

# Competing Historical Narratives: Memory, Identity and Politics in Nineteenth Century Bohemia.

In a perceptive yet often neglected book on nationalism and social democracy in the Habsburg Monarchy, the Austro-Marxist writer and politician Otto Bauer attempted to explain the emergence of nationalism in the nineteenth century and the implications for the creaking Austrian state.<sup>1</sup> Published one hundred years ago in 1907, central to Bauer's discussion is the importance of history in creating a national community (or, as he termed it, 'a community of character').<sup>2</sup> Bauer's theory of nationalism is profoundly historical yet encompasses contingency as well as cultural and social forces. Indeed, for Bauer, a theory of nations should not be a mere definition of a nation (he explicitly criticises Karl Kautsky's definition of a nation by language) but must describe the ongoing process of integration which forms a modern nation.<sup>3</sup> The professed core of his book is the idea of a 'community of fate' (*Schicksalgemeinschaft*) creating 'communities of character'.<sup>4</sup> According to Bauer, a 'community of fate' is a shared experience and suffering of fate. Thus in the struggle for existence a community coalesces around a shared fate and the oral transmission of certain cultural elements which, while in constant interaction with each other and the outer world, form the particular characteristics of the community.<sup>5</sup> In other words, history and the collective memory of it plays a decisive role in the formation of a community and, hence, the integration into or exclusion from the community. Much of Bauer's book recounts the history of the Habsburg Monarchy from the perspective of the Austrian State tradition as an instrument of centralisation and Germanisation coupled with the response of the threatened nations, especially that of the Czech national movement.<sup>6</sup>

Bauer's work clearly links issues of national identity to those of historical memory, perceptions of a shared historical narrative and the creation of a national

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<sup>1</sup> Bauer's work has been described as 'the first full-length study of nationalism, from an historical standpoint'. A. Smith: *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford 1999, S. 36. Nevertheless he is not as widely discussed as Ernst Renan and much less referred to than modern theorists of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson, Ernst Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, among many others.

<sup>2</sup> O. Bauer: *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (1907). Minneapolis 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Ebd., S. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ebd., S. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ebd., S. 99-102.

<sup>6</sup> Ebd., S. 167-240.

community – all among the primary preoccupations of present scholarship on nationalism. His observations and insights (along with those of his fellow Socialist writer and politician Karl Renner<sup>7</sup>) are just part of the intense intellectual ferment arising from a Monarchy in a constant state of crisis. How could a monarchy modernise itself when there were so many different cultures, languages and traditions (11 recognised nationalities and 17 different regional *Landtage*)? Or, to use Bauer's terminology, how could one make sense of and create an integrated polity from the overlapping, interacting *Schicksalgemeinschaften* which made up the Habsburg Monarchy? It is no wonder that many historians have spoken of a prolonged crisis over the concept of Austria and have postulated a profound identity crisis, a certain sense of dislocation, among the educated classes.<sup>8</sup> Bauer, born in Vienna and an active participant in the Monarchy's intellectual and political debates, lived through these times and his work reveals an intimate knowledge of the Monarchy's history and its ongoing problems. Issues of identity, historical memory and cultural constructions of communities were all in evidence in the old Habsburg Monarchy, *avant la lettre*. Never was this more evident than in the crownland Bohemia, where a complex and inter-connected social and intellectual web of identities, cultures and histories existed. Bauer, like many subsequent theorists of nationalism including Gellner and Hroch (both natives of Prague), took the Czech national revival as almost paradigmatic of a modern national movement.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See [K. Renner]: *Der Kampf der österreichischen Nationen um den Staat*. Leipzig and Wien 1902.

<sup>8</sup> E. Zöllner: *Perioden der österreichischen Geschichte und Wandlungen des Österreich-Begriffs bis zum Ende der Habsburgermonarchie*. In: A. Wandruszka/P. Urbanitsch (Hg.): *Die Habsburgermonarchie Vol. 3: Die Völker des Reiches*, Wien 1980, S. 29. See also E. Bruckmüller: *Österreichbegriff und Österreich-Bewußtsein in der Franzisko-Josephinischen Epoche*. In: R. Plaschka/ G. Stourzh/J. P. Niederkorn (Hg.): *Was heißt Österreich? Inhalt und Umfang des österreich-begriff vom 10 Jahrhundert bis heute*. Wien 1995, S. 255-88 and in general E. Bruckmüller: *Nation Österreich. Kulturelles Bewusstsein und gesellschaftlich-politische Prozesse*. Wien 1996. The works of Gerald Stourzh are particularly illuminating. G. Stourzh: *Vom Reich zur Republik. Studien zum österreichbewusstsein im 20 Jahrhundert*. Wien 1990 and G. Stourzh: *Der Umfang der österreichischen Geschichte*. In: H. Wolfram/W. Pohl (Hg.), *Probleme der Geschichte Österreichs und ihrer Darstellung*. Wien 1991, S. 3-27. The classic statement on the middle class sense of dislocation and the cultural efflorescence of Vienna 1900 is C. Schorske: *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*. New York 1981. His general argument has been applied recently to Prague and the circle around Franz Kafka in S. Spector: *Prague Territories. National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin-de-Siècle*. Berkeley 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Gellner's imaginary nation, Ruritania, contains many details with parallels to the Czech national revival. Gellner received his early schooling in Prague and was familiar with its history. E. Gellner: *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford 1983, S. 58-70. Hroch's use of the Czech national movement is more explicit. See M. Hroch: *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*. Cambridge 1985, S. 3-30.

This essay will look at the competing historical narratives which contributed to the rise of nationalism in Bohemia and their political implications in the specific context of the mid to late nineteenth century Habsburg Monarchy. It will address the role historical writing and thinking played in the creation of a community's identity, the particular interaction between competing historical narratives and the relation between history and politics. Three general historical narratives have been identified and will form the backbone of my discussion: first, the historical paradigm of the Austrian *Gesamtstaat*; second, František Palacký's history of the Czech people; and, third, Ludwig Schlesinger's conception of Bohemian history from the German-Bohemian perspective. They were not schools in the strictest sense – more tendencies or frames of understanding – and there was often considerable overlap between the schools.

A number of points should be borne in mind throughout the subsequent discussion. First of all, while some general statements on chronology can be made, it is difficult to date precisely when a particular conception of Bohemian history emerged. The various groupings developed in parallel and in interaction with each other. In particular, a standard typology of historical writing and associated political policies is difficult to discern. While for the Czech national and German-Bohemian groupings community consciousness and political goals developed in harmony with the written narratives of their respective pasts, the case of the Austrian *Gesamtstaat* school was very different. Here the political policies *preceded* the writing of its history. The golden age of the Austrian *Gesamtstaat* was Joseph II's reign and the call for an integrated history of the Austrian state first arose fully 60 years after Joseph's death.

Second, there was and continues to be a considerable tension between the idea of historical research as a science (following Ranke's methodological strictures of archival research and source criticism) and the awareness of history's older function as a form of rhetoric. Thus, in the nineteenth century, along with the development of history as an academic discipline, there was a realisation of history's ideological aspect and the possible use for political legitimacy. It was this coupling of apparent scientific objectivity with the important function of defining and legitimating a community and its claims that made the debates over history so heated and central to the political landscape of the nineteenth century.

Third, I have used the term ‘memory’ throughout the essay since there are some difficulties with the term ‘myth’ when applied to the recounting of historical events. ‘Myth’ implies a falsehood or imaginary story which can be exposed by showing a verifiable reality. Yet for many historical narratives the particular events and the existence of documents are not in dispute. Rather it is the particular emphasis of a historian, the explanatory framework adopted, the interpretation of certain words or documents which has provoked heated responses and assertions of misrepresentation. This is another example of the tension between history as an objective science and as a possible rhetorical instrument. Nevertheless, ‘myth’ as a term does highlight one important aspect of history; namely, its ability to explain and invest meaning in the world. In a recent well-considered essay Bo Stråth wrote that ‘[h]istory ... [is] permanently invented in order to give meaning to the present – and to the future – through the past’.<sup>10</sup> The term ‘memory’ retains the idea of a narrative which gives meaning to the past without the overt implication of falsehood. However, the historical concept of ‘memory’ is by no means unproblematic.<sup>11</sup>

Fourth, a lot of recent scholarship concerns itself with the construction of nationality or the ‘invention of tradition’ yet, no matter how productive this vein of thinking is, a number of reservations arise.<sup>12</sup> Both Anthony Smith and Bo Stråth do not accept the prevailing ‘constructivist’ approach uncritically. Smith has identified three limitations of the ‘constructivist’ approach: the downgrading of possible long-term processes and structures, an over-emphasis on the elite and, finally, a neglect of the affective dimension of nations and nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Stråth has stressed that the process of construction is often conflictual and oppositional, rather than the smooth, integrated process implied by some constructivist models. He has also pointed out that the ‘debunkers’ are themselves within society and subject to their own cultural frameworks

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<sup>10</sup> B. Stråth: *Introduction: Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community*. In: Ders. (Hg.): *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*. Brussels 2000, S. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Stråth has pointed out that Hayden White does not agree with the analogy of an individual’s consciousness being projected onto a collectivity. Ebd., S. 34. The classic work on collective memory is M. Halbwachs: *On Collective Memory* (1925). Chicago 1992.

<sup>12</sup> For examples of this scholarship see P. Judson/M. Rozenblitt (Hg.): *Constructing Nationalities in East-Central Europe*. New York/Oxford 2005. The classic text is E. Hobsbawm/T. Ranger (Hg.): *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Smith: *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, a.a.O., S. 9.

and possible myth propagating traditions.<sup>14</sup> Indeed at the beginning of Western critical thought, Socrates may have questioned beliefs and instigated a radical form of sceptical investigation, yet he too became an icon and a method himself.

Fifth, history is intimately related to politics and this was especially the case in nineteenth century Bohemia. History could be used to legitimise political goals such as national autonomy, independence or political participation. On another level, history was seen as the story of progress towards a certain goal (Hegel and Marx being the most obvious examples of this form of thinking). In most narrative accounts of a nation's or community's history a certain teleology existed. What was the end point? What were the keys to history and to the future? And what was a certain nation's or community's place in the flow of history? Ultimately, who did the future belong to? These questions often underpinned the historical debates of nineteenth century Bohemia and led to fundamental disagreements over which national or community was the truly liberal or truly progressive. Thus, even in the nineteenth century a certain millenarian frame of thinking was evident, though viewed through the lens of nationalism rather than religion.

In the following discussion of the three main competing historical narratives – Austrian *Gesamtstaat*, Czech national and German-Bohemian – more space will be given to the Austrian and German-Bohemian viewpoints since Palacký's contribution and the development of Czech historiography is a relatively well-known story.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, there is a general scholarly neglect of both nineteenth century Austrian and German-Bohemian historiography.<sup>16</sup> History was not kind to the adherents of the Austrian state

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<sup>14</sup> Stråth: *Introduction*, a.a.O., S. 30-1.

<sup>15</sup> For a survey of Czech historiography R. Plaschka: *Von Palacký bis Pekar: Geschichtswissenschaft und Nationalbewusstsein bei den Tschechen*. Graz/Cologne, 1955 is still useful. The best account of Palacký's life and work in English is without a doubt J. Zacek: *Palacký. The Historian as Scholar and Nationalist*. The Hague 1970. For a more recent study see M. Baar: *The Historian and the Nation in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of East-Central Europe*. Oxford Univ. D.Phil thesis 2002, S. 127-84. A recent study in Czech from a distinguished historian is J. Kořalka: *František Palacký*. Prague 1999. Palacký's antecedents can be traced in H. Agnew: *Origins of the Czech National Renaissance*. Pittsburgh/London 1993.

<sup>16</sup> For example, in a recent, generally sound, discussion of historiography in the Bohemian lands the Austrian aspect was not mentioned. J. Štaif: *The Image of the Other in the Nineteenth Century. Historical Scholarship in the Bohemian Lands*. In: N. Wingfield (Hg.): *Creating the Other: Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*. New York/Oxford 2003, S. 81-102. Jeremy King's comments in J. King: *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*. Princeton/Oxford 2002, S. 1-14. demonstrate more sensitivity to the different, often shifting, loyalties, including the feeling towards 'Austria'. Austrian and German-Bohemian historiography is still sadly under-researched. For some interesting essays without any attempt to survey the field see M. Neumüller: *Die Böhmisches Länder in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung*, 2 Vols. Ústí nad Labem 1995-7. The German-Bohemian view of history can best be glimpsed in M. Neumüller: 'Zur deutschliberalen Geschichtsschreibung des 19. Jahrhunderts in Böhmen'. In: *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 20 (1971), S. 441-65 and F. Seibt: *Der Nationalitätenkampf im Spiegel der*

idea or to the German-Bohemians in general, but this is no reason to treat their history and historians unkindly.

### **The Austrian *Gesamtstaat*: Centralisation and Germanisation in Service of the Austrian State Idea.**

As previously mentioned, the development of the Austrian state idea and the writing of its history is an example of the difficulty in precisely dating the beginnings of a particular concept. While Austrian centralisation and Germanisation can be traced to the wave of Theresian administrative reforms to the state (roughly 1740-80), it was really only with her son, Joseph II (co-regent 1765-80 then as sole monarch 1780-90), that the ideological justification and bureaucratic spirit which formed the basis of the Austrian state idea developed. Initially Josephinism stood for wide-ranging, deep reforms throughout state and society, but the concept subsequently metamorphosed into a protean movement able to justify almost any change to the status quo.

Josephinism and its development into the Austrian state idea took as its justification the march of history. According to its dictates, a state should be run efficiently, in accordance with rational principles. In other words, reason should underpin decision making in all matters of state. Rather than reflecting on past glories, the Austrian state idea concentrated on implementing present-day reforms and looking forward to the future vision of a German-dominated, centralised, rational, bureaucratic state.<sup>17</sup> It sought

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*Sudentendeutschen Geschichtsschreibung 1848-1938*. In: F. Seibt, *Deutsche, Tschechen, Sudentendeutsche. Analysen und Stellungnahmen zu Geschichte und Gegenwart aus fünf Jahrzehnten*. München 2002, S. 375-95. Less incisive is J. Mandlerová: *Methodologische Erwägungen in der deutschböhmischen Historiographie am Ende der Habsburgermonarchie*. In: Neumüller: *Die böhmischen Länder*, S. 31-47. Fritz Fellner, from a more Austrian viewpoint, has mined the field for a number of years and a recent collection of essays has appeared. F. Fellner: *Geschichtsschreibung und nationale Identität: Probleme und Leistungen der österreichischen Geschichtswissenschaft*. Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2002. Lhotsky's invaluable book A. Lhotsky: *Österreichische Historiographie*. Wien 1962 looks at the nineteenth century in a cursory manner. For the interaction between the Austrian state idea and Bohemian state rights see J. Kwan: *The Austrian State Idea and Bohemian State Rights: Contrasting Traditions in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918*. In L. Muller/L. Eriksonas (Hg.): *Statehood beyond Ethnicity*. Brussels 2005 – forthcoming.

<sup>17</sup> The most useful survey is R. Till: *Pax Austriaca. Sinn und Geschichte des österreichischen Staatsgedankens*. Wien 1948 which dates the declaration of the Austrian Kaisertum in 1804 as the beginning of the Austrian state idea. There have been a surprisingly small number of works on the Austrian state idea. Till's books was part of a post-WWII reassessment, perhaps related to a revisionist view of the Sudeten Germans' contribution to Central European history. W. Weizsäcker: *Deutschland und der österreichische Staatsgedanke*. In: A. Simon (Hg.), *Festschrift zum 75 Geburtstag des Sprechers der Sudentendeutschen Rudolf Lodgmann von Auen*. München 1953, S. 51-61; W. Weizsäcker: *Zur Geschichte*

legitimacy from so-called universal, rational principles rather than a glorious past. Indeed, to a large extent the initial motivation for Josephinist reforms was an overturning of traditional governmental and societal practices. Underpinning the whole project was the desire to weld the disparate regions and peoples of the Monarchy together into a modern, unified state.

Institutional historical writing remained mostly in the long-standing genres of dynastic, Church or Imperial history and the desire for a historical narrative tracing the development of the Austrian state arose very late. Instrumental to the call for a ‘national history’ of Austria was the Prague-born bureaucrat and writer Joseph Alexander von Helfert who participated in the foundation of the Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung in the mid 1850s. Helfert outlined his conception of the Institute’s goals in a brochure published in 1853 advocating a history of a ‘territorial and political unity (*zusammengehörigen*)’ under one authority and subject to the same laws.<sup>18</sup>

Österreichische Nationalgeschichte ist uns die Geschichte des österreichischen Gesamtstaates und Gesamtvolkes als dessen organisch ineinander verschlungene Glieder all die nach Abstammung, Bildung und Gesittung verschieden Stämme erscheinen, die auf dem weiten Gebiet des Reiches hier unvermischt in größeren Massen, dort vielfach untereinander vermengt, sich bewegen.<sup>19</sup>

However, the Institute never fulfilled Helfert’s manifesto, instead following the lead of its distinguished head Theodor Sickel in preparing vast editions of source material (e.g. *Monumenta Germaniae*) and training generations of dedicated historians, archivists and librarians.<sup>20</sup> Helfert’s plea for a ‘national history’ of Austria portraying the gradual growth of the monarchy into a modern, unified state never led to an overarching historical narrative which captured the public’s imagination, instilled Austrian patriotism and became part of the collective memory. The outlines were clear – the joining of the

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*des österreichischen Staatsgefühls*. In: *Ostdeutsche Wissenschaft* 2 (1955), S. 297-340 and P. Berger: *Die Idee einer österreichischen Staatsnation bis 1938*. In: *Der Donauraum* 12 (1967) pp. 57-73. Alphons Lhotsky wrote a short essay on a number of Austrian state ideas see A. Lhotsky: *Der österreichische Staatsgedanke*. In: Ders., *Aufsätze und Vorträge. Band 1: Europäisches Mittelalter. Das Land Österreich*. Wien 1970, S. 365-88. The only historian who has related the Austrian state idea to historiography is R. J. W. Evans: *Historians and the State in the Habsburg Lands*. In: *Visions sur le développement des états européens. Théories et Historiographie de l'état moderne*. Rome 1993, S. 203-13.

<sup>18</sup> Berger, *Die Idee*, a.a.O., S. 58.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Ebd.

<sup>20</sup> A. Lhotsky: *Geschichte des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung 1854-1954*. Graz/Köln 1954, S. 45-70. See also L. Santifaller: *Das Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*. Wien 1950, S. 13-17.

Bohemian and Hungarian Kingdoms with Austria in 1526, Ferdinand II's ordinance of 1627 reducing the power of the Bohemian *Landtag*, the crucial period of Theresian-Josephinian reforms and the patriotic fight against Napoleon – and various monographs appeared from the pens of Austrian historians on these topics but this overarching narrative never became a paradigm for thinking about Austria's history. There are a number of possible reasons for this.

First, its explanatory power, especially in relation to recent events, appeared limited. The narrative of Austria's state development appeared relevant to the Theresian-Josephinian era but subsequent developments no longer followed the main course of the story. For example, Franz I and Metternich were adverse to reforms, indeed to any change at all, and used the state as an instrument for suppressing dissent. Moreover, the major debates in 1848 were over Germany unification, a possible federal constitution and the position of Hungary within the Monarchy. Hardly topics which fit easily within the frame of the smooth development of an integrated Austrian state and of patriotic feeling!

Second, the subject of the history – the Austrian state – was rather dry and uninvolving for the general populace. Most of the key events were not wars or heroic figures (except perhaps for Joseph II) but administrative reforms or matters of state. This history may appeal to the bureaucrats in the Austrian state or to specialists, however the wider public resolutely did not respond to it. It was difficult to identify with an abstract entity made up of administrators overseeing a multitude of laws and regulations. This was especially the case in the confusing mix of overlapping and multiple identities which characterised society in the Habsburg Monarchy. Religious, ethnic, regional and local loyalties were often paramount and the respective histories of each more appealing to the general reader than the story of the Austrian state.

Third, while the historical narrative of the Austrian state may not have been widely known and discussed, the actual presence of the Austrian state was hard to overlook. The general population often saw the existence of the state as an unwelcome intrusion into their lives and even associated the state with its more repressive side – censorship or jailing. Why would the man in the street read a history of such an institution or feel patriotic towards it?

The difficulties the Austrian *Gesamtstaat* school of history faced are evident in the career of Constantin Höfler; the Chair in General History at Prague University from 1852 to his retirement in 1882.<sup>21</sup> Born in Memmingen, Bavaria (close to Austria's province of Tyrol) in 1811, Höfler studied first at the University of Munich, then at Göttingen in the early 1830s. After his career in Munich was stopped short prematurely, Höfler worked as an archivist in Bamberg which had a good collection of documents pertaining to Austrian history. His subsequent publications on Austrian history in the late 1840s, mostly in a conservative, Catholic, pro-Habsburg vein, brought him to the attention of the Austrian Department of Education where Helfert was helping with the series of monumental reforms. Negotiations to appoint Höfler to a Chair in History at Charles University began in the summer of 1851 and the following year he moved to Prague, where he would stay for the rest of his life.

From his University chair and his seat in the Bohemian Landtag (from 1865), Höfler initially set the tone for constructing an integrated historical narrative in response to František Palacký's Czech-centred view of Bohemian history. His viewpoint was essentially in line with Helfert's; namely, Catholic, *Gesamtösterreich*, *Grossdeutsch* (in the sense of the old, loose structure of the Holy Roman Empire) and absolutely loyal to the Habsburgs. Höfler tried to influence the younger generations of historians in the direction of a *Gesamtösterreich* approach which stressed the unity of the Habsburg Empire and demonstrated the historical relations of each part to the whole entity.<sup>22</sup> However, over the years he came increasingly into conflict with the young liberals' anti-clerical stance and he eventually resigned his mandate in the *Landtag*. Moreover, Palacký mercilessly attacked Höfler's scholarship and interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Höfler's efforts did not lead to a new paradigm in historical thinking, his influence on the young nationalist activists was minimal and his scholarship provoked hostility from the Czech side.

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<sup>21</sup> For details of Höfler's life see the *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950*. 10 Volumes. Graz/Cologne, 1954-2005 and 'Constantin von Höfler (1811-1897)'. In: *Neue österreichische Biographie ab 1815*. Vol. 15. Wien/München/Zürich 1963, S. 82-9.

<sup>22</sup> See C. Höfler: Festrede. In: *Mittheilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen* 1 (1862), S. 10-12.

<sup>23</sup> F. Palacký: *Die Geschichte Hussitentums und Prof. Constantin Höfler. Kritische Studien*. Prague, 1868. For a good discussion of the intellectual background to the debate see F.G. Heymann: *The Hussite Movement in the Historiography of the Czech Awakening*. In: P. Brock and H. Gordon Skilling (Hg.): *The Czech Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto 1970. The edited volumes of sources that provoked Palacký are C. Höfler (Hg.): *Geschichtsschreiber der hussitischen Bewegung*, 3 Bde. Wien 1856-66.

## Palacký's 'History of the Czech People': An Epic Struggle for Democracy and Freedom against the German Spirit

František Palacký's 'The History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia', published in 5 volumes from 1836-76, encompassed a lifetime of work and established the dominant historical paradigm for Bohemian history.<sup>24</sup> Palacký's framework for Bohemian history was the story of a continual struggle between the Czech and German peoples. He stressed the essentially democratic, freedom-loving, peaceful, independent nature of the ancient Czechs who were subjugated by the aggressive, war-like Germans. The subject of Palacký's historical narrative was the heroic Czech people; a very different emphasis from the *Gesamtösterreich* school's focus on the development of the Austrian state and the incorporation of different peoples into an integrated whole. The primary *leitmotif* of Palacký's account was the ceaseless conflict between the Czechs and the Germans; it was the recurrent thread through Bohemian history. For example, the key episode in Palacký's history – the era which best typified the Czech fight for progress and freedom against a repressive, reactionary, Catholic, German-dominated state – was the Hussite Revolutions.<sup>25</sup> There were clear parallels to the plight of the Czechs in the nineteenth century.

Palacký did not occupy a Chair at University like Höfler, his official position was as historiographer of the Bohemian *Landtag*; to which he was appointed in 1829. His appointment was part of the noble-led resistance to Vienna's general aims of standardisation and centralisation; a process which would clearly reduce the nobles' local power and influence.<sup>26</sup> In late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Czech language and its culture seemed under threat, this noble-led political resistance combined with the burgeoning Czech cultural revival to provide a

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<sup>24</sup> There are both German and Czech editions, though with significant differences between the two. The first three volumes appeared initially in a German edition, then Palacký substantially revised them for the Czech edition. The final two volumes originally appeared in Czech and then in German translation.

<sup>25</sup> For the importance of the Battle of White Mountain in Czech historical thinking see V. Mamatey: *The Battle of the White Mountain as Myth in Czech History*. In: *East European Quarterly* 15/3 (1981), S. 335-45.

<sup>26</sup> For Palacký's relations with the Bohemian nobles in the years before 1848 see F. Prinz: *František Palacký als Historiograph der böhmische Stände*. In: *Probleme der Böhmisches Geschichte*. München 1964, S. 84-94.

conducive atmosphere for Palacký labours. He had the institutional support from many Bohemian nobles (a number of whom opened the family archives to aid his research and were friendly with Palacký) and he had a ready made audience of noble patrons as well as the expanding and increasingly assertive Czech middle classes. The link between many Bohemian nobles and the aspirations of the Czechs continued throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, formalised by the political alliance between the nobles and the Czechs in 1861 and their joint participation in the long standing Taaffe government (1879-93).

Palacký's independence of thinking may be partly attributable to his Protestant upbringing and education.<sup>27</sup> Unlike many scholars brought up in the dominant Catholic educational system (the Jesuits were particularly prominent in training the intellectual elite of Austria), Palacký looked for inspiration to the smaller Protestant countries (especially Scotland and Switzerland) with their histories of religious and political dissent. In addition, Palacký was open to the great intellectual achievements of German philosophy – many of whom had links with Protestant Prussia. In particular, he was heavily influenced by Herder's views of Slav culture, Hegel's concept of the dialectic and the prevailing atmosphere of liberal romanticism which idealised history as the heroic struggle for freedom.<sup>28</sup> Thus Palacký's work incorporated many prevailing ideas of the time along with providing a simple yet compelling narrative. In a time when national consciousness was on the rise across Europe, his history had a tremendous effect on the consciousness of the Czech population.<sup>29</sup>

Another factor in the immediate acceptance of Palacký's work was the deep scholarship which supported his historical writings. At the same time as Palacký's monumental efforts, the study of history as an academic discipline was beginning to acquire the prestige of science; inspired by the works and methodology of Palacký's contemporary, Leopold von Ranke. Palacký's historical work was a mix of extensive, pain-staking archival work (along with the necessary source criticism) and a simple,

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<sup>27</sup> The story of his religious crisis and the role his study of Kant played in overcoming it is well known. Plaschka, *Von Palacký*, a.a.O., S. 8 and Zacek, *Palacký*, a.a.O., S. 16.

<sup>28</sup> See Zacek, *Palacký*, a.a.O., S. 80-7.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Plaschka identified the heightened national consciousness of the time as one of the factors for Palacký's great influence. The other two he mentions are the topicality of the subject and Palacký's powerful, energetic personality. See R. Plaschka: *The Political Significance of František Palacký*. In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 8/3 (1973), S. 35-55.

compelling storyline. Quite simply, Palacký rapidly became the accepted authority on Bohemian history, highly respected abroad as well as at home.

Hence when the Frankfurt Vorparlament met in 1848 to prepare for elections to a German parliament, a member of the committee Ignaz Kuranda (a liberal, Jewish journalist from Bohemia) invited Palacký to attend the sessions. Palacký's famous letter in reply was an important marker of the burgeoning Czech national consciousness and the letter's sentiments were absolutely consistent with Palacký's overall aims; his historical works included. It allowed Palacký to express his patriotism publicly and to defend the Czech nation's right to sit at the table of European nations. Before 1848, in his early correspondence Palacký stated that his goal was:

die Eigenschaften des nationalen Geistes vollkommen kennen, die großen Gefühle und erhabenen Taten verstehen und sich zu den Lebensideen der Nationen erheben müsse – und er wird ein Werk vollführen, das unsterblich ist.<sup>30</sup>

Inspired by the patriotic, historical works of Robertson (Scotland), Müller (Switzerland) and Luden (Germany), Palacký wished to awaken Czech patriotism and to further the Czech fight for freedom against the absolutist Austrian state and its equally absolutist associate, the Catholic Church. Palacký's words in 1848 not only represented his response to the invitation, but expressed his lifetime's convictions about historical writing and political activity.

Ich bin ein Böhme slavischen Stammes, und habe ich mit all dem Wenigen, was ich besitze und was ich kann, mich dem Dienste meines Volkes ganz und für immer gewidmet. Diese Volk ist zwar ein kleines, aber von jeher ein eigenthümliches und für sich bestehendes ...<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the changes in his political thinking, Palacký retained this one idea, that the Czech nation deserved recognition as an honourable European nation. Accordingly, his historical works stressed the Czech people as an independent actor and as a separate distinct nation. Because of its long glorious history as the forerunners of liberty and the basis of the historic Bohemian state, the Czechs should therefore either have political autonomy within the Habsburg Monarchy (as Palacký advocated) or complete independence (as Masaryk, who was heavily influenced by Palacký's ideas,

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Plaschka, *Von Palacký*, a.a.O., S. 10.

<sup>31</sup> The full text of the letter can be found as an appendix to F. Palacký, *Österreichs Staatsidee*. Prag 1866, S. 79-86

advocated during World War I).<sup>32</sup> In any case, Bohemian history – according to Palacký – truly belonged to the Czech people, thus by implication excluding groups such as German-Bohemians and strict Catholics from the evolved historical community of Bohemia. To use Otto Bauer’s term, the German-Bohemians and strict Catholics had no real place in Palacký’s *Schicksalgemeinschaft* of Bohemia.

### **German-Bohemian History: The Contribution of the German-Bohemians and the Wider Context of Central European History**

During a typically spirited exchange of polemics about the Hussite era, Ludwig Schlesinger – a young German-Bohemian liberal historian and politician – criticised Palacký’s historical assumptions asserting that the Czechs did not have a monopoly on peace and freedom.<sup>33</sup> Schlesinger wanted to show that Palacký was not an objective historical writer and despite being the official historiographer of the Bohemian *Landtag* had unjustly neglected the positive contributions of the German-Bohemians while also mischaracterising the German people as aggressive and war-like. Indeed, much of Schlesinger’s historical output was devoted to refuting Palacký’s framework and arguing for the benevolent, liberal, progressive contributions of German-Bohemians to history. From his involvement in the foundation of the Verein für die Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen (VGDB) in 1862 to his premature death in 1899, Schlesinger’s activities as a historian were intimately linked with his position at the centre of German-Bohemian politics; much as they were for Palacký and his role at the heart of Czech politics.

The VGDB was a crucial forum for the expression of German-Bohemian historical views and formed one of the most powerful cultural focal points for the German-Bohemian community.<sup>34</sup> Schlesinger edited the association’s journal from 1870

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<sup>32</sup> Masaryk’s views on Bohemian history, which owe an obvious debt to Palacký, are available in English translation. T. Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*. Chapel Hill 1974.

<sup>33</sup> L. Schlesinger: *Antwort auf das XI Kapitel des Palacký’schen Buches “Geschichte des Husitentums und Prof. C. Höfler”*. In: L. Schlesinger and J. Lippert: *Würdigung der Angriffe des Dr. Franz Palacký auf die Mittheilungen des Vereines für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen*. Prague 1868, S. 2-4.

<sup>34</sup> There are two articles specifically on the VGDB: M. Neumüller: *Der Verein für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen: ein deutschliberaler Verein (von der Gründung bis zur Jahrhundertwende)*. In: F. Seibt (ed.): *Vereinswesen und Geschichtespflege in den böhmischen Ländern*. Munich 1986, pp. 181-93 and, rather less illuminating, K. Oberdorffer: *Der Verein für Geschichte der deutschen in Böhmen 1862-1938*. In: *Bohemia* 3 (1962), pp. 9-29.

to 1890 and became VGDB's President in 1880. Initially, it was assumed that Höfler as the Chair in History at Prague University would provide the intellectual impetus to the association. At the official opening Höfler outlined his view of the association's intellectual aims. He viewed Bohemia from the medieval period onwards as part of Western Christianity and thus under German influence. Moreover, Bohemia was an historically important part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. In recent years, Höfler continued, Bohemia had become part of the Austrian monarchy and it was these historical links to the other parts of *Gesamtösterreich* that should be the subject of historical research. Based on these conceptions, he therefore postulated three areas for further research: first, the German cities in Bohemia; second, the history of the Church and its influence in Bohemia as it swept eastwards; and third, the gradual institutional development of Austria (to use Höfler's phrase an 'echte österreichische Geschichte').<sup>35</sup>

Another speaker at the opening ceremony was the President of the Association Franz Pelzel who called for a history of the German-Bohemians as founders of the free *Bürgertum*. For Pelzel, the history of the free *Bürgerstand* – its laws, trade, arts and science – had not yet found its historian.<sup>36</sup> Thus, at the foundation meeting of the VGDB, Höfler and Pelzel outlined the areas of Bohemian history that Palacký had neglected and the VGDB should promote. Accordingly, in May 1866 the VGDB commissioned Schlesinger to write a popular history of Bohemia to fill the gap and to act as a counter-narrative to Palacký's monumental work.<sup>37</sup>

In astonishingly quick time, barely three and a half years, Schlesinger's 'Geschichte Böhmens' appeared and proved a success with the German-Bohemian public. Schlesinger's historical account is structured around recurrent themes adopted from Höfler's and Pelzel's suggestions. In the preface to his history, Schlesinger explicitly set himself three goals in writing a history of Bohemia: first, to present a fair account of cultural and religious issues which he believed had hitherto been portrayed in a one-sided manner; second, to focus on the many contributions of German culture to the region and; third, to look at Bohemia's historical links with Germany (especially through

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<sup>35</sup> Höfler, *Festrede*, a.a.O., S. 5-11.

<sup>36</sup> F. Pelzl: *Eingangrede des Alters-Präsidenten*. In: *Mittheilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen* 1 (1862), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> The background to Schlesinger's commission is described in L. Schlesinger: *Geschichte Böhmens*. Prag 1870., Vorwort zur ersten Auflage.

its many centuries as part of the Holy Roman Empire) and with the Austrian monarchy.<sup>38</sup> Each chapter of the book ends with a section on the specific German-Bohemian contribution to the particular time period.

Ultimately, in accord with the VGDB's views and similar to Palacký's patriotic motivations, he wished to promote the historical consciousness of the German-Bohemians.

Der schönste Lohn wird mir der Gedanke bleiben, wenn die ehrliche Forschung ein Scherflein dazu beigetragen hat, durch Vorführung der stolzen Vergangenheit das nationale Bewusstsein der Deutschböhmen in der Gegenwart zu kräftigen ...<sup>39</sup>

His views on the Germans as a cultural people introducing the benefits of Western civilisation to the barbaric East reflected the prevailing views of the Austro-German liberals of the time.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the book there are typical statements in the moral, teleological tone so characteristic of nineteenth century historical writing.

Uebrigens bewirkte schon der mechanische Druck des großen deutschen Reiches auf das kleine, isolirte tschechische Herzogthum die Einleitung zu jenem Germanisierungsprocesse, der, den großen unbeugsamen Gestzen der Weltgeschichte flogend, bis in die Gegenwart fort dauert, der allerdings oftmals in's Stocken gerieth, aber durch menschliche Macht in seiner Entwicklung niemals gänzlich unterbrochen werden kann.<sup>41</sup>

For Schlesinger and the Austro-German liberals, history had an inevitable direction towards freedom, culture and the construction of a constitutional *Rechtsstaat* (rule of law). The present-day German-Bohemians were at the forefront of these movements since, according to Schlesinger, they were following the historical steps of their forefathers who had created a third *Stand* (class/estate) and fought the reactionary, feudal aristocracy. So, Schlesinger argued, the Czechs could learn much about universal liberal, humane values from the long fight of the German-Bohemian *Bürgertum* against the reactionary nobles. Indeed Schlesinger wrote that:

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<sup>38</sup> Ebd.

<sup>39</sup> Ebd., Vorwort zur zweiten Auflage.

<sup>40</sup> For overviews of Austro-German liberal politics and ideology see P. Judson: *Exclusive Revolutionaries. Liberal Politics, Social Experience and National Identity in the Austrian Empire 1848-1914*. Ann Arbor 1996; L. Kammerhofer (ed.): *Studien zum Deutschliberalismus in Zisleithanien 1873-1879*. Vienna, 1992; L. Höbelt: *Kornblume und Kaiseradler: Die deutsch-freiheitlichen Parteien Altösterreichs 1882-1918*. Munich 1993 and my recently completed thesis J. Kwan: *Austro-German Liberalism and the Multi-National State, 1867-1895*. Oxford Univ. D.Phil thesis 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Schlesinger: *Geschichte Böhmens.*, a.a.O., S. 89.

nicht Verwüstungen und Sklaverei, wie sie die Stürme von Osten den Völkern Europas schickten, sondern die köstlichen Früchte der Industrie und des Handels vor allen andern aber die goldene Freiheit führte der germanische Kolonist von Norden und Western nach Böhmen. Ihm verdankt das Land seine frühzeitige Kultur und den Eintritt in den Verband westeuropäischer Gesittung ... ihm verdankt die böhmische Krone die Verstärkung des monarchischen Prinzips, das Volk selbst aber eine wohlthätige Selbstverwaltung und Antheil am politischen Leben neben den Adel, dessen ständische Alleinherrschaft der deutsche Bürger gebrochen hat.<sup>42</sup>

In Schlesinger's account, the German-Bohemians promoted trade, industry, *Bildung*, science, art, religion and influenced all levels of society and developed a free *Bürgertum* through the founding of cities under municipal autonomy, German law and control of German industry. Indeed, the achievement of the Czechs could largely be attributed to the German nation's move eastwards with their twin gifts of *Bildung* and *Kultur*. According to liberal ideology, the Czechs could either join with their brothers the German-Bohemians in the common struggle for a constitution, individual rights and a representative political system or they would be consigned to the dustbin of history. Palacký also believed in the eventual triumph of freedom and liberty – though he became increasingly disillusioned in later life – but his historical account portrayed the Czech people at the vanguard of the movement and the German-Bohemians as part of the reactionary state and Church institutional framework.

Another overarching theme to Schlesinger's work was the emphasis he placed on Bohemia's historical links with both Germany and Austria. Instead of viewing Bohemia as a Czech enclave continually under threat from its neighbours (as Palacký's history had done), Schlesinger wanted to integrate the Czechs into the general stream of Central European history; though, admittedly, from the German-speaking perspective. Schlesinger regarded much of Central and Eastern Europe as subject to German cultural influence and for Bohemia the main instrument of this influence was the Austrian state. While less adulatory than the conservative historians like Höfler, Schlesinger was a true Habsburg loyalist and advocate of an Austrian central parliament since this conformed to enlightened, liberal principles and protected German-Bohemia interests best.

Sie [German Bohemians] halten fest an der Monarchie und wünschen die kräftege Entwicklung derselben ...Sie können sich für die Wiederherstellung der Krone

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<sup>42</sup> Ebd., S. 179-80.

Böhmens nicht begeistern, da sie dieselbe mit dem Bestande des Staates als nicht vereinbar und für ihre Nationalität höchst gefährlich halten. Ein kräftiges Centralparlament entspricht ihren Wünschen am meisten.<sup>43</sup>

He accused the Czechs of selfishness in their politics, while, on the other hand, the Germans had fought for the constitution and for freedom, which had benefited all within Austria.

Schlesinger's history was a response to Palacký's paradigmatic interpretation of Bohemia's past and the inability of the conservative tradition as embodied by Höfler – based on the Catholic Church and an uncritical adherence to the monarchy – to articulate the position of the German-Bohemians in modern Austrian and Bohemian life. Schlesinger's emphasis on the beneficial, cultural mission of the German-Bohemians betrayed a particular German liberal viewpoint of Central European history just as Höfler's viewpoint reflected a pro-Catholic, state-based *Gesamtösterreich* conception. Similarly Palacký's historical work contained a clear outline of the Czech national view. With such differing interpretations of Bohemian history – all written within the complex, difficult political context of the nineteenth century Habsburg Monarchy which allowed, even promoted, a permanent jockeying for position – there were bound to be numerous conflicts over the meaning and significance of history. These controversies were so intimately linked to contemporary concerns that one historian has described the nineteenth century debates over historical events as a 'projection of the present in the past.'<sup>44</sup>

### **A Contested Region: Historical Memory, Nationalist Politics and Community Life in Bohemia**

For much of the nineteenth century, history was central to the creation of community consciousness; it provided a framework for understanding one's place in the world and for justifying political claims. Bohemia and its history was the site of competing historical and political visions, which contributed to the atmosphere of fin-de-siècle Bohemia as a site for an unstable, contingent, complex mix of identities. Grand

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<sup>43</sup> Ebd., S. 655.

<sup>44</sup> Heymann: *The Hussite Movement*, a.a.O., S. 232.

historical narratives appealed to the expanding educated public through a subtle combination of science and speculation – best personified by Palacký’s mix of rigorous source criticism and overarching schema of Bohemian history. These large narratives postulated a vision of community and underpinned many of the respective political goals of the groupings. Historical memory provided a particular *Weltanschauung* with which to interpret a region’s geography and history.

The Austrian *Gesamtstaat* vision of community was the most inclusive, though it was subject to onerous conditions, especially for the Czechs. The Czechs could be supporters of the Austrian state idea but had to accept the goal of a German-dominated, Vienna-based centralised state. In addition, the German language would be the primary language in public life; that is, all contact with officials, government notices and most education would be in German. Under this conception of Austrian society, Czech language and culture would be reduced to the private sphere, possibly to disappear within a few generations through assimilation of Czech speakers into a German-dominated society or simply through gradual disuse. For the vast majority of Czechs, including the moderate liberals who shared some common goals with the German liberals (for example responsible government, a functioning parliament, the desire to reduce the Church’s power), the voluntary sacrifice of their language and culture was unacceptable.

According to this view, history was on the side of German civilisation and culture, which represented some form of universal progress and liberty. Schlesinger’s image of the irresistible, inexorable mechanical pressure of German culture expanding throughout the region was indicative of general Austro-German liberal views common to the politicians of the earlier generation (those who entered politics in 1848 and came to political maturity in the 1861 parliament). The Czechs and other smaller nationalities (mostly Slav speakers) could join the Austro-German liberal community but only at the cost of renouncing the basis of their linguistic and ethnic identity. In any case, the combined power of German culture and the Austrian state would gradually impose itself.

Who were the main proponents of the Austrian state idea and the associated *Gesamtstaat* conception of history? Traditionally, the bureaucracy and army were the primary supports of the state and many individuals in these institutions would have subscribed to the Josephinist views in the *Gesamtstaat* conception of history.

Nevertheless, the nobles, who often occupied the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, may have preferred the more conservative forms of Church and dynastic histories. As already mentioned, the first generation of Austro-German liberals, many of who worked as lowly officials in the *Vormärz* before their active political careers, were mostly advocates of a centralised state as well as a centralised parliament. However, while the traditional institutions of the dynasty and the Church were broadly in favour of increased control from the centre and a powerful state, both had reservations about the liberal idea of a *Gesamtstaat*. Franz Joseph was aware of the intense resistance to a centralised state – especially from the Hungarians, Czechs and Poles among many others – while the Church could not countenance the liberals’ anti-clerical views. Lacking institutional support, a compelling narrative and a coherent, focused community, the Austrian *Gesamtstaat*’s conception of history and political goals never spread beyond elite circles to gain popular support.

The Czech national vision of community was very different to the Austrian *Gesamtstaat*’s. Palacký’s definition of the Czech people was largely linguistic.<sup>45</sup> Fluency in the Czech language was a clear indicator of membership in the Czech nation which, according to Palacký’s viewpoint, formed the basis of Bohemia (and Moravia) history. While Palacký mentioned some positive German contributions to Bohemian history and was greatly influenced by German thought, it is the epic story of the Czech people and their centrality to Bohemian history which infuses his work. His belief in national destiny was strengthened by the unifications of Italy and Germany. For much of the nineteenth century, nationalism throughout Europe seemed triumphant.

As for the Austro-German liberals, it was the events of 1848 which prompted Palacký and his future son-in-law František Rieger to enter politics. Both would be at the heart of Czech politics for the ensuing decades. Through much of 1848-49 Palacký’s political views were in harmony with his definition of linguistic and ethnic nations and at the Viennese then Kremsier parliaments he advocated a federation of politico-ethnic regions as the basis for a reorganised Austria. For Palacký, in accordance with his

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<sup>45</sup> This aspect of Czech self-definition is investigated in D. Sayer: *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*. Princeton 1998, S. 98-115 and more recently H. Agnew: *Czechs, Germans, Bohemians? Images of Self and Other in Bohemia to 1848*. In: Wingfield: *Creating the Other*, S. 61-3. For an insightful overview of language and state in the Habsburg Monarchy see R. J. W. Evans: *Language and State Building: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy*. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 35 (2004), S. 1-24.

conception of history, the principle of national freedom was paramount. Nevertheless, with the failure of the revolutions Palacký was forced to rethink political tactics and began to move the Czech party closer to the conservative Bohemian nobles. Palacký now stressed the importance of maintaining historic Bohemia and the Czech desire for an agreement similar to the terms negotiated by the Hungarians in 1866-7. Historical state rights replaced the triumph of national freedom as the justification for political goals. The importance of history remained paramount. The Czech political goals would mean complete autonomy in domestic matters and the central government in Vienna only having jurisdiction in foreign affairs, certain financial matters and the military. Palacký's emphasis on the *Landtag* as the main source of political legitimacy in Bohemia and his portrayal of the Czech people as the main actor in Bohemian history were not reassuring to the 2 million (37%) German-Bohemians. In many areas of Bohemia – even where the Germans were heavily outnumbered by the Czechs – they had constituted the traditional elite in state, business, educational and local affairs. For example, Prague's Germans, of which the Jews formed a very important part, were disproportionately prominent in wealth and influence.<sup>46</sup> Under the Czech national viewpoint the German Bohemians would occupy a position as a permanent minority and would have little chance of autonomy from the Czech-dominated Bohemian *Landtag* in Prague.<sup>47</sup>

Who were the main proponents of these plans to place the Czech people at the heart of Bohemian political decision-making? Obviously many of the fundamental assumptions for this view stemmed from Palacký's historical writing and for a whole generation of Czech politicians and activists, Palacký's leadership was unquestioned. Rieger ran everyday political affairs and relied heavily on Palacký's advice; though both Palacký and Rieger could be influenced by pressure.<sup>48</sup> In spite of their recognised

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<sup>46</sup> For an unsurpassed account of German-Bohemia life in Prague in these years see G. Cohen: *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*. Princeton, 1981. The special position of Prague's Jews is investigated in G. Cohen: *Jews in German Society: Prague, 1860-1914*. In: *Central European History* 9/1 (1977), S. 28-54 and G. Cohen: *Jews in German Liberal Politics: Prague, 1880-1914*. In: *Jewish History* 1/1 (1986), S. 55-74.

<sup>47</sup> The actual history of the Bohemian Landtag is magnificently retold in O. Urban: *Der böhmische Landtag*. In: H. Rumpler/P. Urbanitsch (Hg.): *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918, Bd. 7/2 Verfassungs- und Parlamentarismus*. Wien 2000, S. 1991-2055. The conservative-Czech alliance attained the majority in 1883 and was subsequently unassailable.

<sup>48</sup> See for example the Czech policy of 'passive resistance' in S. Pech: *Passive Resistance of the Czechs, 1863-1879*. In: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 36/87 (1958), S. 434-52. For Rieger's political

leadership, there were different strands within the Czech national movement. From the 1870s to their eventual triumph in the 1890s, the Young Czechs challenged the Old Czechs on the grounds of political tactics – specifically, against the alliance with the Bohemian nobles and for the use of radical obstruction in parliamentary chambers – but Palacký’s conception of the Czech nation and general political goals remained in place.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the linguistic definition given by Palacký promoted a coherent and integrated Czech community.

Yet in reality there were many difficulties and ambiguities in its application. What was the position of Czech speakers in Moravia who were under a separate *Landtag* and balked at any centralisation from Prague? Palacký (and his spiritual successor Masaryk) were both born in Moravia yet both looked to the Prague-based Czech national movement for political support. Did all Moravian Czech speakers in the street do likewise? There was also the question of Slovakia. Traditionally under Hungarian control, the majority spoke a language with clear affinities to Czech. Were they part of the Czech nation? Palacký, influenced by his upbringing in Bratislava and the realities of time, did not think so. Masaryk, in a more fluid time, postulated a Czechoslovak nation.

There were also problems with certain individuals’ political and national affiliations. For example, though many Bohemian nobles felt committed to the Czech cause, they had other loyalties – towards their own social class, towards the dynasty, towards the idea of Bohemia as a geographic term and a nation of nobles – which were often as strong as the commitment to the Czech nation and its political goals. The special position of the nobles was evidenced by some remarkable example of noble families being split with one brother on the Czech side and another brother on the German *Verfassungstreu* side.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the presence of different strands within the movement, considerable haziness about the extent of the Czech nation and the ambiguous position of the

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career see S. Pech: *F.L.Rieger: The Road from Liberalism to Conservatism*. In: *Journal of Central European Affairs* 17/1 (1957), S. 3-23.

<sup>49</sup> Czech politics are well covered in B. Garver: *The Young Czech Party 1874-1901 and the Emergence of the Multi-Party System*. New Haven 1978 and O. Urban: *Die tschechische Gesellschaft 1848-1918*, 2 Bde. Vienna 1994.

<sup>50</sup> For example, in the Buquoy and Kaunitz families there were examples of one brother on the Czech-conservative side and the other on the German *Verfassungstreu* side. Franz and Oswald Thun played prominent roles on different side of the political spectrum but were only brothers-in-law. I am grateful to Franz Adlgasser for this information.

Bohemian nobles, the Czech movement tended towards cohesion and integration. In short, there was a certain clarity of political purpose and in the definition of national community. In addition, their self portrayal as an oppressed minority fighting for survival created a strong, closely-knit community – something the more disparate, establishment-based Austrian *Gesamtstaat* concept could not achieve.

At first glance, the German-Bohemian definition of community, like the Czech's, seemed based on linguistic and cultural factors. Yet, as Schlesinger's example shows, there was often a substantial overlap between the Austrian *Gesamtstaat* perspective and membership in the German-Bohemian community. For the older generation of German-Bohemian liberal leaders – such as Eduard Herbst, Leopold Hasner and Franz Schmeykal – the Austrian state and a centralised political system (with a central constitution and parliament) were the best guarantees for protecting German interests.<sup>51</sup> Herbst expressed this sentiment well during a fiery speech in 1870 against federalism where he stated that:

Wir wollen nicht, daß wir in jedem einzelnen Land von einer Majorität erdrückt werden. Wir wollen und wünschen, daß die Deutschen in Österreich Deutsche eben in Österreich seien und bleiben, nicht bloß Deutsche in Böhmen und Mähren und wo immer sonst.<sup>52</sup>

Schlesinger, like his contemporary Ernst von Plener, was from a slightly younger generation yet shared Herbst's sentiment. Nevertheless, it was obvious by the 1880s and 1890s that there was little or no possibility of a strong central, German-dominated political system. Within the German-Bohemian community there was a turn away from the Austrian *Gesamtstaat* idea towards a more linguistic and ethnic based definition of community.<sup>53</sup> Indeed many younger German politicians looked to the Czech movement as an example to follow; not only in the stress on language and culture, but also with respect to radical political tactics. Schlesinger's history contains both strands of German-Bohemian thinking: the older belief in the Austrian *Gesamtstaat* and the assertive pride in German-Bohemian achievements.

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<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that Herbst was born in Vienna but dominated German-Bohemian politics in the 1860s and 1870s. His family had its roots in Bohemia and had Czech roots! See E. Wymetal: *Eduard Herbst, sein Werdegang und seine Persönlichkeit vornehmlich auf Grund seiner selbstbiographischen Aufzeichnungen*. Wien. Univ. Diss. Phil 1944, S. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Wymetal: *Eduard Herbst*, S. 73. For the full speech see [E. Herbst]: *Dr. Eduard Herbst über die böhmischen Ausgleichs-Verhandlungen im Jahre 1870*. Wien 1879.

<sup>53</sup> I have attempted to describe and explain this complex process in Kwan: *Austro-German Liberalism*, a.a.O., S. 261-85.

Thus in the 1880s, facing a hostile central government – Taaffe’s ‘Iron Ring’ included conservatives, Czechs and Poles – and a permanent Czech majority in the Bohemian *Landtag*, the German-Bohemian political aims quickly changed from a belief in the *Gesamtstaat* to a radical partition of Bohemia into German and Czech speaking areas (an idea first floated in 1848 by Ludwig von Löhner). This policy was the logical outcome of adopting an exclusive definition of community based on language and culture. It was, however, difficult to implement because of the many mixed language areas and bi-lingual families; plus, the Czech majority in the Bohemian *Landtag* would never countenance the partition of ‘historic’ Bohemia. With such a political deadlock, there was a growing tendency to use associational life – organised strictly along national lines – for the wider political and cultural struggle. Thus national strife began to permeate public and private life. By the time of the early twentieth century, when the historian of nationalism Hans Kohn was growing up in Prague:

In all fields of life and activity there reigned a voluntary segregation, a kind of tacitly acknowledged ‘iron curtain’ which separated two worlds living side by side, each one self-contained, scarcely communicating.<sup>54</sup>

Prague may have been the extreme example of this voluntary segregation since there still existed much contact between Czechs and Germans, especially in the countryside, but the tendency towards separation was clear to all.<sup>55</sup>

Who were the proponents of this creation of a separate German Bohemian community? The clearest group were the German-Bohemians themselves, though there was continual friction between the Prague Germans and the majority of German speakers in the North and West of Bohemia. Moreover, the belief in and reliance on the Austrian state continued in many of the older generation.

Both constituent elements of German-Bohemian identity were contested, ambiguous and prone to multiple definitions. ‘German’, for example, could mean the whole German speaking world stretching from the French border to the Transylvanian Saxons in the far South-East of Europe and the east coast of the Baltic Sea in the North-

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<sup>54</sup> H. Kohn: *Living in a World Revolution. My Encounters with History*. New York 1964, S. 10. A similar description is given in F. Kleinwaechter: *Der Untergang der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*. Leipzig 1920, S. 141-5.

<sup>55</sup> For an important corrective to the works focused on national mobilisation and a persuasive argument about how nationalism functioned in the countryside see P. Judson: *Nationalizing Rural Landscapes in Cisleithania, 1880-1914*. In Wingfield: *Creating the Other*, S. 127-48.

East. Or it could simply mean the German speakers in Austria. Indeed, to aid its cause the German-Bohemians (and other ‘threatened’ Germans in the Monarchy) used the phrase ‘*Deutsche Gemeinbürgerschaft*’ in an attempt to create a pressure group encompassing the disparate German speakers throughout the Monarchy. Yet despite the declarations of solidarity, it was hard to see much unity in such a widespread group with its differing concerns and traditions. Another possible meaning for ‘German’ could be a German-dominated Austria. With such ambiguity, to which wider community could the German-Bohemians appeal as ‘fellow Germans’?

The term ‘Bohemia’ was clearer; it meant the territory of Bohemia. Yet what of Bohemian history which Palacký had appropriated for the Czech nation? And what of Bohemia as a political entity – dominated by the Czechs and conservative nobles? What place did the German-Bohemians occupy in these conceptions? One answer to all these ambiguities was a general belief in German nationalism – German spirit and culture being immense sources of pride – but the political implications of a reliance on greater German nationalism were unclear. What of the traditional loyalty to the Habsburgs and to the Austrian state idea? What of the attachment to Bohemia itself – its landscape, history and distinctive traditions?<sup>56</sup> For the German-Bohemian community, whose historical consciousness began late and was closely connected to Austria and the larger German-speaking world, politics and the creation of community involved balancing many overlapping, sometimes contradictory, identities – a difficult task to achieve, especially in light of the general feeling of urgency and desperateness that surrounded the German-Bohemian community from the late 1870s onwards.

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In a strange, but instructive, reversal the Czech historians at the end of the century while acknowledging Palacký’s towering presence were quite critical of his ideological framework. Under Jaroslav Goll’s direction (a favourite pupil of Palacký’s rival, Constantin Höfler) many Czech historians of the next generation concentrated on source

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<sup>56</sup> An interesting essay on the use of geography and landscape in nationalist discourse is P. Judson: *Frontiers, Islands, Forests, Stones: Mapping the Geography of a German Identity in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1900*. In: P. Yeager (Hg.): *The Geography of Identity*. Ann Arbor 1996, S. 382-406.

criticism and specialist works, rather than grand narratives in Bohemian history.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, the German-Bohemian historians were extolled to write history in the service of the '*deutscher Gemeinbürgerschaft*' and the defence of the German '*Nationalbesitzstand*'.<sup>58</sup> At the end of the century, the German-Bohemians were in need of legitimacy and ideological justification for their political claims. The reversal demonstrates the changes in relative strengths of the Czech and German-Bohemian positions and the perceived need for counter-narratives. In the 1830s when Palacký began writing his history there was a fear that the power of the Austrian state would eliminate Czech language and culture if substantial rescue work was not begun soon. Palacký's history – inspired by his Czech patriotism – was an immense intellectual project for the preservation of Czech identity; first, by awakening their national conscience to their language and history and, second, by implementing political policies to ensure the continued survival of the Czech nation. The counter-narrative of a heroic Czech people in the heart of Europe at the vanguard of freedom and progress was an important step in this project. By 1900, the Czechs controlled the Bohemian *Landtag*, had immense influence in Vienna and were recognised around Europe as a small, but proud, nation.

The German-Bohemians, in the same period, had gone from being the recognised elite in state and society to a position of marginality in Bohemian and Austrian life. Palacký's position as the greatest historian of Bohemia was unchallenged and his framework for understanding was the dominant historical paradigm. The German-Bohemians were in need of a counter-narrative stressing their contributions to Bohemian history and recognising their right of existence in Bohemia. Quite a turnaround from 1830!

Yet these developments were not inevitable. Bohemian historical writing was malleable, contingent and inextricably related to its context – the pressures on and motivations of the writers, the interaction with various institutions and the public, the general political and social situation of the time. To attempt to understand why historical

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<sup>57</sup> For an assessment of Goll's influence see F. Machilek: *Jaroslav Goll*. In: K. Bosl (Hg.): *Lebensbilder zur Geschichte der böhmische Länder*. München 1974, S. 163-96.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, the introduction to the volume H. Bachmann (Hg.): *Deutsche Arbeit in Böhmen*. Berlin 1900, S. v-xiii. Ludwig Schlesinger was one of the contributors.

writing was important and how it functioned in society, it must be placed in its political, cultural and intellectual context.

In nineteenth century Bohemia the writing of history – since it postulated a common purpose and substantive end – played an important role in creating the separate communities. The process of mental separation was extremely complex, covered many decades and involved a bewildering range of state, societal and cultural issues. Bohemian society was constantly changing and fiercely contested. Crises in politics, culture and identity all contributed to the powerful intellectual ferment of fin-de-siècle Bohemia. Historical writing was both part of the genesis and ferment itself. Its contribution should not be neglected.