

PARENTS, NATIONS, AND THEIR CHILDREN
Volksschulen in Moravia during the Ethnicization of Politics and Law

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In Moravia, whose Czech-speaking residents comprised 72 percent of all inhabitants, the German-speaking elites used their economic and political power to assimilate part of the Czech population. In the late nineteenth century, at least one-eighth of all Czech children in Moravia – mostly those living in larger towns – were educated in German-language schools. Czech politicians and national activists wanted to end the admission of children of Czech ethnic origin to German primary schools. As part of the 1905 political agreement known as the Moravian Compromise, they succeeded in enacting the so-called Lex Perek, the principle that children were to attend a school whose language of instruction corresponded to the language in which they were proficient. Based on a detailed analysis of sources of local, district, provincial, and Cisleithanian provenance, this study shows that the Lex Perek and the implementing regulations instituted after its adoption had significant loopholes and explains why Czech activists in larger towns were often unable to reclaim children from German schools.