

From ethnic group toward the modern nation: the Czech case

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ABSTRACT. Historians usually try to understand and interpret the reasons for the successful result of national movements. Less attractive seems to be the question, why the early ‘nationalists’ took the decision to persuade the members of their ethnic to accept a new national identity, i.e., why did Phase B start? The author of this article formulated many years ago the hypothesis that this decision had to do with the identity crisis caused by great reforms and changes which put in question the old system of values and legitimacy, and eroded old pre-modern ties in patriarchal or late ‘feudal’ societies. The article tries to check this hypothesis analyzing the turn towards Phase B in the case of Czech intellectuals (in Bohemia) at the end of the eighteenth and first decade of the nineteenth centuries, in the time of radical enlightened reforms and of the wars against the French Revolution. Loosening their old ties and traditional values, these intellectuals tried to find a new identity with their nation-to-be. The author argues that this decision was not a voluntarist mood or ‘nationalist’ plague but that it had serious social motivation. The same can be said about the turn of the incipient Czech national movement towards language and literature.

The Czech national movement is generally regarded as a ‘success story’. The ethnically defined Czech national identity received, during several decades of national agitation, general acceptance from the masses of the Czech-speaking population. This happened under the conditions of the oppressive Metternich regime and against German cultural and social superiority. In my earlier comparative research, it was demonstrated that this success can be explained neither by the Herderian influence (as the traditionalist, above all German, historians supposed), nor by the force of the idea of ‘nationalism’ as a free-floating actor. At least, the oft-quoted author of the concept of nation as the product of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, proved that successful ‘nationalism’ had its deep historical roots in the social and cultural process labelled by him erroneously ‘industrialization’. According to my earlier research, the transition from the Phase B of national agitation to the Phase C of mass movement was possible only under several conditions, which were independent of the wishes of its actors, the ‘nationalists’: firstly, strengthening social communication and mobility; secondly, a coincidence of national demands and social (political, cultural) interests, i.e. under conditions of a nationally relevant conflict of

interests; thirdly, the pre-existing linguistic and cultural community, sometimes accompanied by a memory of old 'national' statehood.

This contribution does not intend to repeat earlier published results and recall generally known data on the transition of the national movement from Phase B to Phase C, i.e. to the mass movement. It aims to go one step back and try to interpret the transition from the learned Phase A dominated by nationally 'neutral' scholars to the nationally engaged, agitating Phase B. This article offers an attempt to explain motives: why some intellectuals decided to construct a new national identity and to propagate it among the members of their ethnic group. Expressed in the terms used by Anthony Smith, we try to explain the decision to transform the ethnic community into a modern nation. For good or ill, the actors of this procedure understood themselves as protagonists and 'awakeners' of the real existing nation and they regarded the non-existence of statehood in most cases (except the Balkans) as unimportant or as not decisive.

This turn to national agitation occurred in the Czech case (and above all in Bohemia) in the period between 1790 and 1815, contemporaneous with similar developments in Hungary, Norway and Greece, and much earlier than most other European national movements.

Our analysis chooses as its point of departure a hypothesis proceeding from social psychology that the need for a new identity has to be understood as a result of the crisis or loss of old identities, as an answer to the dissolution of old values and social ties, under conditions of uncertainty caused by social and political changes and transformations. This hypothesis will be verified through the analysis of empirical data from Czech history.

Our procedure follows three steps, answering three questions:

1. 'the constants': what were the basic factors of stability under the conditions of the old regime?
2. What changes and reforms destabilized or eroded old factors of stability?
3. 'the answers': How did members of the Czech ethnic community react to these changes?

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the way of life of the inhabitants, their beliefs, habits and identities were formed and maintained by several constant relations and institutions. These invariables or 'constants' had survived without significant change since the seventeenth century, in some cases even since the Middle Ages.

The medieval Kingdom of Bohemia gradually lost its independence under the rule of the Habsburgs, but it did not disappear: its name, its borders, its capital Prague survived, and also some institutions, like the Landtag, Court of Justice and even the constitution from 1627. Most aristocratic families were not Czech by origin (they usurped the confiscated lands of Protestants, who were expelled after their defeat in 1620), but their later members accepted an identity with the 'Lands of the Crown of Bohemia'. A new feeling of identity emerged among many members of the nobility in opposition to the centralist policy of Vienna and they tried to retain old privileges: the 'Landespatriotismus'. As a

part of this process, the memory of old statehood of the Crown was retained. Nevertheless, for the most part, the majority of this nobility regarded the Austrian dynastic identity as the dominant one and many aristocrats supported Habsburg centralism.

Since Protestantism in Bohemia had been defeated, the Catholic Church had controlled all the religious, spiritual and cultural life in the country. Its organization corresponded to the old political structure: Bohemia remained an autonomous ecclesiastical unit with the archbishop in Prague as its head. Similarly, Moravia was an archbishopric with its capital in Olomouc. The Catholic hierarchy kept elements of the 'land'-identity and some among its members (and above all among the lower clergy) developed a Bohemian baroque patriotism, as a positive attitude to the land, and even regarded the Czech language as a symbol of Bohemian or Moravian individuality. The cult of St. Vaclav (Wenzel) I as 'Protector' of the Crown of Bohemia and of other 'national' saints represented an important element of this patriotism. Naturally, the Church asserted until the middle of the eighteenth century, beside its monopolistic control of education and all spiritual life, a privileged position in the economy and politics.

The most expressive social constant was signified by the rigid system of serfdom in the countryside and guilds in towns. Aristocratic domains, still strongly influenced by their feudal origins, created the basic unit of administration, taxation, and jurisdiction. All individuals were firmly included into the more or less effective system of Church and state administration. This meant that inhabitants of non-noble origin were subordinated to the state, to the Church and to their lordships. They had no right to self-administration and at the same time, they were the only tax-payers. Nevertheless, the inequality of human beings, predestined by birth, was still generally accepted by all strata of the non-privileged population as a self-evident feature of their life.

What about the ethnic constants? Since the Middle Ages, both Bohemia and Moravia were inhabited by a majority Czech-speaking and a minority German-speaking population. The written Czech language developed during the fourteenth century and remained, until the seventeenth century, the official language of administration. The new constitution of 1627 gave the German language an equal position with Czech, but in reality German became the dominant language in administration, the economy and cultural life. The Czech-speaking population was aware of its language, at least, since it remained the language of the Church. We have proof for some degree of ethnic identity, which – with very few exceptions – did not include xenophobia or spontaneous patriotic enthusiasm. The social structure, the 'Stand', was still decisive. An example of this was the fact that the Czech- and German-speaking peasants participated side by side in the great peasant war in northeast Bohemia and there is no evidence of any relevant conflict between insurgents from these two *ethnies*.

In general, one could gain the impression that this society was stabilized and based on currently accepted inequality, religious legitimacy and everyday

oppression. Nevertheless, this was only on the surface. Within society, immanent tensions and signs of crisis increased. To prevent conflicts, to ameliorate the situation and to avoid a crisis, the enlightened absolutist rulers initiated efforts to modernize society through reforms. These famous reforms, introduced by the late Maria Theresa and above all by Joseph II, brought significant changes which brought old constants into question.

Their impact can be summarized in five points:

1. The hitherto monopolistic and uncontrolled power of the Catholic Church was limited not only by the introduction of religious tolerance and by diminishing its intellectual control, but also by the reduction of Church property by the state.
2. The state decreased the power of landlords, above all through the abolition of serfdom and through increasing state control in local and state administration.
3. The progress of jurisprudence and the reform of legislation, based on principles of equal value of all citizens, was the first step to abolish – at least in the theory – the inequality of classes.
4. The new concept of education and the school system tried to spread elementary education to all and to open higher schools to all inhabitants.
5. The state administration increasingly supported the spread of enlightened principles and scientific research, diminished the rights of censorship and contributed to the creation of a new secular public.

All these reforms, even though not generally welcomed, influenced sooner or later everyday experience, but their immediate importance was larger: they demonstrated not only to the educated classes, but also to the people that the conditions and circumstances of their life were not unchangeable and that they could be ameliorated.

Naturally, an opposition emerged against these reforms, led above all by a part of the nobility and by the Church hierarchy. This opposition – irrespective of its reactionary character – included a mobilizing impact: it demonstrated a phenomenon which seemed until this time unthinkable, i.e. public opposition against the will and the orders of the ruler and of the state authority. The image of the inviolability of the ruler's will was impaired. All this played a role as a factor which started to disturb old constants and old identities.

Beside this general impact, each of the five groups of reforms included changes which influenced – usually without having intended to – the preconditions for the strengthening of a new national identity.

The religious tolerance brought an end to more than one hundred years of persecution and ostracism of the Reformation tradition in Czech cultural life: non-Catholic books written in Czech and published before the triumph of the Counter-reformation had until this time been forbidden and destroyed and their authors had to be forgotten as 'heretics'. Only now was it possible to offer a full picture of the history of Czech-written literature since the fifteenth

century. The religious tolerance allowed now even reprints of some important works written by Czech non-Catholics. In this context, some new historical sources could be published and this contributed to a better knowledge of the country's past, understood sometimes as 'national history'.

The abolition of serfdom was regarded by traditional historiography as the starting point of the migration from the Czech-speaking countryside to the German towns. Recent research has revised this opinion in two respects: firstly, the immigration from the countryside had already started before the abolition of serfdom; secondly, the towns in the core territory of Bohemia were ethnically not as strongly Germanized as in Moravia. Nevertheless, more important from the point of view of identity crisis was the difference in the experience of personal freedom between the Czech-speaking and the German-speaking peasant. The German peasant entered a society whose official language was similar to his local dialect. The Czech peasant entered a society whose official language he was unable to understand. The difference in possibility of social advancement – and also in the search for a new identity – became apparent.

The reform of jurisdiction was discussed but not finished until after 1800. For this reason, it had a limited impact on the masses of people. Nevertheless, the educated public, partially Czech by origin, was well informed and accepted the principle of equality of human beings. The abolition of serfdom itself was regarded as a great demonstration of the principles of equality, which opened the possibility of new social relations (and identities).

The new school system was also an expression of this trend towards equality. From the point of view of the change of identities, its impact was ambivalent. In theory, all higher schools and the university in Prague were open to everyone regardless of social origin. On the other hand, the replacement of Latin by German as the language of instruction created a new inequality. German native speakers and also sons from bilingually educated families were in a more advantageous position in comparison with those who were born in Czech-speaking families.

The elementary schools received – unlike all higher schools – the 'local language' as the language of instruction. This was an important point of departure not only for the improvement of alphabetization, but also for the awareness of ethnic identity. Somehow, it could also be regarded as an important sign for the prestige of the Czech language.

While the elementary schools remained under ecclesiastical control, the majority of higher schools became secularized: the proportion of secularized themes increased and new scientific knowledge was allowed to enter education. Themes from history and geography achieved an unintended importance for the awareness of the specificity of one's own region, country, and nation.

The secularization of education together with the liberalization of intellectual and scientific life influenced the profile of the new emerging social strata – the secular 'intellectuals' (or better 'intelligentsia') who lived off contracted work or through free professions and who became partly independent

of the state and religious control, even though the degree of independence of various professions differed from a totally loyal clerk in state service to a relatively independent attorney or surgeon. Naturally, this new category of educated people, without the disadvantage inherited in their birth, sometimes had difficulties in the search for a position which would correspond to their qualifications. It is not surprising that some of them defined a new understanding of social and material interests and were strongly interested in the search for identity.

That is to say, most of these new intellectuals did not belong to any established estate or self-conscious traditional professional group. Even those who were originally educated as priests or friars did not regard their affiliation to the Church as a decisive identity. Some of them identified with their aristocratic sponsors (and with the Bohemian nobility), with a limited chance to be accepted as members of this noble class. Some of them identified with the modernizing centralist state, in so far as they found jobs in state services. It was difficult for them to accept other traditional identities and so the search for a new identity seemed 'inevitable' for them.

The internal and institutional reforms of social and cultural life were only one part of the changes that shook the traditional social relations and identities of the old regime in the Habsburg monarchy. The other category of shocks were external in origin, did not depend on the state policy, and came from outside.

The most famous and influential among them originated from the French Revolution and were strengthened by the interventionist wars against it. In these wars, the Habsburg armies played the central role and could not be omitted in the system of communication in their Empire. Given the conditions of Central Europe, it was impossible to introduce a total blockade of information on the French Revolution, as was realized, with some success, in Russia and in Spain.

Since revolutionary terms like 'liberty' and 'equality' could not be ignored because they were an integral part of daily news, the governmental ideologists tried to adopt them and use them as positive values – naturally, not to announce the fall of the old regime, but on the contrary, as natural features of this regime. 'True' liberty and equality is realized not in the 'falsified' sense in France, but in the Habsburg lands. Later, the revolutionary term, 'la patrie', was adopted as 'Vaterland'. On the other hand, the term 'la nation' did not become an object of dynastic revaluation – maybe because it was not regarded as a danger to the stability of the old regime.

Even though the wars against revolutionary France affected the lands of the Crown of Bohemia only marginally, the German and Czech reading public was regularly informed about the battles and military campaigns and the 'French danger' was present, at least indirectly. The psychological and educational impact of these reports was immense: never before had the population received such detailed information about the war. Reports presented the war not only as the ruler's war, but also as 'our war', a war against a common enemy and this enemy was often defined ethnically: 'the French'. War reports were in some

sense an instrument of identification, but they also offered a schooling in imagination: you never knew the consequences of military operations, of battles won or lost – the only thing you could do, was to imagine the different alternatives.

Beside this, the reading public – and indirectly also the people – received through war reports an immense amount of geographical information about foreign countries, peoples, towns, rivers etc. Some of these names the Czech and the German reading public had never heard of and, above all, this was a practical training in imagination: imagining the existence of ‘the other’, people could imagine their own group, their own country.

Later on, especially during the Napoleonic wars, another factor of identification was offered by military billeting and transits. For the first time, Czech peasants and urban inhabitants met others who spoke a language different from the usual Czech or German: French, and also the Slavic languages, like Russian. We know from contemporary comments that the Czech people oscillated between sympathy with soldiers who spoke a similar language, and aversion against the parasitic demands of foreign (and not only foreign) armies.

It is significant that all other innovations happening in the neighbourhood were overshadowed by the Revolution and wars. The process of dissolution of the Old Empire received only a marginal place in newspapers and contemporary comments. We can interpret this marginalization of the Reich as a partial success of the efforts of the Viennese government to strengthen the Austrian identity of both Czech and German speakers in contrast to the identity based on the Old Empire. The events in the ‘Reich’ were interpreted as events which happened abroad, in foreign countries.

In the end, we have to mention some events which did not change the life and institutions in the Empire, but mobilized the attention of the broad masses insofar as they also influenced the search for identities. Three great political festivities at the beginning of the 1790s played this role. Chronologically the first was the public transfer of the Bohemian Crown Jewels to Prague from Vienna, where they had been kept since the time of Maria Theresa. The transportation of the Crown Jewels of the Kingdom of Bohemia was accompanied by festive processions and meetings, where the feeling of Landespatriotismus were demonstrated, sometimes explicitly as a reaction to Viennese centralism.

The reason for transportation was the second festivity: the coronation of Leopold II as king of Bohemia in 1791 and one year later – after his unexpected death – another coronation, that of his son Franz. Both coronations were opportunities for great ceremony not only for the nobility but also for the people. Thousands of peasants and artisans were invited to come from the provinces to Prague for this occasion.

While these three festivities corresponded to the traditional patterns of the old regime, the attempt to awaken Bohemian patriotism in 1808 intended to mobilize all strata of society, aiming to strengthen the people’s will to resist an eventual French invasion of Bohemia. As part of these patriotic activities, the

old medieval Kingdom was celebrated and even the Czech Hussites were presented as an example of bravery and of the love for fatherland. After the defeat in 1809 patriotic agitation was stopped. Nevertheless, this short period offered to the small group of Czech patriots an opportunity to strengthen the arguments for, and to improve instruments and forms of, national agitation.

At least one negative experience with governmental 'innovations' has to be mentioned: the catastrophic failure and bankruptcy of state finances in 1811, which struck almost all inhabitants of the Monarchy. The loss of savings through the decision of the state did not provoke any larger social unrest, but it affected the search for identities, because it urgently reminded all state subjects that they lived in the same country and shared the same fate.

In the last part of this contribution, we ask, how did people respond to the challenge of all these historical events? How did all these changes and innovations influence the identity crisis and the search for new identities?

We have to resist a simplifying temptation to draw a teleological line from the identity crisis provoked by enlightened reforms to the creation of the modern Czech national identity. During the critical period, we distinguish several activities based on different and mutually overlapping identities. The aristocratic Landespatriotismus survived as an activating medium of scientific research on history of the kingdom, its old literature and the Czech language itself. Analogically, baroque patriotism, with strong religious affiliations, also survived the period of enlightened absolutism, stressing the traditions of the autonomous kingdom. Although both variants of old patriotism were based on anti-modernist feelings, they were partially compatible with the new identity which emerged with enlightened regional patriotism. This enlightened patriotism regarded the patriotic individual (usually an intellectual) as responsible for the wealth and prosperity of the region and its population: he had to improve the situation through school education, scientific research, and cultural activities.

During the last decade of the eighteenth century, this regional patriotism, originally intellectual, exclusive and in most cases *German-writing*, diverged into several streams. One of them kept the concept of a purely economic improvement of the country, disregarding linguistic aspects. Another integrated into the learned activities of Landespatriotismus. The third regarded its main responsibility as improving the cultural standard and education of the most neglected part of the population – the Czech-speaking part. This patriotism started to support Czech publishing not only on economic matters but also on the past of Bohemia, on its heroes, on the present situation and also descriptions of foreign countries as 'other'. A specific component of these educational efforts offered to the Czech public were translations (and increasingly also original works) of fiction, mostly 'popular' reading and in some places (above all in Prague) Czech-speaking theatre, with both translated pieces, and pieces from the history of Bohemia. This was the environment in which some intellectuals wrote enthusiastic 'defences' of the Czech language.

The enlightened patriotic activities were in most cases written in German, as it was the usual language of communication in the Habsburg monarchy at the

end of the eighteenth century. The minority of *Czech-writing* enlightened patriots demonstrated that they accepted – beside a regional and professional identity – some kind of ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the use of Czech language was also compatible with baroque patriotism and eventually also with aristocratic Landes patriotism. In spite of this overlapping of identities, they evidently differed in their social background. The *Czech-writing* patriotism of that time could hardly count on material or moral support from the ruling elites. The *Czech-writing* engagement could, in other words, bring no profits to the patriots. Some degree of selfless enthusiasm was a necessary precondition of this branch of patriotism and the activists could at best earn their reward in the immaterial field of prestige.

However, this patriotic attitude expressed the heritage of the basic moral principles of enlightened patriotism: self-denying and active love for the fatherland without regard to any material profit. Prestige was then regarded as some kind of moral, spiritual substitute for profit. Symptomatically formulated on the threshold of the nineteenth century by Bernard Bolzano, Professor in Moral Philosophy at the University in Prague, was a concept of regional patriotism, where the enlightenment and religious traditions were combined: patriotism was an expression of Christian charity imposed upon the people by God. In his understanding, all kinds of patriotic activities were fully in accord with religious moral principles.

Beside this combination of the enlightened and baroque patriotic traditions, another combination emerged at the very same time, Austrian state-patriotism, proposed in the above mentioned crisis year of 1808. The love for the fatherland was presented as an integral part of the love for the Emperor, who was presented as ‘father’ of his subjects. The official propaganda offered a twofold identity: the broader one with the Emperor and his Empire, the narrower one with the concrete historical Land. The new identity, offered by official Austrian state-patriotism, was accepted as a central one by a very small stratum of the state bureaucracy in Bohemia and partly among aristocrats. Nevertheless it was immanently or explicitly accepted also by the broader masses of population but not as their central identity.

For those patriotic intellectuals who tried to define their ‘national’ or regional identity in a new way, one central question had to be answered: how to define and describe the fatherland, ‘patria’, as an object of care and love? Where is the homeland of one’s fellow-countrymen? Three answers can be distinguished at the threshold of the nineteenth century, corresponding to different types of old patriotism and to their modified versions.

The surviving concept of regional patriotism was related to a region, defined by political (or historical) borders, without regard to its internal structure and also without regard to the ethnic borders. Ethnic identities of the inhabitants were respected as a specific feature of the region. This old concept implied some overlapping with Landes patriotism and with baroque patriotism and its linguistic or ethnic ‘neutrality’ meant that German was its basic language of communication and that its impact was limited and acceptable above all for

German-speaking enlightened elites, while the Czech-speaking population remained almost untouched.

Those intellectuals, ethnic Czechs by origin, who felt responsible to their ethnic countrymen, defined the 'patria' in a different way. The most important among them, Josef Jungmann, defined the fatherland (for the first time in 1806) as a territory, where people speak the same language, 'my' language. In this context, they used as synonym of fatherland the term 'narod' – nation. This term was not a neologism invented by them, but an old term used in the Czech language since the sixteenth century and understood at least since the seventeenth century as a community characterized by common history, living place and also by common language.

The third concept of fatherland was formulated at the same time by Professor Bolzano as a vision of one nation comprising all the inhabitants of Bohemia, who would be able to use or understand both Czech and German, i.e. a bilingual society. This vision seems to be very up-to-date, even fashionable today; nevertheless, the future proved, very soon, that it was only a utopian vision. Even if Bolzano was in his time more popular (above all among students) and influential than Jungmann, it was not his, but Jungmann's vision, which was accepted by young educated men in their search for a new group identity.

If we ask why this linguistic concept of national identity became the most attractive one, we have to take into account that these newly educated intellectuals and students proceeded from the lower middle classes; they were sons of artisans, small shopkeepers and peasants. Most of them kept in contact with their families and the localities where they were born, and were well aware about their way of life and about the impact of enlightened reforms.

The Czech-speaking artisan or peasant was, thanks to these reforms, personally free and regarded as an equal human being, he was often wealthy enough to acquire some degree of self-consciousness and for this reason he realized a humiliating fact, which was not relevant for his parents or grand parents: that he was excluded from the new emerging society of 'equals' because the language he spoke was rejected by this society as inferior. As long as the horizon of Czech-speakers was limited by the feudal estate, this inferior status of his language played no important role: the only linguistic difference he experienced as 'naturally' inferior to him was that in relation to the German-speaking landlord and his servants. As soon as he or his son overstepped the bounds of the local estate, he experienced his Czech ethnicity as a handicap or even as a source of humiliation. 'We are foreigners in our own land', commented one educated peasant as early as the 1780s.

It is evident that among those who experienced this inequality were young sons who started on the difficult process of achieving higher education. Even though they were personally able to learn German sooner or later, the only language of education, they were not able to achieve better social positions and jobs. This feeling of injustice provoked in some of them a need for total assimilation, but another reaction became increasingly frequent: the decision to struggle for linguistic equality in Bohemia, i.e., to accept and

support the ethnic concept of national identity and of the nation, proposed by Jungmann.

The traditional historians regard this programme as Herderian and 'romanticist' – and for the same reason, some social scientists denounce it. Naturally, Herder played an important role as inspiration and as a source of arguments and similarly, German Romanticism was welcomed by Jungmann as validation of his concept, which was, however, formulated and written earlier than the famous 'Reden' of Fichte and the pamphlets of Ludwig Jahn.

There is no doubt that there were also emotional motifs behind the decision to accept an ethnic national identity. The 'irrational' love for language was derived from the more understandable love for his countrymen, for those inhabitants of the country he felt identity with. In this respect, Jungmann's proposals represents rather the heritage of enlightened patriotism than the influence of 'romanticism'.

Very soon, this ethno-national identity started to diverge into a moderate and a consistent stream. The moderate patriots regarded the Czech language as a loved symbol of community, they enjoyed using and developing it, but they regarded the demands for its equality with German as utopian and even as unnecessary. To adore the Czech language and to be proud of Czech national history did not negate their pessimism concerning the chance of the Czech language becoming a modern written language. For this reason, German had to maintain its domination in Bohemia.

The consistent stream aimed to achieve a real and not just formal equality between both languages. Sooner or later, the Czech language had to be able to express all modern feelings and thoughts and to describe complicated connections. For this reason, it had to be accepted as a language of instruction in schools and as a language of communication in public life. Even if this vision seemed to be a utopian one in the eyes of contemporaries, these claims cannot be interpreted as a mere project of romanticism. Neither can they be explained as a tool in the struggle for political power, as was the case a century later.

The interpretation has to take into account that the enlightened concept of equal human beings was later accompanied by the proto-liberal concept of equal opportunities for every man. These principles, however, could not be fulfilled – at least according to the opinion of these patriots – under conditions of differential prestige and unequal possibilities of different languages. So far, the decision to embrace the linguistic national identity had not been very far from the emerging ideas of civil society and equality of its members. Additionally, the struggle for equality of languages (and their speakers) has something to do with the need for prestige and acknowledgement felt by the Czech-speaking intellectuals.

For a better understanding of this attitude, let us exemplify it by comparing the arguments used in favor of the Czech language by enlightened patriots in their 'Defences' from the 1780s and 1790s, with the arguments used by Jungmann in favour of the Czech language in 1806. In the eighteenth century Defences the Czech language was celebrated above all for its beauty, rich vocabulary and its

age (as a language spoken by medieval Czech kings, etc.). Its practical use was recommended to the elites of that time: the landlord needs it for better understanding of his (Czech) servants or serfs, the officer can better understand his soldiers, the surgeon his patients. The general position of these Defences was a call addressed from below to the higher classes of Bohemian society.

Jungmann also praised historical and aesthetic values of the Czech language, but his most important argument was that it was above all the Czech people who needed the improvement of their language. It was not important to him which language was used by the nobility; what was important was that the Czech speaker, if he did not know German, had no chance for any social advancement.

The search for new identities proceeded in Bohemia at the time around 1800 in different ways and offered different identities. Naturally, it was always a matter of individual decision, which alternative was preferred, or how the hierarchy of old and new identities was constructed. To avoid the criticism of being under the influence of the concepts of 'teleology' and 'ethnicism', let us put the concluding question, concerning the chances of different alternatives to be realized as the generally accepted modern national identity.

The non-ethnic regional patriotism kept its position as an identity accepted by German-speaking and bilingual intellectuals for several decades. Nevertheless, since it did not aim at any mass-mobilization, it was unable to compete with other identities, but could survive as a marginal identity in connection with another one. The same could be said about regional identity as a component of a national one, even though the regionalists tried to mobilize the population. So, for example, the Moravian regionalists opposed, until the second half of the nineteenth century, full integration into the Czech nation with the result that the national identity of the Moravian population existed alongside the regional identity not as an alternative but as an additional identity.

The alternative of the 'Bohemian' bilingual nation had a real chance of success only if accepted not only by Czech but also German speakers. Czechs, so far as they achieved higher education, fulfilled the claim for bilinguality, but only a few Germans by origin did the same by learning the Czech language so as to become consciously bilingual 'Bohemians'. Nevertheless, with the emerging national movement in German states, an increasing number of German intellectuals in Bohemia decided to accept the linguistic concept of German identity and regarded themselves as members of the German nation. This decision was for the first time demonstrated in 1848 in the dispute about participation in elections for the parliament in Frankfurt. Once this decision was taken, a bilingual nation in Bohemia ceased to be an alternative.

The old surviving Landespatriotismus also rejected Frankfurt and German identity, but it was socially exclusive and its aristocratic representatives only in very few exceptional cases supported the efforts to improve the Czech language as an integral part of their identity with the land. The decisive part of the nobility did not renege on their German language – not as a symbol of their national identity but as a symbol of their social superiority.

Consequently, the linguistic definition of a new national identity in Bohemia was the victorious alternative, because it was the only real way, which could integrate an intellectual patriotism with the Czech- (but also with the German-) speaking population. This does not mean that this population inevitably followed the 'national' call. Only if several conditions were fulfilled, could the real possibility of Phase B turn to the reality of Phase C. This is, nevertheless, already another problem.

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