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To take the measure of things and their  
mismeasure, to reason unto unreason, to  
suffer to count and to be accountable—such  
is the ratio of that form of life called the  
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## THE GEOGRAPHY OF IDENTITY

Edited by Patricia Yaeger

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**FRONTIERS, ISLANDS, FORESTS, STONES:  
Mapping the Geography of a German Identity in the  
Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1900**

**Pieter M. Judson**

In July of 1885, the newly founded League for the Bohemian Woods (*Böhmerwaldbund*) advertised a special sale in its quarterly newsletter under the headline "Relief Maps of Southern Bohemia." Using the maps of the Imperial and Royal Military-Geographic Institute in Vienna, a retired infantry lieutenant had developed a technology for producing finely detailed three-dimensional reliefs, which the journal praised enthusiastically. The league had negotiated an agreement with the inventor to produce relief maps of the Bohemian Woods at a reduced price, depending on how many orders he received. "We therefore urge all municipal and county governments, school administrators, financial institutions, and associations of every kind," wrote the editors, "to consider ... whether they wish to order this extremely important product, which will contribute considerably to [the growth of] exact knowledge about our land."<sup>1</sup>

In the 1880s, "exact knowledge about our land" became a new and vital concern for German nationalist organizations like the League for the Bohemian Woods. As voluntary associations like this one labored to create a sense of national identity among German speakers in the multiethnic Habsburg Monarchy, they situated that identity in local geography and history rather than, as tradition dictated, in allegiance to certain abstract cultural ideals. Familiar local relationships were to be redefined in terms of nationalist struggle as a way of making German identity a more compelling part of local village

This paper is dedicated to Milan Hornak and Lars Larson, with whom I witnessed the return of several Sudeten Germans to southern Bohemia and Moravia and some of its rhetorical consequences. I would like to thank Laura L. Downs, Daniel A. Segal, and Douglas McKeown for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> *Mitteilungen des deutschen Böhmerwaldlandes* [MDBL], no. 2 (1885): 35. The journal cited the expert opinion of the foremost geographic journal of Germany, that this new type of relief map constituted a potentially rich font of knowledge for schoolchildren and amateur geographers.

life. German speakers in the ethnically mixed Moravian town of Iglau (Jihlava),<sup>2</sup> for example, should no longer think of themselves as Iglauers or even as Moravians but above all as Germans. Their ties to other Germans in Central Europe must now outweigh the familiar social and commercial relationships they enjoyed with neighbors who spoke Czech.

This transformation of identity would be accomplished by locating national identity in the geographic spaces people occupied, by redefining those spaces according to their particular nationalist significance. To continue with the example of Iglau, the town became known in the 1880s primarily as an island of Germans surrounded by a sea of hostile Czechs. Provinces like Moravia, where many such islands were to be found, became known as *frontiers*, where Germans and Slavs met on imagined borders. New historical traditions were gradually developed to justify this reconceptualization of local identity in national terms. Activists claimed the forests of Southern Bohemia (the Bohemian Wood), for example, as the ancestral home of ancient Teutons, and they pointed out the ways in which architectural styles and town planning, the very stones themselves, confirmed the uniquely German character of the landscape. Using several of these related strategies, German nationalists hoped one day to supplant parochial village identities with more self-consciously nationalist ones.

In this paper I examine the way nationalist activists in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy transformed their rhetoric about the German nation, using spatial metaphors that attributed a national identity to the very landscape itself. In doing so these activists sought to establish a common and politically useful national identity for all German-speaking inhabitants of Austria's socially and geographically diverse regions.<sup>3</sup> German identity, formerly a desirable elite cultural

<sup>2</sup> Wherever possible I have tried to use English terms for place names in the ethnically mixed regions of the monarchy. Where such terms do not exist, I have relied on nineteenth-century German place names as they appeared in the newspapers, almanacs, and records of voluntary associations that I examined for this paper, and I have added the common Czech, Slovene, Polish, or Romanian name in parentheses. The choice should in no way imply a preference for the German names on my part.

<sup>3</sup> In 1867 the unitary Habsburg Empire had been divided into an Austrian and an Hungarian state, each with its own domestic government but

commodity, became more of a popular local identity in the 1880s, defined empirically according to language use and rooted in physical landscapes. If earlier definitions of German-ness stressing culture and humanist conviction never died out completely, the radically changing political and social conditions in the empire helped foster newer, more empirically based forms of self-identification. These later nationalisms presumed a transhistorical concept of identity, a concept that required the maintenance of cultural purity. Activists anchored the new German identity in identifiable spaces, conferring a specifically German identity on the land itself and staking a claim to any territory that was either currently or had been historically occupied by German speakers.

All too often, historians analyze the emergence of nationalist differences in any society by assuming that people necessarily privilege one set of attributes (such as language use) over others (such as common regional culture). Yet, contrary to popular myths about the nature of politics in the multicultural Habsburg Monarchy, differences in language use alone did not magically produce nationalist politics. Those who believe that class or regional politics inevitably crystallized around existing and historic differences of language ignore at their peril the situational specificity of national identities. Differences in language use may have been decisive for identity formation in some, but certainly not all, cases, as Gary Cohen, Istvan Deak, and Katherine Verdery have demonstrated in works on differ-

ent regions and institutions of the monarchy.<sup>4</sup> Cohen's masterful work on Prague's German-speaking minority clearly shows that, over time, people of the urban lower classes often changed nationalities if no German nationalist community infrastructure (clubs, schools, theaters, etc.) adequately addressed their social needs in specifically German nationalist terms.

Furthermore, if we examine early forms of German nationalist rhetoric, we find that they were not even necessarily founded on language use. To mid-nineteenth-century Austrians who thought about it, German identity corresponded far more to the cultivation of middle-class, liberal cultural values like education, enlightenment, individual self-control, and economic independence. The very first German nationalist association founded during the Revolution of 1848 proclaimed a belief that Germanness was based "not simply on the soil of birth or language of culture but rather on ... nobility of action and the worthiness of conviction."<sup>5</sup> In theory at least, individuals from any background—Jews, Slavs, peasants, and workers—could eventually attain a German identity through education and acculturation. German nationalists in the Habsburg Monarchy viewed Germanness as a relatively open identity, one available to anyone who adopted its principles and lived according to its norms, even though few individuals outside the middle class might actually obtain the requisite income or education. For these German speakers, nationalism served as an ideology of public integration in Central and Eastern Europe, one that would eventually wipe away the backward and particularist attitudes held by uneducated peasants and Slavs, joining them all in a great German liberal nation.

These early German nationalists rarely justified their pre-eminent social position in terms of their numbers, even though

<sup>4</sup> See Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Istvan Deak, *Beyond Nationalism: A Political and Social History of the Habsburg Officer Corps 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Deak, "Comments," *Austrian History Yearbook*, no. 3 (1967); and Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Schwarz-Roth-Gold, a newspaper published by the Association of Germans in Austria, no. 1 (11 July 1848).

both sharing a common foreign and commercial policy. The Habsburg monarch was both emperor of Austria and king of Hungary. This paper deals with the Austrian half of the dual monarchy, a state whose territory included the present-day states of Austria, the Czech Republic (Bohemia and Moravia), and Slovenia as well as substantial pieces of Italy, Poland, and the Ukraine. For convenience I refer to this state as "Austria" or simply as the "monarchy." The following is a breakdown of how people identified their "language of daily use" (*Umgangssprache*) according to the census of 1880, the first to record this information: German: 36.75 percent; Czech: 23.77 percent; Polish: 14.86 percent; Ukrainian: 12.81 percent; Slovene: 5.23 percent; Serbo-Croatian: 2.6 percent; Italian: 3.07 percent; Romanian: 0.87 percent. See Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, vol. 3/1 (Vienna: Verlag der Osterreich, 1980) table 1.

theirs was the language spoken by the largest number of people (ca. 36 percent) in the monarchy. Rather, they constantly referred to their culture's historic mission as creator of a civilized public sphere in Central Europe. According to these liberal nationalists, neither geographic location nor the sheer number of people who spoke a given language was as decisive in determining a group's relative status or power in the monarchy as was quality, defined by the group's cultural and financial achievement. As one nationalist author pointed out, "With the exception of Italian, German is the only one of all the languages spoken in the Austrian Monarchy that has an absolute value; the others have only a relative, local value."<sup>6</sup>

The internal structure of the empire encouraged this kind of cultural definition of German nationality. Proficiency in German was a crucial prerequisite for any upwardly mobile bourgeois seeking higher social status by entering government or military service. In reply to Czech nationalist accusations of government favoritism toward German candidates for the civil service, for example, the Liberal minister of the interior could state, "the primary consideration in bureaucratic appointments is an official's ability to do his job. If a candidate is fluent in German, then no matter what his ethnic background, he would be considered qualified in this respect."<sup>7</sup> As the language of much interregional commerce, German was also closely associated with financial and social achievement. Many German liberals presumed that as upwardly mobile Czech or Slovene *Bürger* became financially successful and better educated, they would naturally identify themselves as Germans, as indeed many did in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>8</sup> Nor did early Austro-German nationalists demand what we would call complete ethnic assimilation from those who aspired to a German iden-

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous pamphlet, *Die Deutschen im Nationalitätenstaat Österreich* (Meran, 1887) 21.

<sup>7</sup> Gustav Kolmer, *Parlament und Verfassung in Österreich*, 8 vols. (Vienna & Leipzig: C. Fromme, 1902-14) 1:89.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Peter Vodopivec' discussion of Slovene academic and writer Dragotin Dezman in "Die sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Ansichten des deutschen Bürgertums in Krain vom Ende der sechziger bis zum Beginn der achtziger Jahre des 19. Jahrhunderts" in *Geschichte der Deutschen im Bereich des heutigen Slowenien, 1848-1941*, ed. H. Rumppler and A. Suppan (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1988) particularly 87-93.

tity. In theory, at least, German nationalists encouraged the local preservation of non-German languages and cultural traditions. After all, what language one spoke in the private sphere of the home or even at the local community level was hardly a matter of political concern. Nationalists did, however, expect strict assimilation to cosmopolitan German values in the context of one's public or institutional life.<sup>9</sup>

Since the very existence of the central state guaranteed the German language a functionally privileged status, German liberals thought of themselves proudly as the monarchy's *Staatsvolk*, or "state people," and not at all equivalent to the other competing ethnic groups. They connected their own special status to the very survival of the state. Not surprisingly, the sporadic attempts by a handful of German activists to develop a politics organized specifically around German nationalism before 1880 typically met with embarrassed silence or outright opposition from liberal leaders. German speakers needed no special nationalist movement; theirs was after all the language and culture of civilization. For the same reason German liberals interpreted early Slav nationalist demands for linguistic parity in the 1860s and 1870s more as a threat to the very state itself, and to the liberal ideas of civilization it embodied, than as a national threat to the Germans.

Neither this liberal vision of German identity nor the liberal understanding of community was completely transparent in its enthusiasm for the eventual inclusion of ethnic others in the nation. Most liberals believed that full membership in the civic community had to be earned. They considered the vote, that ultimate token of inclusion, to be a political function assigned to people who had reached a certain level of economic independence and educational achievement. In the 1870s, for example, German Liberal party leader Ernst von Plener challenged the Socialists' characterization of the vote as a natural or civic right, calling it instead a function "that the state can

<sup>9</sup> German Liberal party discussions of the proposed texts of a nationality clause for the 1867 constitution stressed the local rights of individual ethnic groups while retaining a privileged position for German in the administration. See especially Gerald Stourzh, "Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten und die österreichische Dezentralverfassung von 1867" in *Der österreichisch-ungarische Ausgleich von 1867. Vorgeschichte und Wirkungen*, ed. P. Berger (Vienna: Herold, 1967) 186-218.



confer on those who offer a guarantee that they will exercise it properly."<sup>10</sup> Laboring and petty-bourgeois males might gain the vote as they became more like the liberals themselves, that is, as they achieved sufficient property and education.

The same could be said of liberal ideas about the monarchy's various ethnic and religious groups. Neither geographic location nor sheer quantity (the number of people who spoke a given language) was as decisive in determining a group's relative status or power as was quality, defined by cultural and financial achievement. Liberals based this understanding of the world on a set of crucial (if unacknowledged) epistemological dualities that underlay their visions. They divided the universe into two theoretically separate and implicitly hierarchically arranged spheres, the worlds of active and passive citizenship. The boundaries separating these two worlds were often masked by a universalist rhetoric that stressed active participation and civic inclusion. Liberals insisted on political equality for the inhabitants of the public sphere. Nevertheless, the importance they assigned to financial independence and education enabled them to maintain hierarchically arranged relationships with the women and children, as well as racial and class inferiors, whose immaturity and dependent status kept them in the private sphere. One of liberalism's most powerful legacies to the new nationalism in Austria was to be the translation of this fundamental relationship between the public and private spheres into a new set of public hierarchies organized around national identities.

An 1861 pamphlet entitled "The Germans in Krain" illustrates the startling ways in which ideas about national identity were still developing along the lines of liberal hierarchic conceptions of active and passive citizenship rather than according to purely linguistic or ethnic concepts of identity.<sup>11</sup> The pamphlet replied to Slovene nationalist arguments that the identity of the province Krain (roughly comparable to present-day Slovenia) was primarily Slavic, a claim based purely on the

<sup>10</sup> See *Stenographische Protokolle des Hauses der Abgeordneten* (Vienna, 1867-1911) session of 17 December 1874; also quoted in Wilhelm Wadl, *Liberalismus und soziale Frage* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987) 233.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, *Das Deutschtum in Krain. Ein Wort zur Aufklärung* (Graz, 1862).

evidence of how few people spoke German as opposed to Slovene. The German-speaking author attributed the misguided belief that linguistic use alone determined national identity to the bad influence of Napoleonic ideas about universal suffrage. ("Popular rule established by a revolution is always inimical to culture.") The author then proceeded to explain why the national identity of Krain should be considered German. To begin with, "the history of the region suffices to prove that Krain was always a part of the German Confederation." Thus political tradition (which also placed Bohemia and Moravia in the German confederation) pointed to a common identity with the rest of the German lands. But what political history tells us is of minor importance compared to what cultural history can reveal about national identity. "Whoever ... wanted to make any kind of career for himself, or to educate himself in any way, spoke and read German.... Over time," continued the writer, "things developed so that on one side stood a raw, ignorant mass opposed to a small number of Germans on the other side who enjoyed the civilized pleasures of life." Here the author admitted that German speakers constituted a minority of the population. Nevertheless, their mere presence gave the province a German national identity.

The author then reminded the reader that a German cultural identity is certainly available to other peoples. After all, the Slav "who strove for education and who sought out Germans in order to gain culture from them was only following a natural urge; he sought his advantage.... Humanity strives for knowledge and culture, which the Slavs can only seek from the Germans, not the other way around."<sup>12</sup> History was working inexorably, it seems, to create Germans of Slavs, once the latter had committed themselves to the general project of gaining enlightenment. In conclusion, this same author claimed that since "in every state intelligence, not numbers, has ruled," the "Germans in Krain have the mission, as history demonstrates, to raise the Slovene people to a higher level of education, and it must fulfill this mission, *without wanting simply to Germanize the people.*" [emphasis added]<sup>13</sup> The writer made clear that his intention was not "simply to germanize" the populace, for that would involve forcing an emancipation that only education and

<sup>12</sup> *Deutschtum in Krain* 9-11.

<sup>13</sup> *Deutschtum in Krain* 15.

self-knowledge could bring about. And yet a chasm separated those who achieved culture and education from the "raw ignorant mass." The occasional Slovene who wished "to make something of himself" could only do so if he bridged the gap and joined the Germans. The differences in levels of civilization between German and Slovene cultures would always remain so large that Slovenes could obtain enlightenment only by becoming Germans; there was no other possible alternate route to independence and active citizenship.

This pamphlet typified the views of German-speaking liberals on matters of citizenship in the 1860s and 1870s. It suggested both the idea of universal inclusion (anyone can become German and an active citizen) as well as the implicit notion of superiority and hierarchy (only Germans have a valid national identity). Given this set of beliefs, German liberals saw little need to respond to the nationalist challenges posed by Czechs and Slovenes using arguments involving numbers. They militated against any attempt to pin down Germanness and the German community by specific location or population statistics. Relief maps marking German territories were the furthest thing from their minds; after all, their understanding of national identity implied that any territory in Central Europe could become German and that Germanness could not be limited simply to places where German speakers constituted a numerical majority. German power in the monarchy, they believed, derived not from numbers but from an advanced civilization that guaranteed German its privileged position as the language of the bureaucracy and the language of instruction at all Austrian universities, from Graz to Prague, from Lemberg (Lvov) to Czernowitz (Cernauti).

Historians traditionally believed that this attitude changed abruptly in 1866 when Prussia defeated Austria militarily and ejected it from the German Confederation. In particular they claimed that this event launched a significant German nationalist movement that sought to join the primarily German-speaking regions of Austria to the new German Empire. Yet with the exception of a politically insignificant minority, most German-speaking Austrians did not adopt this view.<sup>14</sup> Modern

<sup>14</sup> In 1866 the emperor had suspended the constitution of 1861, and most Austrian German politicians interpreted the defeat of 1866 in moral terms as a result of this egregious form of government misrule. They used the

nationalist movements do not grow out of simple facts such as language use or objective appraisals of census results. And in Austria in the 1860s, the political power and cultural hegemony of the German middle classes was still very much on the rise. Only a year later in 1867 the German liberals in Austria celebrated their greatest political triumph as the emperor reluctantly conceded to their demands for a real constitution. The simultaneous division of the empire into self-administering Austrian and Hungarian halves in 1867 only reinforced the notion of a predominantly German cultural identity for the western half.

These political circumstances changed only in the 1880s when the German liberals unexpectedly lost their majority in the Austrian Parliament. Still, it was not the fall of the German Liberal cabinet that changed people's views on national identity so much as the aggressively anti-Liberal and explicitly anti-German tone adopted by the new government. This coalition of conservative, clerical, and Slavic nationalist parties under Count Eduard Taaffe, known as the Iron Ring, created an Austrian state that no longer explicitly endorsed the privileges of German culture and language.<sup>15</sup> The new government moved quickly to pass a series of laws designed to equalize Czech and German language use in provincial courts in Bohemia and Moravia, and it divided the Charles University in Prague into German and Czech-language sections. By themselves these measures did not necessarily constitute an attack on the interests of German nationalists. The second measure had in fact attracted some German liberal support in the 1870s when it was first debated. The new government, however, framed this legislation explicitly as a well-deserved concession to the Czech nationalist parties and thereby caused panic among German liberals in Bohemia and Moravia. The same thing occurred when the government decided to reduce suffrage requirements from ten to five gulden in annual taxes. Although some German liberals had proposed similar measures in the 1870s, they now saw the measure as a blatant attempt as an opportunity to argue for a restoration of the constitution and an expansion of the civic rights that it had guaranteed.

<sup>15</sup> On the advent of the Iron Ring and its policies see W. Jenks, *Austria under the Iron Ring 1879-1893* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1965).

tempt to alter the balance of power in favor of the Slavic parties in Parliament. In ethnically mixed provinces, German speakers tended to belong to the wealthier urban commercial and industrial classes, while Czechs and Slovenes were primarily peasants or involved in rural industries. The government's lowering of the franchise tax requirements tended to increase the proportion of Slavic to German voters.

It was only at this point that German national identity became detached from its traditional association with the central state. With this detachment came a politicization of German nationality as a means of combating the hostile new order that had taken over the reins of government. Self-identified German liberal nationalists developed defensive strategies against the new government's policies, strategies modeled on successful Czech nationalist politics as well as on liberal organizational traditions. A network of regional and interregional voluntary associations based on the example of liberal political clubs, and organized around nationalist issues, spearheaded the new movement.

These associations published universalist appeals, inviting all Germans to join in a common venture that outweighed any possible social or political distinctions.<sup>16</sup> In doing so, they began subtly to transform the earlier liberal appeal to a culture of elite humanism into an ethnically limited vision of nation based on linguistic and cultural ties. Within that nation, relations would be egalitarian, since members of any class or degree of education would share a common right to Germanness. "The German national movement," wrote one activist in 1881,

<sup>16</sup> These organizations, like their liberal predecessors, tended to reward their wealthier or better educated members with higher status positions of leadership. In this sense they inherited the liberal principles that combined a rhetoric of universal participation with an implicit system of social deference that privileged the wealthier or better educated members of a community. Lower middle-class German nationalists, frustrated by their inability to gain much influence in this new nationalist movement, often turned to anti-Semitic German nationalism as a more democratic alternative. See Pieter M. Judson, "Whether Race or Conviction Should Be the Standard: National Identity and Liberal Politics in 19th-century Austria," *Austrian History Yearbook* 22 (1991): 76-95.

knows no division of the community interest into individual interests ... the movement detests political organizations that try to invent and sharpen differences between city and countryside. We Austro-Germans desire the welfare of our united people; every member of the race, whether in priest's or bureaucrat's dress, whether in *Bürger* or farmer's clothing, is welcome in our national union.<sup>17</sup>

The appeal not only worked to erase potential class differences within an imagined German community; it also began, however subtly, to delineate the spatial dimensions of that national community, clearly locating it in both the city and the countryside. Since, in fact, those in the countryside had expressed very little interest in nationalist issues up until this moment, it was important to locate national identity as much in the rural areas as in urban ones.

The new nationalist associations emerged primarily, but not exclusively, in ethnically mixed regions, often to combat incursions by rival Czech nationalist organizations, which had themselves been busy defining local politics in terms of nationalist identity for over a decade. As language use replaced humanist ideals or financial accomplishment as the primary standard for measuring an individual's identity, and as knowledge of German no longer guaranteed local supremacy, activists increasingly worried about numbers. They aimed to regain political power by mobilizing superior numbers, to mobilize new social groups into the public political sphere where they could reinforce German nationalist claims to social privilege. Still, liberal nationalists faced several dilemmas as they struggled to create a politics organized around national identity. They sought to recruit new social forces to help strengthen their movement *without unleashing the violence of a social revolution*. The task was epic in proportions, for it required coordination among several ambitious projects. If all German speakers had to be convinced of the primacy of their German national identity—*itself no small task*—they also had to be mobilized in a useful, controlled way, one that did not endanger bourgeois leadership within this expanded German community.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Stügl, *Die Nationalvereine der deutschen Bürger und Bauern* (Krems, 1881) 2-3.



I have dealt elsewhere with the specific ways in which liberals worked to control this mobilization by defining the external marks of Germanness in terms of bourgeois modes of behavior.<sup>16</sup> Here I am more concerned with examining the other half of the equation, namely with the question of national rhetoric: just how did activists generate enthusiasm for national identity at the local level? How did they manage the ideological transformation of the German community from an abstract but exclusive collective hovering over Central Europe to one more tangibly rooted in local situations and landscapes? How did nationalist activists embed new ideas about national identity in a context of local identities? How, for example, did activists create a belief that profound differences separated neighbors who had hitherto shared several elements of local identity in a multilingual society?

The activists who promulgated the new nationalist identities drew from a fairly limited repertoire derived from their political experiences in the old liberal-dominated polity of the 1860s and 1870s. At first, their liberalism shaped the nationalist identities they constructed. Like liberalism, which had theoretically transcended the boundaries of ethnicity, region, or religion, the new nation constituted a community whose members, of whatever class background, shared a fundamental identity, one that far outweighed their real-world social differences. Yet also like liberalism, the new nationalism was organized around a series of essential differences, hierarchically arranged, separating members of the German community from members of other nations. If language use was to serve as the primary measure of this national identity—rather than education or accomplishment—it would still be within a liberal conceptual framework. The strategies for locating this new national identity in local contexts were organized around a reconceptualization of the local landscape according to terms derived from history and geography.

The first and most critical of these strategies involved the idea of the *frontier*, the border, the geographic place where opposing nations met and confronted each other, the setting for

the colossal and daily struggle between nations.<sup>19</sup> Language use was the critical marker of identity that situated the individual in this newly nationalized geographic setting. Regions in Bohemia, Moravia, or Styria became known as *frontiers*, although not because of their relative geographic or economic marginality to the rest of the monarchy.<sup>20</sup> Rather, the term indicated that German speakers in these territories lived among peoples who spoke other languages.<sup>21</sup>

While people on this *frontier* fought daily battles to maintain their German identity, others in the centers of German culture mobilized to support them, like home-front volunteers during a war. The Vienna-based German School Association (*Deutscher Schulerverein*), for example, worked to awaken Germans all over the monarchy to the plight of their brethren on the *frontier*. This organization, founded in 1880, raised money to fund schools in ethnically mixed regions where not enough German-speaking children lived to warrant state support for German-language schools.<sup>22</sup> Using an alarmist rhetoric which

<sup>19</sup> This struggle was conceptualized by some in terms borrowed from the colonial experiences of Britain, France, and Germany. Certainly, the reconceptualization of Germans as a people bringing civilization to the rugged, uncivilized East suggests this comparison, as did the Lockean notion that the Slavs, like other colonized peoples, forfeited ownership of the land because they could not cultivate it as productively as the Germans. The comparison, although powerful, is mainly a rhetorical one, since economic relations in the disputed territories do not resemble the colonizing experiences of Europeans in Africa, Asia, or the Americas.

<sup>20</sup> In the 1880s Bohemia and Moravia were in fact the most important centers of industrial production in the monarchy.

<sup>21</sup> The historian must be careful to avoid lending any credence to the notion that inhabitants of ethnically mixed regions somehow had a prior authentic national identity due to their language use, even if they remained technically unwilling to see themselves in such terms. In many regions of the monarchy individuals used several languages depending on the social context, whether domestic, public, or commercial. According to earlier definitions, a good knowledge of German might qualify an individual for a German identity, even though he might use a different language at home. By the 1880s, however, such an assumption no longer held true.

<sup>22</sup> For the state to support a primary school in a given language, there had to be at least forty school-age children in a single locality who spoke that language.

<sup>16</sup> See Judson, "Whether Race or Conviction Should Be the Standard" and "Inventing Germans: Class, Nationality and Colonial Fantasy at the Margins of the Hapsburg Monarchy," *Social Analysis* 33, special issue *Nations, Colonies and Metropolises*, ed. Daniel Segal and Richard Handler (1993): 47-67.



suggested that the German language was dying out "on the frontier" for lack of German-language schools, the association rapidly gained the highest membership—over 100,000—of any bourgeois organization in Central Europe. As they adopted a rhetoric of numbers and national competition, activists also broadened their concerns from schooling to creating economic opportunities for German speakers of the working classes who might otherwise emigrate. By claiming to address a variety of specifically local social problems, albeit in nationalist terms, these organizations quickly gained a significant following for themselves in the ethnically mixed regions.

The Union of the Bohemian Woods, for example, sponsored educational and apprenticeship programs for workers and employment bureaus and craft fairs to improve economic opportunities for artisans. It admonished its female members to hire only German-speaking domestics, and it also worked to lower the rate of illegitimate births and alcoholism among German-speaking working women. In an effort to lure tourists away from nearby Bavaria, the union even published guidebooks that touted the splendors of hiking the hills of southern Bohemia.

The *Südmark*, founded in 1889 to protect German interests from Slovene attack in South Styria, went so far as to promote immigration by poor farming families from South Germany. This organization hoped to buy up land that it could then make available to settlers at reduced rates and "gradually create bridges among the urban islands" of German speakers that dotted an imagined ocean of Slovenes.<sup>23</sup> The organization openly admitted its goal, "not simply to protect existing [German] property" but to "win new land." Another association, the Union of Germans in North Moravia, also promised to "win back ... territory that once belonged to us."<sup>24</sup>

Like the idea of the *fronier*, the new term *Sprachinsel* (literally, "language island") was another strategic innovation, coined to refer to towns inhabited by a majority of German speakers surrounded by a Slavic rural population. The changing self-identification of the German-speaking elite in the small

Moravian city of Iglau mentioned at the outset again provides an instructive example. In the 1850s, a travel account written by a prominent Moravian casually mentioned that while "the language of the inhabitants [of Iglau] is predominantly German ... the domestic servants speak mostly Bohemian or Moravian." Like other German-speaking liberals of his time, the author unselfconsciously linked language use to class position and not to membership in separately defined cultural or national communities. He did not even refer to the language spoken by the servants as a single rival language, Czech, which would imply national competition, but simply as local dialects (Bohemian and Moravian). Thirty-five years later, however, when the city's political leaders created the German Association for Iglau, they dramatized their national isolation by invoking the spatial metaphor of the island. Their program vowed "to nurture and protect the Germanic basis of our language island, to keep it undiminished and unbowed."<sup>25</sup> Creating an image of an island under siege, they redefined local identity along national lines. They downplayed the attention to class position that had struck the earlier observer as the more significant form of difference while mapping their linguistic identity using a geographic metaphor.

As part of yet another strategy to make the national status of these *frontiers* and *islands* visible to their inhabitants, German activists pointed to an array of local physical markers as the repositories of German identity. These markers might be cultural repositories of Germanness, as in the case of architectural and farming styles, or what I refer to as *stones*. Yet the very physical landscape itself might also be claimed as a specifically German place, as with *forests* like the Bohemian Woods. In both cases these familiar markers helped to map national differences in the confusing world of cultural mixing. Not only did these signs embody the German spirit of a certain locality; they also served to negotiate between local community identities and the larger, transregional nation. These markers helped to distinguish what was authentically German from what was Slavic at the local level and to connect those local German elements to a larger, Central European German culture.

<sup>23</sup> See Friedrich Pöck, *Grenzwacht im Südosten: ein halbes Jahrhundert Südmark* (Graz, 1940) 8.

<sup>24</sup> "Der Bund der Deutschen Nordmährens" in *Deutsche Volkskalender für das Jahr 1888* (Olmütz: Alpenland-Buchhandlung Südmark, 1888) 5.

<sup>25</sup> See *Deutscher Volkskalender für die Iglauer Sprachinsel* (1887) 7-8.

Nationalist associations encouraged people to meditate on the specifically German elements in their personal identities by attributing civilized virtues like "rationality," "neatness," or "careful planning" to German farms and towns in ethnically mixed regions. These virtues had the advantage of making Germanness so vague in content that it was easily visible to the casual observer (for as one nationalist noted, "every human activity that raises itself above the lowest levels is German, and only in the lowest categories does German work share its tasks with Slavic work"). That said, "sloppiness" clearly became the most recognizable attribute of the Slavs.<sup>26</sup>

It was not only important to establish the visible superiority of Germanness; the German history of these places also had to be made visible. Activists often referred to a civilizing mission undertaken by German-speaking colonists of the Middle Ages who had established outposts in barbarous Slavic territories. Even the recent Slav migrations back into those territories could not erase signs of German civilization planted centuries before. Discussing urban landscapes on the frontier, the Moravian Armand von Dumreicher guided his readers' attention to the few physical remains of this bygone civilizing influence. "Even older neighborhoods in present-day Slavic municipalities show a German orientation. All of this eastern culture was planted by German burgher colonists."<sup>27</sup> "Today, a bustling Slavic folk life fills the mighty and worthy frames left over from a German past. If the German people have vanished, their creations can still be found. *The stones still speak there ... they speak of that which was and is no more.*"<sup>28</sup> The stones, through their rational and distinctive placement, offer physical proof of the German identity of the place.

Taking this strategy to a new level, well beyond those who located the German identity of the region in the ostensibly civilizing ventures of medieval German colonizers, another writer claimed the entire Bohemian Woods region as the original (ur) home of ancient forest-dwelling Bavarians. He attrib-

<sup>26</sup> See discussion of this and further examples cited in Judson, "Inventing Germans" and Maria Lammich, *Das deutsche Osteuropabild in der Zeit der Reichsgründung* (Boppard am Rhein: H. Boldt, 1976) 37-40.

<sup>27</sup> Armand von Dumreicher, *Südostdeutsche Betrachtungen* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1893) 33.

<sup>28</sup> Dumreicher 38.

uted the ethnically mixed character of much of the region to recent Czech nationalist attempts to infiltrate the region and discredit its history as a purely German place.<sup>29</sup> Like much of this genre, his argument cites historical example in its attempt to establish an authentic German identity for the natural landscape. Yet by giving the Bohemian Woods a German identity, the writer produced an ahistoric vision of that local landscape. The place is German because it was *originally* German, despite whatever developments the vagaries of history have brought. This epistemological confusion shows how these arguments merged the older concept of German national rights based on cultural achievement with a more essentialist concept of national rights based on timeless truths. Paradoxically, the popular liberal mania for an empiricist, positivist science seems to have worked equally well to support both kinds of arguments.

Creolization of language and particularly of place names in ethnically mixed areas presented scientific-minded nationalists with a fertile field for connecting national identity to physical landscape.<sup>30</sup> In an exhaustive article entitled "Plöckenstein or Blöckenstein—A Chapter from Our Motherlanguage" one activist warned against the various Czechified place names that had come into common usage in Southern Bohemia.<sup>31</sup> "Plöckenstein or Blöckenstein" referred to the local names for a prominent stone peak that dominated the southern region of the Bohemian Woods. One of the two, it turned out, was in fact a creolized version of the original, purely German name. This "speaking stone" communicated its own authentic national identity and confirms the national identity of the natural landscape to those whose scientific tools are capable of locating its original name.

The same article cited other examples of creolized place names in the Bohemian Woods region, suggesting that the na-

<sup>29</sup> Reiner von Reinöhl, "Der tschechische Schulverein," *Deutsche Worte* (Vienna, 1885).

<sup>30</sup> Here I am not referring to those groups that tried to purify the German language of foreign expressions and constructions (usually French and Latin), found in imperial Germany as well as in Austria, but rather to those groups that sought to replace local place names and usages with the authentic German originals.

<sup>31</sup> See *MDB*, no. 2 (1885): 26-28.