

Robert Scheu, Travels Through Bohemia, 1919
Translated by Jeremy King (Mt. Holyoke College)

Scheu, Robert. *Wanderungen durch Böhmen am Vorabend der Revolution [Travels through Bohemia on the Eve of the Revolution]*. Wien und Leipzig: Strache, 1919, pp. 1-33. Translated by Jeremy King, 2001.

This excerpt comes from a book-length study published in 1919, by an Austrian journalist who was the son of a famous Austrian Social Democrat. Scheu traveled around the language border in Bohemia during the summer of 1918, just before the Great War ended and much changed. Terms that might be unfamiliar to the American reader are explained within brackets. Other editorial notes consist mostly of factual corrections to Scheu's account—J.K.

– I wish to experience the national question in Bohemia, as a tourist. To this end, I wish to travel along stretches of the linguistic border, then to cast a glance into the Czech areas, and finally to go to Prague, after having studied the periphery. I wish to talk with burghers, peasants, teachers, village priests, and politicians, and at the same time to absorb the unique qualities of the countryside and of the towns, and thus to gain intuition that cannot be gained from books and reports. Above all I am interested in how the national struggle manifests itself in the life of the individual, what stands behind the slogan as concrete contents, and what effects the struggle has had.

– All fine and good, but what is supposed to come of this?

– An overall impression, a complex picture, a personal conviction, stimulus and pollination. I feel it an obligation that was somehow placed on me. As for why I am so interested in the Bohemian question and in the Bohemian people precisely now, that I have already told you. In Sweden and in Denmark, where I spent 4 months this year, I came to understand the Czech perspective. Especially in Sweden.... There I realized almost involuntarily what powerful impulses are rippling through the entire world, triggered off by the relatively small people of the Czechs – what a sensation they have caused everywhere, and how much they have managed to pull off here in our country. Just at that time. there were lively discussions of the Bohemian question going on in the neutral press, and I was invited to join in the discussion. Suddenly I found it quite agreeable that a politically so excitable people should exist, and I recalled that the Czechs had always seemed to me to be a very lively people. In Sweden, I have seen how remarkably sleepy an unmixed Germanic people is, and how it ends up losing any desire for contact with the foreign.....

To what is this due? To the coexistence of so many peoples and races in Austria-Hungary, which in the course of centuries have been forged by the state into a psychic whole. Now I would like to heighten this experience to the greatest possible extent, inasmuch as I visit the Czechs and the Germans where they mesh together – and to do so as a someone from outside, as a *distinguished foreigner* [in English in the original]. That is, assuming that they will allow me to gain my hoped-for insight, and which I must gain through hard efforts. And it is in this matter that you must help me, my dear counselor of accounting, in as far as your nation is concerned.

– Aha, now I understand you better. Fine, I will guide you. Here in Budweis, I am at home, because I

was born in the vicinity. Everyone knows me. Have you already taken a look at the town?

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A seemingly normal town can have extraordinary significance in terms of world strategy; it can be the intersection point of two systems of peoples, without this fact needing to be known. The famous and paradoxical phrase, to the effect that "Asia begins on the highway out of Vienna," contains just such a world-strategic insight.

In Budweis, I soon realized that here, in this town, which lies so peacefully on the plain on the banks of the Moldau, things of global significance were taking place. But these are silent events, which stretch over decades without causing the slightest sensation. No more, indeed, than the transformation of a deciduous forest into a pine one, a transformation that often comes about as a consequence of a single frosty night, and subsequently brings about a change in the climate.

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Social secrets may be divined quickly from posters pasted up on announcement columns in the streets. The local newspaper betrays to us the most frequently uttered names and the essential interests around which everything turns. The favorite pub of intellectuals allows one to gauge the temperament, allocation of time, lifestyle, fashion of intercourse, amount and direction of expenditure quickly. And if there is also a theater, then the general picture is soon seamless.

In Budweis, the daily promenade around the central square offers an opportunity to study the physiognomy of the population at leisure. The Ring Square, an enormous quadrangle covered with paving stones in whose middle is a fountain with a statue of Samson, stands out for its beautiful and broad arcades, which make promenading possible in all weather. Only an outsider thinks to cross the Ring Square diagonally. The locals keep to the broad sidewalk. On Sundays, one marches here in rows 6 people deep, and makes all sorts of purchases under the arcades. City and country people keep apart from one another. One hears both local languages, colorfully intermixed. The students go about in modern fashion, with heads uncovered. The officers (at least then) formed up in lines. The young ladies appear cheerful and friendly, and upon closer acquaintance manifest a charming disposition. The Czechs in Budweis, as I had opportunity to convince myself, know German very well, although out of some exaggerated modesty they ask forgiveness for their poor German. This caused me no little surprise, for I was hardly prepared for such civility. In Bohemia, I met with this knightly gesture regularly. Even in wholly Czech districts, the bilingual local asks forgiveness of the monolingual guest for not being well versed in his tongue.

On the Ring Square stand the Town Hall and the hotels, of which the "Sun" is rightly loved for its restaurant. There, at the most critical time of the year, one could have heaping portions of meat and pastries, at astonishingly low prices and with youthful and cheerful service. In the second story of a corner house is the Cafe Central, where one can drink a cup of coffee and read all the Viennese newspapers. The atmosphere and mood in this cafe is completely Viennese, or Austrian. What cafes have done for the unity of the Empire should be the object of a separate study. If only our guiding circles, in preparing for the war, had kept one thing in mind: coffee! Then how much easier would it have been for us to see it all through! The Austrian is above all a snacker.... Think how much the smell of coffee, which is the same everywhere in Austria and forms a strong component of our

unconscious feeling of togetherness, and goes so well with multilingual newspapers, could have contributed to the cohesion of the peoples!...

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The Savings Bank, noted Director Bielohlawek, is the cornerstone of the local economy. About 50 years ago, the Beseda, or the Czech social club, was founded. Then, in 1864, the Savings Bank was founded in the office of an attorney. After 54 years, deposits totaled 45 million crowns, and secured reserves 2 million. In Budweis, we have the following industrial concerns which thank the Savings Bank for their existence: a factory for artificial fertilizer, one for enameled pots, one for screws, a shareholders brewery (a very large concern with capital of 20 million), a paper company, and a candy factory. Now we have founded a machine die factory and an iron works, as well as a match factory – which was bought out by the Helios Co. 3 years ago. All these businesses were founded through self-help, with extremely limited means. And now they are large and profitable factories. The Savings Bank also stands behind the founding of the Czech gymnasium [high school], which Bishop Johann Valerian Jirsik, one of the first enthusiasts for the Czech cause, had created. The Bank also stands behind the girls' vocational school, which the lawyer Zátka built. All these schools were taken over by the state long ago. Every year, the bank contributes 50,000 crowns for educational purposes. In addition, we must pay interest and capital on the funds from which the school buildings were erected. Mr. Zátka has vouched with his own property for 2 million worth of the loans.

The Germans, who have the majority in the municipal representative body, have no such cumulative institute at all. They have only a municipal savings bank, which incidentally was founded by a Czech as well.

The Germans, as a consequence of their inherited property, are long sated, and live off their unearned income. The daughters of the German bourgeoisie prefer to marry officers, and as a result the economic situation of the Germans is weakened over time. Of the 15 German lawyers, two are Christians; of the doctors, only one is a Christian. The Czech doctors and lawyers are Christian without exception. Czech industry in Budweis was founded by rank amateurs: professors, teachers, and priests got together, and pulled together the initial resources. All of us come from small beginnings. My father was a butcher in the countryside, and today I am the vice president of an important institution. At the beginning, I had a monthly salary of only 25 gulden. None of us had the support of a family in the second or third generation. That is the source of our democratic orientation.

The aristocracy is completely alien to us. For Frauenberg Castle, for example, we have no feeling. Prince Schwarzenberg is a completely foreign person among us, we know him only as we know the Emperor and the Pope. He owns 1/5 of all real estate in Bohemia. His estates and businesses lie predominantly in the Czech area, but are administered in German. We regard him as a parasite who sucks our blood. I could hardly name a single aristocrat to you who is a real and decent Czech.....

The statements of the Director had given me a vivid picture of the process by which quietly, step for step and year for year, the economic position of the Germans is weakened and reduced. Gradually, through the work of generations of small people, massive dams have been undermined, until the foundations have grown so thin that they can no longer bear the political superstructure. Artisans and

small businessmen, united with intellectuals dedicated to the national cause, have conquered heavy industry and the banks through tenacious work; they have founded schools, and gained room and ground. The Germans, as inheritors, are on the defensive. Their hinterland brings them nothing like the same flood of rising forces. Why not? Probably a poet could give us the answer, in a sweeping novel that laid bare the driving forces over several generations. I recommend Budweis to him as the setting.

Repeatedly, I had heard the name of Mr. Zátka. People always pronounced it with deep respect, and usually in connection with Taschek, the German mayor of Budweis, whom people praise for his success in bringing about a compromise.

Unfortunately, despite multiple efforts, I never succeeded in meeting with Mayor Taschek. Through a peculiar coincidence, the Mayor was on vacation from the very day of my arrival until my departure. Thus I missed the pleasure of making the acquaintance of a man named by both nations with respect and sympathy. I also lost the opportunity to hear about relations in Budweis from the German perspective. But it was not my goal to provide an objection-free and scientific report. The Czech understanding of things was what was new for me, and what I needed to investigate at its source.

One morning, a comfortable carriage with 4 seats turned out in dark blue fabric halted in front of the Bell Hotel. It was the carriage of Mr. Traeger, which he had placed at my disposal. A sunny and exceedingly fresh July morning beamed down on us. After riding for an hour, we turned in to the charming village of Liebni_, and soon halted at the garden gate of the old master. No one came when we rang. Then the ancient coachman revealed to us that he had seen Mr. Zátka at a crossing of the roads, driving in his wagon in the direction of the town.

– "Why do you tell us only now?" We were speechless. But there was nothing for us to do but to undertake a walk in the surrounding forests....

Mr. Zátka led me into the airy summer house of his villa, and explained to me there over the course of several hours the history of the nationality conflict in Budweis. It was at the same time an autobiographical sketch. As a primary source of classical clarity, it seems so valuable to me that I would like to reproduce it here in full.

The grandfather of Mr. Zátka moved to Budweis more than 100 years ago. He was a barrel maker in a brewery, and possessed a small inn, as well as occupied himself with trade in grain and salt. He supplied half of Bohemia with salt. As is well known, the horse-drawn railway in Budweis (built because of the trade in salt) counts as the first railway on the continent.

Budweis is a German colony. The Germans were invited here by King Ottokar II of Przemysl. There were several such colonies. Already back then, Bohemia underwent considerable Germanization, in order to provide the kings with support against the feudal aristocracy. The native population was subject to the Germans. The king could not rely on that native population, but he could on the foreign colonists. "The Germans, you see, are somewhat harder than the Slavs." There was also the financial motive of tax contributions by the towns. A remarkably liberal Bohemian legal climate maintained Germandom through a full six centuries. The state language was Czech. There was both a German and a Czech syndic.

Until the Hussite period, there was no national movement. But from that point on, there was a national movement, and quite decidedly so. King Wenceslaus still composed German poems, and received minstrels at his court. After the extinction of the Przemyslids, the Hussites turned to Poland, and attempted a union. We are very sorry that such a union did not come about. In the year 1526, the Bohemian estates elected Ferdinand as King. Because Ferdinand already possessed 3 crowns at that time, Austria was all but complete. Thus the Czechs gave the impulse for the creation of Austria. We simply cannot understand the claim that the Germans founded Austria. The small German territories were at that time without significance.

We had the first university. The Germans, of course, say that it was German, because the king by coincidence was also the Emperor of Germany. This King, actually, was a Frenchman, and in the founding document he says explicitly that he is doing it for the natives. The Emperor occupied himself very little with the German Empire. Prague back then was a second Rome. The Czechs were even in the majority, and had more votes than the foreigners. Then the Germans left, and founded the German university in Leipzig.

The Turks provided the first impulse for centralism, when the Habsburgs called on all their peoples for help in their struggle against the Turks. In 1618, the Battle of the White Mountain! This battle was decided in 2 hours. Then the great majority of the aristocracy and of the intelligentsia emigrated to Saxony and Prussia. In the seventeenth century, we were ruled by Jesuits. As a consequence of that great loss, the Czech people very much came down in the world. The townspeople were Germanized, so that nothing of our people was left except the countryside. There the priests, the real awakeners of the people, did their work.

Palacký, as is well known, was a Lutheran. Chelcický, a peasant from the area around Budweis, taught things similar to what Tolstoy did. The Academy in Pressburg published his writings, and Tolstoy studied them. As an extreme pacifist, Chelcický condemned war already back then. ika, before he entered into battle, first inquired at the university whether it was permitted to shed blood for the revolution. Only then did he become the leader of the Hussites.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Czech people was in dire straits. Only toward the end of the eighteenth century did there appear a number of Czech writers, who fastened on the ideas of Herder.

Our entire history is nothing other than a 1000-year struggle with the Germans. Even Dobrovský, the great Slavist at the end of the eighteenth century, doubted greatly whether the project of awakening would succeed.

In the year 1848, the Czechs showed themselves to be completely liberal. Havliczek, Rieger! Higher education in Bohemia was completely German, and I myself studied at a German gymnasium. But the Diet that opened in 1861 petitioned the government to Czechify the gymnasiums located in Czech towns. That did not happen in Budweis. In Budweis, the majority of the students were Czech, but the municipality was German, as is the administration to this day. People allowed themselves to be satisfied with parallel classes for the Czechs. Then the town of Wittingau resented us for those parallel classes, and they were transferred to Wittingau, where a separate lower gymnasium was erected. Only in 1868 did Bishop Jirsik found the Czech gymnasium in Budweis. Later, because of

his oppositional stance, he was denied the usufruct of his estates.

Palacký gave the greatest push for the Czech movement, through his definition of Slavic reciprocity. The Czech nation can also say of itself: *farà da se* [Italian: it will act on its own]! I have represented 5 judicial districts in the Diet, and when one sees the type that is the Czech voter, then one must say that we have a national type that is really quite extraordinary.

In 1866, the Emperor allowed 2 Czech gymnasiums to be erected. People designated them, in the naivité of the time, Slavic institutions. Once the Czechs had their own schools, Germanization was soon ended. Already in 1861, by the way, the Germans lost control over the administration of Prague. To be certain, earlier, Budweis was predominantly German. Proof of that is that only one street was called "Czech Street." Only the old town was Czech, and remains Czech to this day. Only around 1850 was Budweis transformed into a Czech town, after German immigration had largely ceased. Until then, the town had kept itself German through the rapid nationalization of the Czech population that migrated there. Everyone attempted to be counted as a part of the higher orders, and those orders at the time were the Germans. This drive among the Czechs, unfortunately, was very strong. But on the other hand, there were also families which kept themselves racially pure through 500 years as a consequence of a certain *horror sanguinis*. We Czechs look on life in fundamentally different fashion than do the Germans. I would call it a culture of sentiment.

For 1000 years, we have been engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Germans. Our consciousness is too high for us to let ourselves be dominated in the long-term.

Here I made an objection: what is the content of what you call domination?

Mr. Zátka replied: it is the state language, that symbol of power [*Gesslerhut*] whose meaning is that German officials do not have to learn Czech! Already in the 1850s, Budweis showed that the vitality of the Czechs is greater than that of the Germans. As a rule, colonies quickly die out when they are not renewed through immigration. A hard blow for the Germans was the Trade Ordinance [of 1859], with its establishment of the right to pursue any trade. From that point onward, Czechs could settle where they wished; previously, one had to be a burgher. The Germans in Budweis were surrounded by a group of German villages (which, however, had Czech names). The more liberal Austria became, the weaker became the position of the Germans. As soon as universal suffrage was introduced, the German administration was completely lost.

How much the Germans have deteriorated is evident in that the artisanal trades have been completely Czechified. In my childhood, we still had a German tailor and a Germanized shoemaker; the latter was called Wittek. (Minister Wittek comes from a farm half an hour from Budweis. I think that I remember that the father of Minister Wittek instructed Emperor Francis Joseph in Czech. Then he became an officer; as teacher to the Emperor, he was only a cadet. The father of Baron von Beck was also a national Czech. Stibral also has namesakes in Budweis.)

After the right to pursue any trade came the right to purchase real estate. Before then, in order to purchase a house, one had to be a burgher. Religious liberalism was unfavorable to the Germans as well. Until 1848, it was a privilege of the town of Budweis that no Jew could stay the night there. The new freedom, at first, was favorable to the Germans, because 1,200 Jews settled in Budweis. Thus the Germans replaced a part of their voters. But the development of banks did not work to the

advantage of the Germans, because the Jews seized wholesale trade for themselves. The burghers then found another occupation: the military. But as a result, they lost their connection with the town in many ways. The daughters of Budweis have fared even worse. There was no fresh supply of suitors. Barracks were busily built, and officers married the daughters. But thus the daughters and many fortunes have left Budweis. The German colony has become senile, and is slowly dying out. The factories were fateful for the Germans as well. All the cloth makers, the Lohgerbers of Tyrol, who are the wealthiest families of the town, are dying out.

It is striking that the Lohgerbers, despite their great wealth, were not capable of making the transition from artisanal manufacture to factory. It was a misfortune for the Germans that they were wealthy. As a rule, wealth is lost in the third generation. The German is also clumsy and ponderous. The Czech is considerably more energetic. And once we had Czech schools, the foundation for Czech self-consciousness was given. Nonetheless, we have had very many national renegades – in part out of vanity, in part out of economic dependence. The Germans employed Czech workers. But it was not easy to evict them from their apartments, because many houses were in Czech hands.

In recognition of the fact that economic power is political power, we have founded a whole series of factories, for exclusively national reasons. The migration of workers was already taking place – flight from the land! Manpower was abundant and cheap, and coal fairly nearby (the Pilsen mines). Germans founded the second enamelware factory, but it soon went over into Czech hands. At present, we have 2 Jewish enamelware factories, 1 German one, and 1 Czech one. But they do not compete with one another at all. On the contrary, they all supply the same exporters to India. Then the Director of the Savings Bank founded a match factory. We have also founded a paper plant, a chocolate factory, and a screw factory.

The crystallization point was the Beseda, a social club – as was the fashion back then, after the proclamation of the so-called constitution. The constitution had less of an effect on German social life. But a vibrant social life burst into bloom immediately in Bohemia. Sokol [Czech gymnastics] clubs, choirs, etc. were founded. Only three years after being founded, the Beseda participated in municipal elections [in 1865]. The Czechs won in the third electoral curia, with a majority of 100 votes.

All homeowners, artisans, and tax-paying burghers voted in the second electoral curia. Unpleasantly surprised by the electoral results [in the third curia, which voted earlier], the Germans helped themselves with a trick: they invited staff officers into the electoral curia! The entire fate of the town hung on a thread. The Czechs did not want to remain a minority in the Town Council, and withheld participation. In 1870, despite exerting heavy pressure, the German mayor had a majority of only 7 votes. The candidate of the Czechs was a monk from Hohenfurth by the name of Hauck [actually Haug], a mixture of German and Slav. Only then did the Germans begin working and organizing in earnest.

The present mayor, Taschek, is the son of a Czech from the Tabor District and of a German mother.

Many times, we Czechs have voted, and many times we have practiced passive resistance. The Germans were honorable, and for years placed some Czechs on their candidate list in the third electoral curia. Only 2 elections ago did the Town Council become completely German.

In 1880, we made a compromise for the elections. The Germans conceded 9 seats to us [of 12 in the third curia], and the candidate list was a common one. But that did not last long. We spoke Czech in the Town Council sessions, and they forbade us from doing so. We appealed, and the Governor's Office decided against us, in violation of the law. The Administrative Court had to confirm this decision. And with that, the conciliatory mood vanished. Yet a soapmaker made a last will and testament according to which both nations received funds.

On average, a Town Council remains in office for 8 years. In the most recent Town Council, the majority in favor of the Germans was only 120 votes. If elections were proportional, Czechs would have 2/5 of the seats. On both sides, voters were artificially created. The income tax was a very easy means for the manufacture of voters. One only had to pay a few crowns of tax, without surcharges [in other words, claim a higher-than-average income, pay a small tax, and thus qualify for the vote]. Many appeals against such tax maneuvers were submitted. According to law, those appeals must be resolved within 3 days. But we have now been waiting for 3 years. As a consequence, the Town Council remains in office after its term expires. This is also a consequence of the course taken by the Germans.

The currently applicable municipal statutes make it possible for the ruling party to maintain itself as long as it wishes, provided that it has no scruples. The ruling party draws up the lists, checks them, and creates as many artificial voters as it needs. The Germans have exploited this abundantly. They created 321 burghers [in 1902]; and burghers have the right to vote, without paying any taxes. In the first electoral curia, where the Germans were not even threatened, they created 50 honorary burghers. [Burghers have the right to vote in the third curia, and honorary burghers in the more elite first curia.]

We appealed against these resolutions. On the second appeal, we lost. But the Bohemian Executive Committee found in our favor. The Administrative Court decided that the honorary burghers in the first electoral body were nominated in formally correct fashion. But in the nomination of people for the third electoral curia, some errors of form crept in. By mistake, you see, people were made honorary burghers [actually, burghers] without being first granted a [residential] status so that this was technically possible. It is characteristic of the German Austrian authorities that only the formal side to the question was examined.

The election in 1906 was very stormy. It became clear how perfect our organization was. We entered the election campaign completely united. Even the Social Democrats voted with us. Once the votes were counted, it turned out that the Germans had a majority of 99 votes. The Germans complained about being oppressed, although only a single Czech sat on the electoral commission. Germans submitted an appeal against their own tally of the votes, and the Governor rejected it.

I asked Mr. Zátka: what is the practical meaning of nationality in administration?

Mr. Zátka answered:

1. Civil servants and all workers are determined by the ruling nation.
2. The administration of wealth. (After the Battle of the White Mountain, some municipalities appropriated confiscated estates for themselves.)
3. If the municipality contracts for services involving considerable sums, it provides employment for

a huge array of businesses.

4. Construction permits. The building code was used often in Bohemia in order to place obstacles in the way of unwanted schools.

In 1868, there was a big to-do with the nomination of honorary burghers. The town of Landskron in Bohemia, which elects an representative to the Diet together with 2 Czech towns, nominated honorary burghers in order to guarantee the election of its candidate. A German in fact was elected, Provincial Court Counselor Bibus. That provoked the greatest possible indignation in Bohemia. The Diet annulled the election, and changed the law so that honorary burghers lost the vote both in elections to the Diet and to the Town Council. But the Administrative Court decided that the Diet had not formulated the law correctly, and had passed it for invalid reasons. Thus honorary burghers continued to have the vote.

Here I undertook something, something theatrical! On the day of the vote tally [in 1906], when the Czech majority in the third electoral curia was proclaimed, I appeared, accompanied by Chamber of Commerce President Brdlik and by Dr. Hromada, the Secretary of the Chamber as well as the Deputy Chair of the Bohemian Electoral Committee, before Mayor Taschek and submitted a memorandum to him. Dr. Bärnreither was already arguing back then that provisions somehow had to be made for the Germans of Budweis, in order to save them. Dr. Bärnreither had recognized that precisely Budweis was the place where one could make a compromise between Germans and Czechs, in the light of modern ideas. I had already said the same thing a quarter of a century earlier, in 1883.

On that day, I formerly took over leadership in Budweis. I had to pay for it personally, because I lost a large number of German clients, without exchanging them for Czech ones.

When I appeared before Taschek, Dr. Schreiner and several aldermen were present. I handed him the memorandum, in which I explained how friction could be avoided in future.

– What interest did you have in a conciliatory politics of this sort? I asked Mr. Zátka.

– Because I am a Slav, because of feelings. How would we differ otherwise from the Germans, if we copied their power politics [*Realpolitik*]? I acted entirely out of my own initiative, and people were extraordinarily surprised by this step of mine. People did not understand that we did not want to have revenge against the Germans!

The compromise was understood as an amendment to the law. 8 provincial laws were to appear, which would have been very easy, because there are towns which have their own municipal statutes. The law provides that in such statutes, special relationships can be taken into consideration. "Statuted towns." It would have been a statute without certain obligations and rights. As a representative in the Diet, I strove for decades to bring about certain changes in the municipal electoral order and in school legislation.

I made a proposal that the Germans liked. Namely, that each nation should carry the [financial] burden of its schools. This thought, of course, was already contained in the Fundamental Articles [a failed initiative at the highest levels in 1871]. Personal autonomy is precisely formulated in my memorandum of 1916 [actually, 1906].

The following would have had to be changed: municipal legislation and the municipal electoral order, then the law regarding district representative bodies (now overtaken by re-districting), and finally school legislation.

The principal intent was either to remove points of friction or to reduce them. I demanded national cadastres [registration lists], but ones carried out much more thoroughly than in the Moravian provincial law [of 1905], which knows only electoral cadastres. The basic idea was quite simply this: whoever possesses the vote or is required to attend school must declare to which nation he belongs. That, incidentally, was always a difficult question (Bernatzik: "Ueber nationale Matrikeln.") [A book on the topic.] It is a matter for the individual to declare to which nation he belongs. This declaration, as a rule, should be binding, with few exceptions. The "proportion" is then formed, according to the relationship between the two sets of voters. Agitation would become superfluous.

Essential as well was the provision, actually a new idea, that the nationalities were to be constituted as juridical entities in the entire province. In Budweis, that was absolutely necessary. The municipal budget of the town of Budweis contains many thousands for German needs, but very few for Czech ones.

Each cadastre would have its own representation..... Both curias also have a certain right of taxation. They can introduce surcharges up to a certain limit (10 percent), each curia for its members. The Town Council is elected proportionately. Once frictions fall away, one judges the man according to his intellectual worth. Municipal contracts would be awarded in proportion to the tax payments [of the national cadastres], the employment of officials and of service personnel according to the same measure. The two languages would be equal in the municipality.

As for the school question, once Minister Rezek invited me to meet Minister Hartel. He was astounded at how few municipalities actually counted as linguistically mixed. They are, incidentally, the biggest ones: Prague, Pilsen, Reichenberg, Budweis, Brůx, Dux. The erection of a school is truly a crossroads for the minority in question, and it is admirable how bravely the minorities conduct themselves.

In Moravia, the Czechification of the towns was child's play. There the Germans were not real ones, and have now completely disappeared.

Regarding the schools, I proposed that mixed [school] districts be dissolved, and that there should be only Czech or German districts in all Bohemia. The relevant school legislation provides that wherever municipalities cannot be [nationally] divided in a territorial sense, the school district should remain a mixed one. And that is the source of all the difficulties. Today in Bohemia, there are no more than 50 mixed school districts. This question is easy to solve on the basis of personal autonomy. One simply declares that the cadastre is the school district.

The Germans declared as follows: your proposals regarding the schools we accept immediately. Regarding the municipal electoral law, it lasted longer before they made a decision. The Czech School Association has the principle that no German child will be accepted at a Czech school. That is the Kví_ala law, the well known principle that children should only be sent to schools whose language they understand.

How contrary to common sense it is when, for example, a German Town Council elects members of a Czech ward school council! The ward school council should be co-national with those for whom the school is meant. That is the will of the law. The Germans have filled out their coming generations with renegades.....

At first, one needed to find a *modus vivendi* after the election, so that we did not continually brawl in the Town Council chambers. Prime Minister Beck served as intermediary. He called it the "little compromise." [As opposed to the big Compromise, of *Ausgleich*, of 1867, through which the Habsburg Monarchy became a state with two parliaments, one for Austria and one for Hungary.] First the right of the Czech members was recognized to make use of the Czech language. Invitations to Town Council sessions, as well as motions, were composed in both languages. Second, a subsidy was given for the maintenance of the so-called kindergartens – two-thirds for the Germans, one-third for us, although the proportion is precisely the reverse. Then we were conceded a single member of the inner Town Council. The compromise did not come about, and could not come about. The *Taschek* compromise has concessions for Germans and for Czechs. But those can only come into force when a law is either passed or proclaimed [by the throne]. The body with jurisdiction would be the Diet. I believe that the law would be accepted in the Diet, given that the Young Czechs, led by Kramář, spoke in favor of the pact in the Prague National Council. But the law has not come into being. [Because of the dissolution of the Bohemian Diet in 1913.]

After this so-called little compromise a second compromise came into being.

Financial conditions in Bohemia [actually, Budweis] were desperate. The German administration got it into its head that it would assess no municipal tax surcharges. Instead, it preferred to accumulate debt. They set up an unbelievable extraordinary budget, but used it to cover the regular deficit. We demanded that this kind of management come to an end. Then the Germans declared: we are ready, but the minority must vote with us (out of fear of public opinion). We finally agreed, in exchange for national concessions. Notices on principle in both languages, all petitions to be answered in the language in which they were submitted, greater regard for Czech businesses in the awarding of municipal contracts, the district School Council is bound to vote as instructed by the ward School Council, etc.

In fact, the compromise was followed loyally by the Germans. But they could not give us everything – a proportional electoral system, for example.

Prime Minister Beck called on me to put the proposals in such a form that they could be presented to the Diet by the government. People accused us of intending to bring about change through royal decree. But at the time, I had no idea of any possible exclusion of the Diet. We could imagine nothing but a regulation of the issue through legislation. And it would have come about.

But then Prade, as Minister for the province, declared that such a regulation of the school question was impossible, because different principles would apply in Budweis than in the province as a whole. Just the opposite is true. It would have been possible to extend the approach, if it had proved itself locally!

I worked out the legislative bill with Beckh, Stürgkh, Bienenrth, and Chief of Section Härtel. The bill

was printed in the state printing office, and sent to me in Abbazia [a resort town in the South]. In the course of re-reading the bill, we proposed fundamental changes, because we had become better acquainted with the subject matter. Minister Marchet made so many exceptions to the Kví_ala law that the law ended up becoming an exception itself. The Administrative Court declared Marchet's decree invalid, because it went against the spirit of the law.

We would have been happy to have some sort of supervision of the kindergartens, through mutual inspection. The question of school expenditures was also reconsidered, because the difference between Germans and Czechs could be enormous, given the different tax payments. A mass of people might have changed cadastres in an attempt to escape higher taxes. Here the School District was to intervene in order to balance things out.

Before the third reading of the legislation, I made my case to my party. There were two perspectives: the Prague one, and the local one. The National Council did not permit me to continue with the issue, because the political parties in the National Council were not united. In such a case, it is left to the parties to bring the power relations among themselves to expression in the Diet. The National Council declared itself incompetent in the issue, out of fear of pre-judgment. Now we had a free hand.

Through the compromise, the Germans would have saved what was most important: the schools. In spite of that, their fate would have been sealed. The ratio of [German] officials would have dropped, and Budweis would have lost its attraction for the Germans.

The Realist Party declared itself against the compromise, although its leader Masaryk was personally of another opinion. Also against were the so-called state rights progressive party, and the two [Czech] working-class parties (which otherwise fight one another grimly), both the National Socialists, and strangely enough, the Social Democrats as well – although the leadership of the party was certainly in favor of the compromise.

These 4 parties published a manifesto in which they declared that the question of the minorities must be solved in unitary fashion. The Germans wrote the same thing. Beck, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the compromise would be easier to solve piece for piece, rather than taken as a whole. Our inner electoral committee was unanimous in resolving to proceed with the pact, all votes against 4. Among the Germans, no one at all was opposed.

The legitimately elected Town Council and District Electoral Body, finally, approved the compromise unanimously as well. With that, the matter was settled for Budweis.

That is the history of the Budweis compromise. I have reproduced Mr. Zátka's account so extensively because it reflects so completely the whole of the content and the technique of the Bohemian question, including its quite tragic end. There is nothing more to add. The entire problem, inasmuch as it concerns the periphery, is presented. Nothing is missing. We have seen how, despite the best intentions of those locally involved, a solution that would have brought peace was made to fail. We have seen how an overall solution to the Bohemian question stands in the way of local agreement, and how on the other hand local strife stands in the way of an overall solution. A tragic vicious circle, in which the whole of the inadequacy and the sloppy thinking of professional politicians, something of world-historical consequence, may be seen. In our days, of course, the

Bohemian question has taken on a completely different form and nature, and has outgrown all local treatment. So slight is the power of reason in the life of peoples.