277.

⁵⁴ *Rádl*, Emanuel: Národnost jako vědecký problém [Nationality as a scientific problem]. Praha 1929, 55, 62.

⁵⁵ *Boháč*, Antonín: Národnost či jazyk? [Nationality or language?] In: *Čsl. statistický věstník*, vol. II. Praha 1921, 40-58, here 58.

⁵⁶ Decree of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic no. 592 of 30 October 1920, implementing the Census Act no. 256 of 8 April 1920.

with the knowledge of the respondent (even if the respondent disagreed with the correction in question).

The implementation regulations also included instructions for the census officers who would be collecting data directly from respondents. Section 10 of these regulations emphasized that “census officers are forbidden from exerting any coercive pressure on the respondent when reviewing data on nationality. If an officer doubts the accuracy of a respondent’s statement, the officer should question that respondent.” Adult members of the homeowner’s family could be questioned by the officer himself. Household members who were not members of the homeowner’s family were always to be questioned by the officer himself. Any corrections made to the nationality data were to be signed by the respondent on the form.

The implementation regulations contained no guidance on the precise meaning of nationality. The following information is the only clue that appeared in the instructions for officers who would be filling out the census form: “Nationality is understood as membership of a nation, whose primary external feature is usually the native language. Jews may declare their nationality as Jewish.”⁵⁷ This “definition” of nationality became the target of criticism. Wilhelm Winkler, a member of the Central Statistical Commission in Vienna (and thus a former colleague of the Czech and German statisticians in Czechoslovakia) wrote:

This is a shocking distortion of the term to create a specifically Czech, highly flexible concept of nationality based on native language – with the intention of permitting whatever is convenient for the state and rejecting whatever is inconvenient for it.⁵⁸

The census of 1921 did indeed oscillate between the subjective and objective concepts of nationality. Respondents had to state their declared nationality, however in cases of “unsatisfactory” responses the state carried out a more thorough official verification than had been the case before the war. The trend was thus the opposite of that which could be observed in Cisleithania, where the language of daily use was declared to be an objective criterion, but where in practice the state authorities instructed that an individual’s subjective declaration should not be subjected to official verification. In Czechoslovakia, by contrast, nationality was determined as a matter of free choice, but it was also characterized by the respondent’s native language, which was held to be an objective feature of nationality. The reason for this hybrid approach is obvious: the state authorities wanted on the one hand to prevent

⁵⁷ According to Kateřina Čapková the acknowledgement of Jewish nationality was not solely due to a pragmatic interest in weakening the German and Hungarian minorities. The Zionist movement had the support of President Masaryk, who expressed the opinion that Jewish nationality should be acknowledged. Prior to the 1930 census, there were discussions on the possibility of restricting the option for declaring Jewish nationality by making such an option conditional upon the respondent being conversant in Hebrew or Jewish “jargon,” but representatives of the Jewish community intervened to stop this from happening. Čapková, Kateřina: Uznání židovské národnosti v Československu 1918-1938 [The acknowledgement of Jewish nationality in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938]. In: Český časopis historický (further ČCH) 102 (2004) 77-103.

⁵⁸ Winkler, Wilhelm: Der Wert der tschechischen Nationalitätenstatistik nach der Volkszählung vom 15. Februar 1921. Eger, Leipzig 1923, 9.

people of Czech and mixed ethnic origin from declaring German nationality, but on the other hand to allow (or compel) people to declare Czechoslovak nationality if they were of Czech or Slovak origin – no matter that their native language might not be either Czech or Slovak (i.e. if they had been born or grown up in a German or Hungarian-speaking environment), or even if they were not of Czech origin at all (e.g. Polish-speaking people and those speaking the Czech-Polish transitional dialect in the Těšín/Cieszyn/Teschen area).

The Census Act of 1920 stipulated penalties for the deliberate statement of incorrect information – including *de facto* the statement of “incorrect nationality.” Most of the people who incurred penalties for this infringement acquiesced to the decision, though a minority appealed to a higher instance – some to the Supreme Administrative Court (*Nejvyšší správní soud*, NSS). Complaints addressed to the NSS mainly concerned the imposition of penalties for actions which the plaintiffs and their lawyers did not consider to constitute deliberate statements of incorrect information regarding nationality, but plaintiffs also contested decisions that they had stated their nationality incorrectly. The findings of the court eventually forced the state authorities to make partial alterations to their interpretative practice; the court specified the circumstances under which a change in an individual’s nationality could be acknowledged, i.e. cases when an individual of a certain ethnic origin could successfully declare a different nationality. In other words, the NSS somewhat restricted the powers of the state authorities to assign nationality to individuals. The court criticized the instructions for officers filling out the census form – “Nationality is understood as membership of a nation, whose primary external feature is usually the native language” – and added the interpretation of the word “usually”. The court was inclined to consider plaintiffs’ arguments, if it had convincing evidence that plaintiffs had, during the course of their lives, shifted away from their “original nationality” (see below).

Jaroslav Kučera has written that in inter-war Czechoslovakia “the process of drawing up the regulations for nationality statistics was governed not only by the administrative needs of the state and the requirements of statistical science, but also by political motivations and goals.”⁵⁹ I agree entirely with this assessment. Many archive documents show that prior to both censuses (i.e. in 1921 and 1930) the government considered proposals for census criteria first and foremost from the perspective of the state’s interests; in other words the need to achieve the highest possible numbers of inhabitants with Czechoslovak nationality. For example, on 24 October 1920 the Silesian Provincial President Šrámek wrote to the Ministry of the Interior, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the Office of the President of the Republic, stating that the date of the census was approaching and that no instructions had yet been received as to whether the census would determine respondents’ native language or their nationality. In view of the situation in Silesia, particularly in the Hlučín (Hultschin) and Těšín (Cieszyn/Teschen) regions, Šrámek

⁵⁹ *Kučera, Jaroslav: Politický či přirozený národ? K pojetí národa v československém právním řádu meziválečného období [A political or natural nation? On the concept of nation in Czech law during the inter-war period]. In: ČČH 99 (2001) 548-568, here 555.*

recommended that the criterion of native language be used. He saw the situation in terms of the “Germanization of Bohemian and Moravian regions.” He argued that if the census were to be carried out according to nationality, it was obvious that most of the inhabitants of the Hlučín region would declare themselves as Germans, which would damage Czechoslovakia’s image abroad (in view of the fact that the Republic had laid claim to the region at the peace conference). Even if the political authorities were to acquire the right to carry out thorough checks on census data, argued Šrámek, the results of the census would never be as favourable as would be the case if respondents’ native languages were used as the criterion. The Hlučín region was inhabited almost entirely by people of “*Moravec*” nationality (a historical term denoting a form of ethnicity specific to the Hlučín region, formerly part of Prussian Silesia), who had lost their awareness of their nationality while under Prussian rule. The only aspect of nationality that had been preserved by the local people was their native language, “Moravian.” Šrámek continued:

There is no doubt that German agitators will make every effort during this census to persuade people to declare their nationality as German. In the current situation, the local people would be easily susceptible to such persuasion. Moreover, subsequent review and correction of the data would have little effect, as the younger generation in particular speaks both languages. It would be more advantageous for us if the census were to determine respondents’ respective native language, especially if the authority of second instance were in a position to make corrections to the data. [...] Likewise, the situation in the Těšín region is such that it would be better to determine “native language” in the census, as this would provide an advantage to the Slavic element over the German element, which has been artificially created either by sentiment or education. [...] The regulations governing the census must ensure that the number of Czechoslovak nationals be as high as possible, thus demonstrating to other nations our national strength. [...] If we can prove to other nations how the censuses in Austrian times were falsified, it will surely boost our importance in the eyes of the Entente, and it will certainly be in Silesia where the Austrian census system will undergo the most thorough rectification.⁶⁰

A comparison of the census as carried out in the Těšín and Hlučín regions clearly shows that the state authorities in practice decided when nationality was to be viewed as an objectively (linguistically) defined category and when it was to be viewed as a subjectively (volitionally) defined category – all with the clear intention of classifying the largest possible number of people as Czechoslovak nationals. People living in the Těšín region and speaking the local Polish dialect were allowed to declare their nationality freely, which brought gains to the Czechs. For the purpose of the census, the authorities acknowledged the category “*Šlonzák/Ślązak*” (dialect words meaning “Silesian”), as they expected many people to choose this nationality instead of Czech nationality. For this reason nationality was recorded in the form as “Silesian-Czechoslovak,” “Silesian-Polish” and “Silesian-German.” It was the second element in the various compound forms that counted for the statistical purposes.⁶¹ But this approach was not permitted for the “*Moravec*” nationality in the

⁶⁰ NA, collection Předsednictvo ministerské rady [Presidium of the Council of Ministers, further PMR], box 2186, volume 402/339, Silesian Provincial President Šrámek to the Ministry of the Interior, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the Office of the President of the Republic, October 24, 1920.

⁶¹ According to the results of the 1921 census, a total of 47 314 people declared Silesian natio-

Hlučín region. In the case of this community, the Czechoslovak authorities were unbending in their insistence that “*Moravec*” was identical to “Czech.” In the Hlučín region there were no categories of the type “Moravec-Czech” and “Moravec-German,” which would have been analogous to the practice in the Těšín region. In other words, the authorities were largely able to achieve the desired results in each region through their choice of methodology. According to the law, the census was to determine objectively verifiable features, not subjective convictions. However, Ivo Baran is not aware of any case in which an immigrant from Galicia declaring Czechoslovak nationality had his/her nationality officially changed from Czech to Polish; such changes were only ever made from Polish to Czech.⁶²

In “problematic” regions the system based on notification forms (which were filled out by respondents, rather than by census officers) was not used. The provincial political authorities decided where respondents would be allowed to fill out the forms themselves, and where the data would be recorded by census officers. In 1920 Antonín Boháč claimed that “in view of the high intelligence of the population of Czechoslovakia” it can be expected that “especially in the Bohemian lands, notification forms will be widely used.”⁶³ It is true that in the Těšín region the collection of data directly by census officers can be explained with reference to the low levels of literacy and education of parts of the population. However, in the Hlučín region the only possible reason for the decision to use this method of data collection was the desire to exert coercive pressure on the population and to enable census officers to ensure that people did not declare German nationality. This is despite the fact that Czech politicians, when criticizing the Cisleithanian censuses’ method of determining language of daily use, had pressed for a significant increase in the use of notification forms rather than data collection by census officers, and had also demanded that the ethnic composition of linguistically mixed municipalities be taken into account when appointing census officers. If we evaluate the methods by which census officers were appointed in the First Czechoslovak Republic, there is a clear discrepancy between the ethnic composition of such cities as Opava (Troppau), Liberec (Reichenberg) and Znojmo (Znaim) and the percentage of census officers of German nationality in those cities.⁶⁴ The number of census officers of Polish nationality in eastern Silesia likewise did not correspond with the percentage of the population made up by the Polish-speakers in these regions. Moreover, census officers played a very important role in regions in which identity was closely bound up with territory and language (or dialect). There were only a few regions where Poles made up 20

nality; of these, 24299 were counted as Czechoslovaks, 21607 as Poles and 1408 as Germans.

⁶² Baran, Ivo: Otázka národnosti při československém sčítání lidu na Těšínsku v meziválečném období [The question of nationality during the Czechoslovak census in the Těšín region during the inter-war period]. In: Slovanský přehled 94 (2008), 15-32, here 19-20, 23.

⁶³ Boháč, Antonín: Příští sčítání lidu [The next census]. In: Čsl. statistický věstník, vol. I. Praha 1920, 268-275, here 271.

⁶⁴ NA, PMR, box 3285, volume 736, yr. 1921, Pres. 45-286, Presidium of the Silesian Provincial Government to the Ministry of the Interior, 1.3.1921.

percent of the population – the threshold enabling them to exercise language rights.⁶⁵ However, it should be pointed out that the inter-war Polish state took a far harder line against national minorities than Czechoslovakia did.⁶⁶

Antonín Boháč defended the work of the Czech census officers. He acknowledged that some of them had gone too far and had listed certain people as Czechs even though they had lived in a German-speaking environment for many years and had lost their original nationality. However, immediately thereafter he stated:

If a battle for souls has taken place during the census, then in the Bohemian lands it has concerned (besides people from mixed families) solely people of Czech origin, with a low level of national awareness, who have lived for many years in a German environment. These are not people of German origin whom the census officers wanted to turn into Czechs; all disputed cases ruled on by the Supreme Administrative Court concerned people of Czech origin.⁶⁷

In Boháč's view, the assignation of nationality not by free choice but according to previous circumstances in an individual's life was the only way to protect socially disadvantaged and economically dependent people from coercion and to ensure that they had relatively free rein to declare their own nationality.⁶⁸ From today's perspective this line of argument does not appear entirely uncontroversial: in a situation when the Czechoslovak state had prevented municipal councils from influencing the census, and when power was held by the Czech elites, who precisely was carrying out this "coercion"? Boháč's argument clearly yokes together two very different concepts: coercion on the one hand, and lack of national awareness on the other. The state authorities not only acted against forced assimilation but also against voluntary assimilation – on condition that such voluntary assimilation was from Czech to German nationality.

In the last two Cisleithanian censuses, Czech (and to a lesser extent German and Polish) national activists also carried out "private censuses." The purpose of these was to cast doubt upon the results of the state census with regard to language of daily use in a number of ethnically mixed municipalities, and thus to prove that one particular national minority in fact accounted for a higher percentage of the overall population. The state authorities tolerated these private censuses – with a few exceptions, when the level of agitation evidently exceeded acceptable limits, as was the case with the Czech private census in Liberec (Reichenberg) and the German one in Plzeň (Pilsen), both held in early 1901. German national activists attempted to re-

⁶⁵ Paul, Ellen L.: Czech Teschen Silesia and the Controversial Czechoslovak Census of 1921. In: *The Polish Review* 63 (1998), 161-171.

⁶⁶ According to Tomaszewski, Belarusians made up around 50 % of the total population in their home region (in four Polish voivodeships), whereas the official results of the 1931 census show this figure to be just 28 %. *Tomaszewski*, Jerzy: *Rzeczpospolita wielu narodów* [A republic of many nations]. Warszawa 1985, 35. The number of Ukrainians was also significantly understated by Polish official statistics.

⁶⁷ *Boháč*: *Národnost a sčítání lidu. K Rádlovu sociologickému rozboru naší národnostní statistiky* [Nationality and censuses. On Rád's sociological analysis of our nationality statistics]. Praha 1930, 5.

⁶⁸ *Boháč*: *Národnost a sčítání lidu* 14 (cf. fn. 65). Specific examples of official decisions to record Czechoslovak nationality in the census in contradiction to the declared preferences of the affected person are given in *Zabrá*: Kidnapped souls 118-126 (cf. fn. 49).

vive this tradition during the census of 1921, but the state authorities were aware of the situation and any attempts to carry out a private census were nipped in the bud. Initiators of private censuses were subject to prosecution in accordance with Section 4 of the Census Act of 8 April 1920.⁶⁹

Before the 1930 census, the state took account of several objections that had been raised by experts and the general public concerning the definition of nationality in the previous census; it was also necessary to take into account all the findings of the NSS. The leading Czechoslovak demographer Antonín Boháč acknowledged that there was a discrepancy in the case of Jews, who in 1921 had been allowed to choose between stating their “objective” nationality (based on language) or their “subjective” nationality. It was Boháč’s opinion that the spirit of the census would be best served if the declaration of Jewish nationality were to be dependent upon certain external, objectively verifiable features.⁷⁰ However, it should also be emphasized that declarations of Jewish nationality had a far greater effect in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia than in the Bohemian lands, where such declarations had no significant effect on overall results.⁷¹

As was the case before the 1921 census, expert opinion differed on the 1930 census. In an article published in *České slovo* (Czech Word) on 9 February 1930, the President of the State Statistical Office (*Státní statistický úřad*), Dr Jan Auerhan, expressed his opposition to the determination of nationality by means of free choice. His argument was based on the existence of many socially disadvantaged and economically dependent persons who would be afraid to declare their nationality freely. Auerhan’s predecessor (until 1929) Professor František Weyr had a different view. An article by Weyr entitled *Nationalität und Muttersprache. Glossen zur kommenden Volkszählung* (Nationality and mother tongue. Remarks on the forthcoming census), published on 8 February 1930 in the “*Prager Presse*”, emphasized that the question of which language people aged over 50 had spoken in their youth was irrelevant to the purposes of current state administration. Another leading statistician, Professor Emil Schönbaum, was in favour of determining respondents’ native language rather than their freely declared nationality. Schönbaum defined native language as the language of thought (*Denksprache*) – in other words the language which currently plays the primary role for each individual. The entire issue had a clear political context – indeed the most vehement opponents of freely expressed declarations of nationality were the Czech “defence unions” (non-governmental

⁶⁹ The Act stipulated that any deliberate statement of incorrect information, as well as any other deliberate actions or omissions causing or potentially causing the census data to be incomplete or inaccurate, would incur fines of between 20 and 10 000 crowns or up to 3 months’ imprisonment.

⁷⁰ Boháč: *Národnost a sčítání lidu* 21 (cf. fn. 66).

⁷¹ At the 1921 census, a total of 113 600 people in the Bohemian lands declared their religion as Jewish, but just 30 000 of them declared Jewish nationality, compared with around 50 600 declaring Czech (Czechoslovak) and 33 000 declaring German nationality. See *Kárník, Zdeněk: České země v éře První republiky (1918-1938)* [The Bohemian lands in the era of the First Republic]. Vol. I: *Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918-1929)* [The foundation, building and golden age of the Republic]. Praha 2000.

organizations set up to promote and defend the interests of the Czech minority communities in border regions):

Because everybody is registered as a member of one or another nationality, it is necessary that an individual's statement of nationality be subject to externally verifiable features, in order that the information given by them may not be externally influenced or arbitrarily changed. External pressure is necessary to achieve an objective assessment.⁷²

The "National Union of North Bohemia" (*Národní jednota severočeská*) published an article in its newspaper *Hraničář* (Border Guard) stating that over half of Czechoslovakia's border guards were most proficient in German and that some of them were unable to write in Czech, facts that the article claimed was a consequence of the Austrian education system that had been imposed on Czech children.⁷³

The State Council of Statisticians sought to draw up a new definition of nationality for the purpose of the census, as the 1921 definition was considered untenable – a judgment that had also been confirmed by the NSS. A special committee set up by the Council eventually decided on the following wording:

Nationality is recorded for each respondent (whether a citizen of Czechoslovakia or of a foreign country) according to the language which the respondent has learned best and speaks with the greatest proficiency; this is usually the respondent's native language. The Jewish language is considered to be either Hebrew or so-called jargon.⁷⁴

This brought a response by the "National Council of Czechoslovakia" (*Národní rada československá*), which had close links with the "defence unions." The National Council wrote to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of the Interior expressing its opinion that the statisticians' definition of nationality downplayed the importance of native language and, in the case of the Jewish population, failed to take into account the extensive presence of other specific and highly visible features besides language. According to the National Council, such a census would not be a census of nationality, but rather a census determining partial knowledge of language – very similar to the former Austrian practice of determining language of daily use:

It is evident that the language which the respondent speaks most proficiently will not correspond with his/her native language especially in regions where the effect of a foreign environment could have led the respondent to know the language of that environment better than his/her native language. This will disadvantage those nationalities whose members are most widely represented in the territory of another nation. This evidently applies primarily to members of the Czechoslovak nationality [...].⁷⁵

Antonín Boháč disagreed with this view, which implied that a native language could only change from generation to generation, not during an individual's life.⁷⁶

⁷² Národnost ve sčítání lidu [Nationality in the census]. In: *Hraničář*, 22.2.1930.

⁷³ Boháč, Antonín: Národnost při druhém sčítání lidu [Nationality in the second census]. In: *Statistický obzor* 12 (1931) 14-30, here 21, 27-28.

⁷⁴ NA, PMR, box 2186, volume 402/339/1, file no. 35844/1930 of the Ministry of the Interior.

⁷⁵ NA, collection Státní úřad statistický [State Statistical Office, further quoted as SÚS], box 45, no. 3541/1, The National Council of Czechoslovakia on February 6, 1930.

⁷⁶ NA, PMR, box 3285, no. 1649/II-30, the opinion of the State Statistical Office from April 7, 1930.

The archives of the State Statistical Office contain a copy of a memorandum on the census requested by Edvard Beneš. The content of the memorandum confirms a fact that we could already see from the preparations for the 1921 census: when defining the criteria and methods to be used, the state authorities carefully considered how particular options would affect the results of the census with regard to nationality, taking immense care to support the idea of a “state nation” (*státní národ*). According to the memorandum, there were three main reasons for using respondents’ native language as the decisive criterion for determining nationality in the census: (1) Many members of the “*Moravec*” community in the Hlučín region were pro-German: according to election results, over two thirds of them would be likely to declare German nationality, and “this would provide official proof that we had taken control of the Hlučín region without justification.” (2) In Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia the Magyarization policies of the former Hungarian state had not yet been overcome: “there are many native Slovaks and Ruthenians with pro-Hungarian sentiments, who, if given the opportunity for a free declaration of nationality, would declare themselves Hungarians.” (3) The coercive pressure exerted by the wealthy upon the socially disadvantaged and economically dependent would turn against the Czechoslovak nation if respondents were allowed to declare their nationality freely.

On the other hand, the memorandum lists the following reasons in favour of a free declaration of nationality and against the declaration of the respondents’ native language: (1) In the Těšín region, part of the native population, though Polish-speakers, were unlikely to want to declare Polish nationality: the majority of these “Silesians” (the above-mentioned *Šlonzák* nationality) would prefer to declare Czech nationality, while a minority would opt for German nationality. At the next census, the number of these Silesians declaring Czech nationality would be lower than in 1921, when the local population was still under the influence of the plebiscite.⁷⁷ (2) The separation of German- and Hungarian-speaking Jews from Germans would reduce the number of inhabitants of the two first-named nationalities. It would also reduce the number of Czechoslovaks if Czech-speaking Zionists were removed, however the impact would be weaker on the Czechs than on the Germans and Hungarians.⁷⁸

After taking all of these issues into account, the Ministry of the Interior decided to reject the recommendations of the State Council of Statisticians, instead approving an instruction for recording nationality in the upcoming census which was much closer to the instruction issued in 1921 (and thus also to the views of Czech nationalists). The instruction appeared in a government decree on the census issued on 26 June 1930:

Nationality is usually recorded in accordance with the respondent’s native language. It is only possible to record a different nationality than that of the native language in cases when the

⁷⁷ In the area of Těšínsko, a plebiscite was to take place at the beginning of 1921. Both the Czechoslovak Republic and Poland staked a claim on this area. At last Poland boycotted the organization of the plebiscite and the territorial dispute was solved by means of international arbitration.

⁷⁸ NA, SÚS, box 45, call no. P3541.1., The Memorandum “Sčítání lidu a národnost” [Census and nationality], undated.

respondent does not speak this native language either in his/her family or in his/her household, and is not fully proficient in the language of the given nationality. However, Jews may in all cases declare their nationality as Jewish.⁷⁹

In a document setting out the grounds for its decision, the Ministry of the Interior explained the rule change as follows: the formulation used in the 1921 census (“Nationality is understood as membership of a nation, whose primary external feature is usually the native language. Jews may declare their nationality as Jewish”) was unacceptable to the NSS. The court added the reading of the word “usually,” which should refer to unclear cases of change in nationality. The new 1930 formulation, in the view of the Ministry, achieved a clear logical connection between the first sentence (setting out the rule) and the following two sentences (setting out exceptions to the rule). The second sentence defined the situation in which a change of nationality was considered to be complete, in order to avoid nationality-based disputes such as those which had occurred in 1921, when the NSS annulled several decisions by the census authorities and political powers.⁸⁰

In the 1930 census, it was accepted that the native language was not the sole criterion for determining nationality. However, an exception was only possible in cases when the respondent did not speak this native language in his/her family or household, and at the same time was fully proficient in the language of the “non-native” nationality.⁸¹ If the authorities found any indications whatsoever that the respondent was able to speak Czech, then they uncompromisingly rejected any declaration of German nationality by an “ethnic Czech.” Only Jews were still able to choose freely between the subjective and objective conceptions of nationality.

For the 1930 census, therefore, the decisive indicator of nationality remained the respondent’s native language. As had been the case ten years earlier, this rule was broken in the Těšín region, as it would have meant that all respondents speaking the Polish dialect common in the region would have had to declare Polish nationality, even if they felt no such identity. The state’s attempt to reduce the number of Poles by introducing a “Silesian” nationality was so successful that in November 1931 the Ministry of the Interior temporarily refused to reveal the number of respondents declaring Polish nationality in the Těšín region, on the grounds that the figure was too low. In both the districts that together made up the Těšín region, the census registered a total of 70836 Poles, including Poles-Silesians and Silesians (as opposed to 68261 Poles in 1921). The State Statistical Office expressed the opinion that an increase of just 2575 in the number of Poles was small and scientifically indefensible in view of the high birth rate among the Polish community. The Office recommended that all Silesians-Czechoslovaks should be counted as Poles. The state authorities eventually decided to “assign” Polish nationality to several thousand more people,

⁷⁹ Decree of the Government on the Census 1930 no. 86 of 26 June 1930, § 21.

⁸⁰ NA, PMR, box 2186, volume 402/339/1, file no. 35844/1930 of the Ministry of the Interior.

⁸¹ The rule was confirmed by the Supreme Administrative Court in findings no. 3335 of 16.2.1934 and no. 12272 of 23.2.1935.

giving a final total of 77309 (66674 Poles, 2150 Silesians-Poles, 4038 Silesians and 4486 Silesians-Czechoslovaks).⁸²

Conclusion

The classification (or determination) of nationality (or language of daily use as a surrogate for nationality) in Cisleithania and during the First Czechoslovak Republic was significantly influenced by the interests of the state as the state authorities had to take into account trends in social and political developments (the increasing importance of national identification and the interlinking of the concepts of national and civil rights, as well as the system of obligations accepted at Paris in 1919).

Both in Cisleithania and in the First Czechoslovak Republic, most of the population (of various nationalities) enjoyed reasonably good conditions that enabled them to live as members of their own national/ethnic communities (the very existence and intensity of national/ethnic consciousness among the common people is another question), though opposition politicians (especially nationalist agitators) were quick to claim otherwise. Although national identification did indeed play a certain role in the lives of ordinary people (as compared with earlier eras), we have a tendency to overestimate rather than underestimate the importance of this role, influenced as we are by the words of journalists and other authors, which often reflect wishful thinking rather than the actual reality. For most members of society (especially the lower classes), daily life was more concerned with (or entirely dominated by) social questions, which only partly overlapped with national issues. Somewhat sceptically, one could pose the following question: What percentage of the population actually cared whether their language of daily use or nationality was recorded accurately—whether or not it reflected “reality”? Would it not be more accurate to write the history of Cisleithania or the First Czechoslovak Republic from the viewpoint of other categories people identified themselves with, or from the perspective of provinces or regions,⁸³ rather than nationalities (or, to be more precise, the wishes of nationalist politicians in relation to processes of national identification)?

Despite these doubts, I do believe that it is worth studying the national question – though it is important to be aware of the limitations outlined above. From the perspective of generally acknowledged national/language rights, it was mainly people living in predominantly foreign language-speaking regions who found themselves at a disadvantage; this observation applied throughout the period covered by this study. However, the fact that these people faced worse conditions with regard to their collective national life does not necessarily mean that they were socially or economically disadvantaged (either in absolute terms or in comparison with people

⁸² *Baran*: Otázka národnosti 26 (cf. fn. 62). The remaining 5176 Silesians-Czechoslovaks were counted as Czechoslovaks, as were the 8758 Silesians-Czechs.

⁸³ For example, after the foundation of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the Znojmo (Znaim) region no longer formed part of the outer orbit of Vienna, a location which had previously offered it considerable potential for development. Instead the region found itself in a peripheral border area. How, then, should the First Czechoslovak Republic be evaluated from the perspective of the Znojmo region?

speaking the same language living in ethnically homogeneous areas), or even that they were interested in any such collective national life.

It is my opinion that national policy in Cisleithania was reasonably positive. The state authorities acknowledged the national principle and laid down rules governing the co-existence of nationalities, upon which the new Czechoslovak state was able to draw. As I have already stated, the decisive motivation leading Taaffe's government to introduce the dubious category of language of daily use into the 1880 census (rather than the category of native language or family language) was that this option admitted the possibility of assimilation – in other words, it rejected the notion that nationality was fixed and immutable. The government's position was ultimately guided by the need to preserve the unity of the state. Moreover, later governments too were guided by the interests of the state, which meant that a certain balance had to be maintained. The slower demographic growth in the German-speaking population compared with the Czech-speaking population was largely cancelled out by the potential for assimilation in the industrial areas of the German-speaking portions of the Bohemian lands. The method of national classification used in the census evidently supported this process of assimilation. The greatest weakness of this method was that it was unable to prevent coerced declarations of the language of daily use or the fraudulent recording of data (with census officers appointed by municipal councils who were effectively acting on behalf of a particular nationality). However, it was not just the German community that committed fraud and exerted coercive pressure. In the prewar period such pressure was less connected to the state, and it was linked to the relatively lower social prestige of the Czech nationality (and, in Silesia, of the Poles).

At the same time, the equally problematic definition of nationality used in the 1921 and 1930 censuses was also tailored to serve the interests of the state. The greatest problem facing the Czechoslovak Republic in this respect was that the new state did not play a role as an arbiter presiding over competing nationalities (unlike Cisleithania – though this of course does not mean that the Cisleithanian authorities always acted fairly in this capacity). Instead, the Czechoslovak state expressly identified itself with one particular nationality. Czech politicians in the new state were not satisfied with the concept of native language as the main criterion of nationality, since linguistic assimilation occurring between generations unavoidably led to a shift in the native language of some individuals during their lifetime. This was why the 1921 census used the hybrid category of nationality combined with native language, clearly stating that an individual's native language depended on the group from which the individual originated, regardless of his or her current linguistic behaviour.⁸⁴ The Czechoslovak state entirely removed the municipal councils from the census process. This significantly reduced the risk of forced assimilation (i.e. the recording of "incorrect" nationality under coercion) and fraudulent behaviour. However, the state went further than this, devising rules which almost went as far as excluding voluntary assimilation via respondents' own statements of nationality (in 1921), or at least making such voluntary assimilation very difficult (in 1930). This

⁸⁴ *Arel*: Language Categories 102 (cf. fn. 25).

prevented (or reduced the number of) cases in which people voluntarily declared German nationality where the state authorities deemed them to be of “Czech origin” (even if they were proficient in German); on the other hand, the state clearly allowed people of “Polish origin” (if we apply the same criteria used by the state to determine “Czech origin”) to declare Czechoslovak nationality. The state authorities thus went beyond merely creating conditions in which citizens would be confident that they could freely declare their nationality – which was what Czech politicians and activists had demanded prior to 1914. This was the main criticism levelled at the state by Emanuel Rádl.

The census policy of the Czechoslovak Republic was unambiguously pro-Czech, while the census policy of Cisleithania was primarily pro-state (i. e. pro-Austrian, as a consequence of which its repercussions in the Bohemian lands were to some extent pro-German).

Throughout the period from 1880 to 1938 the independent judiciary played a key role. (Although independence is a relative concept – courts do not create law; they merely interpret it and monitor compliance with the constitution). The Cisleithanian Administrative Court of Justice (VGH) and Imperial Court of Justice (RG) played an important role in establishing the national principle in public life by interlinking the national and civil principles. It would appear that the VGH and the RG acted more autonomously than the Supreme Administrative Court (NSS) in Czechoslovakia. The NSS at least forced the state authorities to specify their definition of the concept of “nationality” and to clarify the relationship between native language and nationality.

Table: Individual nationalities (by “language of daily use” up to 1910) as a percentage of the population of the Bohemian lands (excluding foreign citizens)⁸⁵

Province	1880			1910		
	Czechs	Germans	Poles	Czechs	Germans	Poles
Bohemia	62,8	37,2	–	63,2	38,8	–
Moravia	70,4	29,4	0,15	71,75	27,6	0,6
Austrian Silesia	22,95	48,9	28,1	24,3	43,9	31,7

Province	1921				1930			
	Czechs	Germans	Jews	Poles	Czechs	Germans	Jews	Poles
Bohemia	66,64	33,04	0,17	0,02	67,19	32,38	0,18	0,02
Moravia	78,29	20,93	0,58	0,08	79,62	19,51	0,50	0,05
Austrian Silesia	47,56	40,53	0,59	11,24	52,59	35,93	0,47	10,94

⁸⁵ Based on official results of censuses published by the Central Statistical Commission (k. k. Statistische Zentralkommission) in Vienna 1880, 1910 and the State Statistical Office (Státní úřad statistický) in Prague 1921, 1930.