A PLACE IN THIS WORLD: MINORITY NATION-BUILDING IN INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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A PLACE IN THIS WORLD:
MINORITY NATION-BUILDING IN INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

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The University of Texas at Tyler
May 2022
The University of Texas at Tyler
Tyler, Texas

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Introduction

The disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 created a hotbed of struggle in Central and Eastern Europe. New nation-states were formed that had never existed before, encompassing a multitude of different faiths, language groups, and cultures. The First Czechoslovak Republic was one of these multi-national states that emerged after World War I. The new republic, created in 1918, was officially approved at the Paris Peace Conference the following year. Czechoslovakia was comprised of the Czech Crownlands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia), along with Subcarpathian Ruthenia and Upper Hungary (renamed Slovakia). The geographic placement and unique makeup of the population made Czechoslovakia a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe.

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This thesis will analyze minority nation-building and identity in the First Czechoslovak Republic and the struggles the minority populations faced when they came under Czech control. Each new state created after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had to cope with a monarchical and imperial past, one in which they had been ruled without a common ancestry or history. As the First Czechoslovak Republic attempted to forge a new independent democratic identity, the state had to contend with the same problem the Empire had: how to govern disparate cultures and peoples. It is important to investigate these different peoples, where they lived in relation to the empire and then in relation to the Czechoslovak borderlands. Consideration must also be given to the importance of language in nation-building and how it ties into the nationalism of these particular nation groups. Each minority group had their own form of nationalism and sense of community due to their language and geographic location.

The tensions between the Czech majority and the Slovak, German, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Jewish minorities greatly affected the development of the new republic. On the part of the Slovak population, there were problems surrounding the idea of national self-determination and their unease over being combined with the Czechs to create a majority. The German minority oftentimes saw the Czech majority as vengeful for their treatment under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The Hungarian minority felt similarly to the Germans in regard to their Slovak counterparts, as they had enjoyed elevated status under the Hungarian branch of the Dual Monarchy, but found themselves excluded from building the new nation. The Jewish minority was supported by the founders of the Republic, but anti-Semitic beliefs from the German population specifically contributed to their own issues with nation-building. When examining the different political, social, and economic difficulties for each of the major minorities within the First Republic against the global rhetoric being pushed by the Czechoslovak government, it is
easy to see that the government cared less about certain minorities than it did about its reputation. There were several instances that will be examined further in which the First Republic’s government set out to humiliate certain groups for past treatment and made subtle attempts at homogenization towards others. The Czechs in the First Republic were determined to present themselves as a bastion of democracy to the West, but they also set out to get even for past imperial wrongdoings committed by those they were now in charge of.

A brief history of this area is needed to understand the complicated relationships between the different nationalities that made up the First Czechoslovak Republic. The Czech Lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia made up one of the oldest kingdoms in Europe and the Czech people were independent until the Thirty Years’ War. A very recent publication on the entirety of Czech history, *A History of the Czech Lands* by Jaroslav Pánek, Oldřich Tůma, et al., covers everything from original settlement to 2004. The introduction points out that “when the European past is narrated, a small number of states dominate…while the others are either occasionally remarked upon or completely overlooked.”\(^2\) Scholars often overlook the Czech Lands (along with the various peoples who live there). According to Pánek and Tůma, the “Czech state, its core and borders, were formed from the beginning of the 10\(^{th}\) to the beginning of the 11\(^{th}\) centuries.”\(^3\) During the Přemyslid Dynasty (beginning of the 11\(^{th}\) century and ending in 1306)\(^4\) the political center of this area became Bohemia, and it was on this Dynasty that Czech leader Thomas Masaryk based his idea to take back the Czech lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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\(^3\) Ibid., 26.
\(^4\) Ibid., 27-28.
The aforementioned awakening began in the late eighteenth century on the back of the French Revolution and is crucial to how the founders of Czechoslovakia convinced an international council in the twentieth century to create a state named after the combination of two Slavic peoples. Masaryk credits the beginning of the Czech national revival with Jan Kollár (1793-1852), a Slovak Protestant who wrote *Slávy dcera (Slava’s Daughter)*, “combining the themes of love and Pan-Slavism.”\(^6\) Masaryk explained in *The Meaning of Czech History* that the main purpose of the renaissance was to “create and nurture an independent, indigenous Czech culture, and to perfect the Czech language through many-sided literary activity.”\(^7\) However, this renaissance was also a way to counter the Germanization the Czech people endured under


\(^7\) Ibid., 16.
Austrian rule. Masaryk states here that the rural population was able to retain their mother tongue, but that the “intelligentsia…in the schools, the language of instruction was Latin, replaced by German in the eighteenth century;” therefore, the Czech elite were educated in German instead of their own language. Masaryk also gives some credit to the rural Czech population for keeping the national consciousness alive.⁸

The layout of this thesis is as follows: the first two chapters explore the Slovak and the German minorities, while the third will focus on three smaller minorities: the Hungarians, the Ukrainians, and the Jews. The population of Czechoslovakia consisted of Czechs and Slovaks, Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Roma, Russians, and Jews. When Czechoslovakia was created, it was the combination of the Czechs and Slovaks that lent their names. The largest two national populations were the Czechs and Germans. The demographic makeup consisted of fifty percent Czech, fourteen percent Slovak, twenty-three percent German, and the other populations making up thirteen percent total.⁹ The determining factor in figuring out which national group a person belonged to was spoken language. According to René Petráš, the First Czechoslovak Republic “had one of the most thorough legal regulations of the minority status,” which was a direct result of using language to determine nationality. The administrative language of the Republic was Czechoslovak and those who did not speak or read either were left at a disadvantage. He then goes on to call the extensive regulation “rather overcomplicated,” which is not an overstatement.¹⁰

One of the key features of forming and governing the First Republic was the idea of Czechoslovakism. This ideology essentially meant that the Slovaks were Czechs, “only less

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⁸ Ibid., 17.
developed,” a sentiment that was prominent among Czech circles. According to Elisabeth Bakke, “the national minorities were explicitly excluded from the Czechoslovak nation, as well as from any state-forming status.” Despite the fact that they were included in the national majority, the Slovak elite opposed being a part of Czechoslovakism as they believed themselves separate from the Czechs. As time progressed, this rhetoric became more pronounced. Bakke states that the trajectory of the rhetoric can be found in the Constitution as well as speeches in the Parliament. The combination of the two peoples into one representative group also meant that the Slovaks now had more representative power than the Germans and this was done intentionally by the founders and the representatives at the Paris Peace Conference so that the Germans would be more limited. However, this was not solely beneficial to the Czechs because “the Slovak national leaders preferred a Czechoslovak state to the alternative, which was to remain under Hungarian rule.”

Wilsonian national self-determination was another factor in forming the Czechoslovak state. Self-determination meant that certain kinds of nations deserved to be their own states and determine Modernity (both politically and economically) was an important part of Woodrow Wilson’s particular version of self-determination. Specifically, modernity meant an emphasis on industrial labor and that the new nation-states’ economic policies aligned with those of the West. Michael Cude explains that the “Czechs’ historical claims to independence, modern economy, and proactiveness in the Austrian Parliament clearly met the standards of national

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12 Ibid., 25.
13 A further explanation of the Paris Peace Conference and those involved in setting the borders for the New Europe, and subsequently, the New Republic will be in a subsequent chapter.
development set by Wilson.” He then goes on to say that it was specifically the Czech argument of having previously run their own kingdom that tipped them over the edge in the views of Washington, DC.  

17 In the views of Wilson, the Czechs met the criterion needed to become independent, whereas the Slovaks did not. The Slovaks did not have a history of independence like the Czechs; the Slovak territory was called Upper Hungary until the collapse of the empire. Another thing in favor of the Czechs was their industrialization. The Slovaks came from a much more agricultural background.  

18 It is worth noting that some Czechs and Slovaks in the United States looked to the US government to support a Czechoslovak independent state. The United States itself was still a young government, especially in international politics, so it is significant that these people would look to them for approval. The leaders of the First Republic also wanted to impress the American president. Wilson’s words inspired nations all over Europe during the years leading up to the end of the war; many people cited Wilson in their attempts to build their own states.

Here, it is important to take into consideration what determines a nation. Benedict Anderson gives an excellent look into the rise of nationalism and how a nation is defined in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. He links the development of nationalism to the growing availability of literature in vernacular languages instead of languages of the state.  

19 He states specifically that “the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities.”  

20 The administrative language of the nation was Czechoslovak, a combination of

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17 Ibid., 160.  
20 Ibid., 133.
the Czech and Slovak languages. Slovak was not a written language until the eighteenth century, and while both languages are linguistically similar, one can discern the discrepancy between a country built for all that is being administered with one state language. Another important aspect of Anderson’s book is his explanation of how a group of people who speak the same language feel they are connected, even if a nation for those people did not exist. The Czechs built an imagined community before the creation of the First Republic because they spoke the same language and had the same cultural traditions. This sense of a nation that exists but does not exist (an Imagined Community) is a driving force behind each of the nationalities that lived within the First Republic.

The majority of primary sources in this analysis come from The New York Times and the Jewish Daily Bulletin, as well as academic journals of the time such as the Slavonic and East European Review and the Slavonic Review. The former two provided excellent English sources as to how the West perceived what was happening in the First Republic, while the latter two provided either English translations or information originally written in English by those studying the area or those who lived in central-eastern Europe at the time. Works by RW Seton-Watson were invaluable when researching those officials in the government of the First Republic who were important to the state’s development, but for some reason did not warrant translations of their works. Many works by the founders of the First Czechoslovak Republic have been translated to English, such as The Meaning of Czech History by Thomas Masaryk and Bohemia’s Case for Independence by Eduard Beneš (the first two presidents of the Republic)21. These works offer much understanding of Czech sentiment in regard to who they were as a nation and

what they hoped to achieve. There are no primary sources from the minorities in this thesis because they are unavailable in English. This draws attention to a lack of English sources on this subject and the broader subject of the history of Eastern Europe.

Until recently, there was a dearth of academic scholarship on the First Czechoslovak Republic. Indeed, there is still less on the minorities than there is concerning the entirety of the history of the nation. Within the last couple of years, there have been some publications on fairly niche topics, such as *Scholars in Exile: The Ukrainian Intellectual World in Interwar Czechoslovakia* by Nadia Zavorotna and *Zionists in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Minority Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging* by Tatjana Lichtenstein. There have also been several recent scholarly works on Milan Rastislav Štefánik, one of the men who fought for the Republic to be built. One crucial work to this study of the German minority are *Czechs and Germans: A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* by Elizabeth Wiskemann. This monograph provided excellent insight into the deep-rooted history between the Czechs and Germans. A brief look through the bibliography will show that many of the secondary sources are more than twenty years old. While this is not ideal for a modern study of the First Czechoslovak Republic, it does offer insight into the lack of attention this small nation has received. However, even with the lack of sources within the last two decades, what has been produced since the First Republic’s inception still provided enough information to understand the very tangled history of minorities within Czechoslovakia.

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Each of the minority nationalities within the First Republic were unique in their own ways and thus handled by the new government in different ways; the Slovaks were unique to the First Republic because they were part of the national majority, yet many felt they were treated as a minority because the Czechs were highly favored within the government. Chapter One will explore the Slovaks and their attempts at their own self-determination outside the Czech government. It will begin with an examination of the lingering effects of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy on the Czech-Slovak relationship, in areas such as differences in religious beliefs and economic development. It will also discuss the various positive developments the Slovaks experienced during the First Republic, when the literacy rate of the Slovaks rose and they began producing literature in their own language, which had been impossible for them to do under the previous regime.

Chapter Two will deal with the German population within the First Republic, and in particular, the population in the Sudetenland and its relationship to Germany. The German minority is highly important for an analysis of the different nationalities in this nation because they constituted the second-highest population after the Czechoslovaks. Like the Slovaks, the Germans and Czechs had an interwoven history dating back centuries before Czechoslovakia. Many of the German issues lay in them losing their favoritism from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and being thrust into a minority position within the new Republic. Beginning with the years leading up to the First World War, and ending with the rise of Nazism in the Sudetenland, this chapter will explore the decline of socioeconomic statuses of German citizens, issues with Czechoslovakia’s foreign policy, as well as problems with language regulation.

Chapter Three will cover three of the smaller minorities within Czechoslovakia: the Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Jewish populations. It will begin with the Hungarian population
because they faced more issues with the Slovaks in the First Republic than with the Czechs. This section will analyze the social decline of the Hungarians through the lens of education, religion, and the foreign relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The Hungarians faced a similar issue to the Germans because they were favored under the Hungarian monarchy before the collapse and felt as though they were forced into a minority status when the lines of the new Europe were drawn. The section on the Ukrainian population will offer a juxtaposition to the Hungarian minority because, as it explores the educational and governmental policies relating to the Ukrainians, and foreign relations of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Ukraine, it will become clear that the Czechoslovak government did not treat all populations as equal. This section will also explore Ukrainian views on national self-determination and how the Czechoslovak government supported their bid for it, while attempting to use that same philosophy against its other minorities. The Ukrainians were unique in that the government of the Republic, especially President Thomas Masaryk, were supportive of Ukrainian intellectuals, and even supported building Ukrainian universities so that the intelligentsia could study and produce art and literary works in their own language. Finally, the last section of the chapter will explore the Jewish population and their relationship with both the Czechoslovak government and the German population within the Republic. The Jewish population is important because they were able to pick their nationality based on their religion, not their mother tongue. They were also supported by the Czechoslovak government, but the Germans within the Sudetenland fought against the rights of the Jewish citizens. The chapter will end with the rise of anti-Semitic rhetoric within the wave of Nazism that seeped into the corners of the Republic in the 1930s.
Chapter 1: The Slovaks

“Every Slovak was a Czech…and every Czech was a Slovak…”

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the Slovak reaction to their unusual position of both majority and minority population within the First Czechoslovak Republic. They were a minority because they represented only 14.5% of the overall population. However, when combined with the Czechs to form one nationality, they became part of the majority and represented 65.5% of the population. The Slovak Question, much like other minority questions, was at the forefront of Czech-Slovak relations. At the outset of the Republic, the Slovaks welcomed a union with the Czechs, as many saw it as their only opportunity to build up their newly independent nation. Prominent Slovak leaders fully supported the creation of the Republic, mostly on the grounds that they would have much more freedom than they had during Austro-Hungarian rule. Outside forces like Hungary, as well as religious and representative difficulties, contributed to the tensions between the Czechs and Slovaks. There were also prominent Slovak leaders who resisted Czech rule. The chapter will also explore various apprehensions faced by both the Czechoslovak government and the Czech people in regard to how the Hungarian government conducted itself toward the new Republic. The Hungarian government sought to take back Slovakia since it had been part of the Hungarian branch of the Dual Monarchy and the government of the new Republic sought to protect that land. Each of the issues faced by these peoples were interwoven; none happened in a vacuum and there was not a

single issue that did not spill over into another part of life. Overall, combining these nationalities into one state turned out to be full of problems that were never truly resolved in the twenty-year life of the First Republic. The issues between the Hungarians and the Czechs also impacted the Czech-Slovak relationship, which is the reason for their inclusion in this chapter. The Hungarian minority had their own issues with the Czech government that affected their relations with each other, while the problems with the Hungarian government affected the Slovak population in the First Republic, thus the need for this chapter on the Slovak population and the section in Chapter Three concerning the Hungarian minority.

The Czechs and Slovaks had a long history, since they were similar ethnic groups and had lived in the same part of Central-Eastern Europe for centuries. Even with their shared history and experience of colonization by foreign kingdoms, the two groups had vastly different experiences while under the Austro-Hungarian regime. The Slovaks had been under the control of the Hungarian branch of the Dual Monarchy for a thousand years, while the Czechs had only been taken over by Austria toward the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War (about three hundred years prior). The Slovaks were forced to undergo Magyarization, while the Czechs maintained their culture and even had representatives such as T.G. Masaryk in the Austrian government. Edvard Beneš understood and wrote extensively on the relationship between the two nations in his book *Bohemia’s Case for Independence*. He explains that until about the “middle of the nineteenth century, the ties which held them together were very close, and some of the most illustrious pioneers of the Czech renaissance were Slovaks.”

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26 In regard to Magyarization, the Hungarian half of Austria-Hungary attempted to bring all of its subjects under one nation group. Here, it tried to force the Slovaks to assimilate to a Hungarian lifestyle, which entailed losing their language and having their history suppressed in favor of becoming Magyars. This forced assimilation was called Magyarization because ethnic Hungarians are Magyars. Magyarization will come into play in Chapter 3 as well.

and Slovaks not being tied together as closely after the middle of the nineteenth century is due to
the fact that in 1868, a new language law was passed in Hungary, making Magyar the official
language of the nation and thus denying the Slovaks their language. When this happened, “non-
Magyar nations living in the land were cruelly persecuted…[with] imprisonment [and] flogging,”
thus ushering in the age of Magyarization in Hungary.\(^{28}\) At this point, the Czechs were under
Austrian control, so the Magyarization policy only affected the Slovaks.

Masaryk refers to the previously mentioned renaissance as “the renaissance of the
Czecho-Slovak nation” and is “proof of strong national vitality.”\(^{29}\) Masaryk explains that it made
sense for the Czechs and Slovaks to become a combined nation, even though their populations
did not compare to those of the bigger world powers. He states that “the present-day great
nations have laid the foundation of their culture at a time when they were smaller or as small”
and that it is “especially significant that in the former days there did not exist the modern
methods of communication [and] industry…which are said to be necessary for the development
of the up-to-date culture.”\(^{30}\) The Czech nation was in a good position to claim modernity (in the
eyes of the West because even though they had experienced certain limitations under the
Austrian regime, they still “had achieved a respectable level of development” in areas such as
economic development and industrial skills.\(^{31}\) Under Magyarization, the Slovaks faced much
more stunted growth: the literacy rate was low, and most income came from agriculture or other
hard labor.

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\(^{28}\) Josef Pešek, *The Story of Czechoslovakia*, translated by Marie J. Kohnová (Praha: Professors’ Printing House and
Library, 1930), 182.

\(^{29}\) Thomas Masaryk, *The New Europe. (The Slav standpoint.)*, translated by Nová Evropa (London: Eyre &
Spottiswoode, 1918), 24.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 24.

Modernity, or lack thereof in the Slovak case, fed directly into one important aspect of the formation of the Czechoslovak state: the concept of national self-determination. This terminology was coined by US President Woodrow Wilson toward the end of World War I to explain that nations deserve to be their own states with the ability to determine their own destinies. Of course, the concept of self-determination was around well before it was put so concisely. The use of self-determination ideology exploded all over Europe toward the end of the war, as the Habsburg monarchy dissolved and people moved to create their own nations under their own influences, which was the result of decades of nationalist movements within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Czechoslovakia was one of those nations. A particularly important aspect of Wilsonian national self-determination was the need for modernity (both politically and economically) and a background of independence for the people. Here, the Czechs had the advantage, as the Czech Lands had lost their independence about three hundred years before and were viewed by the US as a state-turned vassal of the Habsburg Empire, capable of building their own nation. While American support was helpful to the fledging state, they also needed British and French support.

One of the most important British delegates to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference was British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. According to Margaret MacMillan, Lloyd George was the youngest of the big three (Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and Wilson) and had known “personal scandals and political controversies [that] had threatened to ruin his career.” MacMillan also credits Lloyd George with holding his country together and leading them to

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victory during the war, and even though he faced controversy within his cabinet and there was much unrest in Britain during this time, Lloyd George still “entered into the negotiations in Paris as though he had little else on his mind.”\textsuperscript{35} The head of the French delegation, Georges Clemenceau, brought “France's profound patriotism, its relief at the victory and its perpetual apprehension of a revived Germany” to the Conference.\textsuperscript{36} From Wilson came “the United States’ benevolence, a confident assurance that the American way was the best, and an uneasy suspicion that the Europeans might fail to see this.”\textsuperscript{37} Indeed, before Wilson arrived, the Europeans were arguing amongst themselves regarding the different demands from each corner of the continent, but the meetings ended up “fail[ing] to produce a common European approach.”\textsuperscript{38} The representatives from Central and Eastern Europe witnessed these failed negotiations and thus looked to the US president for new ideas on nation-building.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 954.  
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 920.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 920.  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 920.
The Slovaks, however, were not ready for statehood in the eyes of the big western powers based on a few factors, including the national focus on agricultural labor and their association with the Hungarian branch of Austria-Hungary. Emanuel Čapek stated in an article in 1931 that “out of every hundred people in Slovakia, sixty-seven [then lived] by agricultural labor, while only seventeen [were] engaged in industry and hardly eight in business and transport.” This led to a western perception of the Slovak people as less modern than the Czechs, who were seen as more focused on industry, which in turn made them more appealing to the Western European nations. A major issue with Wilson’s version of national self-determination stemmed from the fact that he would not support the creation of a state if that state did not have a prior background of independence. This put the Slovaks at a disadvantage because they did not have such a

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history; they had been under Hungarian rule for most of their past (it was called Upper Hungary until the collapse of the empire). There were several reasons as to why Wilson supported the making of Czechoslovakia and the combining of the two peoples: lobbying by Czech and Slovak immigrants in the United States to convince the president of the Czechoslovak readiness for self-government; the service Czech and Slovak legionnaires convincing the US that they were doing their part in the war effort; and effective propaganda from exiled Czech and Slovak leaders using excellent propaganda to show just how modern these people were.41

A driving force of the rhetoric surrounding national self-determination was the idea of “civic” nationalism, which focused less on national lineage and more on common experiences between people.42 This focus shifted from the traditional nationalism that had developed in Europe at this time and was particularly present in the First Republic because of the many different nationalities within the borders. During the negotiations for the Republic, the Czechs and Slovaks based their need for national self-determination on the experiences shared by them under Austria-Hungary; later in the first iteration of Czechoslovakia, many of the minorities felt they deserved to determine their own destinies based on their shared national lineage (an example would be the Sudeten Germans). Most of the founders of the Republic were focused on modernity and looked to the West as models; therefore, it is unsurprising that self-determination went hand-in-hand with the making of the Czechoslovak people. While on the surface this idea sounded inclusive, underneath it was not. The concept, to the government, really only applied to the Czechoslovak people, while other minorities were left out.43 The constitution was in theory written to protect everyone under the law no matter their nationality; however, the Czechs were

42 Ibid., 156.
43 Dagmar Kusa, “The Slovak Question and the Slovak Answer: Citizenship During the Quest for National Self-Determination and After,” 275.
favored above all other nationalities and none of these others mentioned by name within the Constitution. This favoritism, as will be explained, caused a rift between the two nationalities.

At the end of the War, the Czechs were a much more industrialized people than the rural and agricultural Slovaks. This meant the Slovaks were seen as backwards and underdeveloped in the modern world. As noted above, the Czechs and Slovaks had a long history with one another, as they were (and still are to this day) ethnically and linguistically similar. Josef Korbel asserted that the concept of Czechoslovakism was present long before the war, as evidenced by the fact that a chair of Czechoslovak language was developed in Bratislava in 1903, and credits this as the root of Czechoslovakism in Slovakia. The development of this chair in Bratislava (the capital of Slovakia), shows that, initially, the Slovaks saw something beneficial in forming a new nation with Czechs. By 1921, however, the Slovaks were growing afraid of being swallowed up by the Czechs; this was likely because the first census was performed that year and they had a more in-depth understanding of the population numbers. Since governmental representation was based proportionately on population, the Slovaks had a smaller number of representatives in Parliament. How did the Slovak leaders go from supporting the idea to resisting it in such a short amount of time?

While the Czechs were well-intentioned in their plans to help the Slovak people modernize, in their attempts they eclipsed the Slovaks and took over their lands. They swarmed the Slovak lands and stayed there, effectively changing the demographics. This led to a change in the treatment of the Slovaks as well. There was an influx of Slovak emigrants (170,000) to the United States between 1922 and 1930 because there were no industry jobs available and the land distributed among the people during the land reform, which began in 1923 and lasted until 1938,

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was often not arable. The mountainous and forested topography of Slovakia proved problematic to the redistribution of land because “only two-fifths of Slovakia’s area were cultivable.” During the land redistribution, “700,000 hectares of land were distributed among 200,000 families, but the average acreage of arable land was still below subsistence level.” When it was time to build up Slovakia, Czechs flooded in, “eager to help [and] offer[ing] their skillful hands and trained minds,” which limited the amount of industry jobs that Slovaks sought once the depression hit.

Czechoslovakism, as a concept, meant that the Czechs and Slovaks were one people. Linguistically and ethnically, the two were (and are) very similar. Elizabeth Bakke argues that there was also a second meaning: that the Slovaks were Czechs. Czechs were not the only advocates for this concept, as there were several Slovak leaders who favored it. One particular advocate was Vavro Šrobár, a Slovak leader who looked at the Czechs with admiration for their Western ideals. He “hoped that [Czechoslovakism] might permeate and transform the amorphous, backward culture of Slovakia.”

He signed the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence and was appointed to the first government as a Slovakian minister. In 1918, he

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45Ibid., 107. Korbel speaks to the implementation of the land reform in chapter three of this same work where he says, “the National Assembly enacted a law sequestering all large agricultural properties to prevent the manipulation of their sale by private interests.” The point was to distribute land among those that had none, such as “landless peasants, holders of dwarf lots, dispossessed prisoners of war and Legionaries, municipalities, cooperatives, and research institutes.” Ibid., 54-55.
47Ibid., 104.
49Korbel, Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia, 96.
50The Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation by its Provisional Government was signed in Paris on October 18, 1918. In it, the authors declare that “[their] struggle against the Hapsburg oppression, intensified and systematized by the Austro-Hungarian Dualistic Compromise of 1867…[represented] only a shameless organization of brute force and exploitation of the majority by the minority; it [was] a political conspiracy of the Germans and Magyars against [their] own as well as the other Slav and the Latin nations of the Monarchy.” In short, the three founders that signed (Thomas Masaryk, Milan Rastislav Stefanik, and Eduard Beneš) had tired of the oppression brought on by the Dual Monarchy and gathered enough support from abroad to declare their independence.
was sent to Slovakia with a four-person Slovak government, money, and seventy gendarmes to bring Slovakia under the Czechoslovakian government, because there was still conflict with Hungary, that did not want to give up those lands. A couple of weeks after this occupation began, the Hungarian government sent troops into Slovakia to reassert its authority.\textsuperscript{51}

Milan Rastislav Štefánik, another Slovak advocate for Czechoslovakism, stated that “every Slovak was a Czech living in Slovakia and every Czech was a Slovak living in the Czech lands.”\textsuperscript{52} Štefánik, part of what Josef Korbel called an “extraordinary trio”, went to France to study astronomy before the War, where he became a French citizen and excelled both in his field and socially. He “opened the doors of political and intellectual salons [in Paris] to [Eduard] Beneš and Masaryk.”\textsuperscript{53} During the War, Štefánik was deemed a traitor to his homeland, since he was technically from Hungary (part of the Central Powers) and he was outfitted as Chevalier of la Légion d’Honneur in the French Army (part of the Allies) the day that Germany declared war on Russia. During this meeting, Štefánik received this French honor that he announced that the Czechoslovaks did not want “anything but to be a nation recognized and respected, like the French.”\textsuperscript{54}

Štefánik yearned to help the French cause during the War even though he could not join the military in a combat capacity due to poor health. Even so, he was still able to contribute to the war effort in a military capacity and in 1914 he and one Captain d’Aragon flew behind enemy lines in a reconnaissance mission; the plane crashed but both men were able to escape unscathed. Josef Banáš states that Štefánik “wanted to prove his skill and especially his courage

\textit{Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation by its Provisional Government}, October 18, 1918, University of Pittsburgh Library, Presented by Francis Newton Thorpe, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{51} Mamatey, \textit{A History of the Czechoslovak Republic}, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 28.
in combat,” and even though he was not part of the main combat, he still wanted to help his cause by contacting Slavic fighters at the front lines. He wanted to convince the Allied Powers that the Slavic troops fighting for Austria-Hungary had very low morale because they felt as though they were fighting their brothers. It was this kind of wartime contribution to Czechoslovak independence that brought the Slovak Štefánik to the forefront of the creation of the new nation and led to his appointment as Czechoslovakia’s first Minister of War. Unfortunately, he never saw the nation he helped to build, as he died in a plane crash on May 4, 1919, as he headed back to his homeland for the first time since well before the War. Amidst the postwar dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was a celebrated hero within the Slovak lands and was later memorialized in Košice, one of the most populated cities in Slovakia, in the form of a statue.

Another staunch supporter of Czechoslovakism (it is important to specify that he was not a supporter until after the War) was Milan Hodža. Hodža fought for Slovak autonomy before the war had even begun. He had found his way into the audience chambers of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who was known for his dislike of Hungarians, and when his hopes for an improvement in the Slovak plight dimmed, he wrote… ‘We know that the Slovak nation existed when this Empire did not yet exist – and it will exist in the future, when this Empire has ceased to exist.’

This little outburst, along with appeals to Slovak parents to send their children to Czech schools, earned Hodža eighteen months in prison. Once the War ended, he represented Czechoslovakism and became the leader of the Slovak branch of the Agrarian Party. According to Mikuláš Teich, “Hodža was able to adapt his policies flexibly to suit specific situations,” and Korbel explains

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55 Korbel, Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia, 97.
56 Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin D. Brown, eds. Slovakia in History (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 145.
that eventually “his convictions about the unity of the Czechoslovak nation gave way…to a
pragmatic defense of the individuality of the Slovak nation.”\textsuperscript{57} Hodža was involved in several
different political schemes through the twenty-year life of the state, in what seemed to be an
effort to gain power, not to further his people or the Czechoslovaks as a whole.

Still, there were some Slovaks who had misgivings about Czechoslovakism because “it
mirrored the Magyar idea of a unitary Hungarian nation,” which had imposed a “brutal linguistic
and ethnic assimilation” policy.\textsuperscript{58} The Czechoslovak linguistic policy for the nation declared the
hybrid language Czechoslovak as the official state language. Teich argues that the creation of a
Czechoslovak language “directly affected the ethnic identity of the Slovak nation.”\textsuperscript{59} The
combination of the Czech and Slovak language is a complicated, if not confusing, topic. Both
languages are linguistically very similar, and Slovak had not been a written language for very
long by the time this policy came into being.

One Slovak who did not support the unity of the Czechs and Slovaks was Andrej Hlinka.
When the Czechoslovak Republic was formed, Hlinka stated, “the Slovaks would not ‘have seen
freedom if it were not for the Czechs,’”\textsuperscript{60} and he proclaimed that “the thousand-year marriage to
the Magyars has failed. We must divorce.”\textsuperscript{61} According to RW Seton-Watson, Hlinka originally
shared the “general view that the only hope for Slovakia lay in close union with the Czechs.”\textsuperscript{62}
How did Father Andrej Hlinka go from being supportive of a Czech-Slovak union to being one
of its biggest detractors?

\textsuperscript{57} Korbel, Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia, 98.
\textsuperscript{58} Teich, et al., Slovakia in History, 141.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{60} Korbel, Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia, 100.
\textsuperscript{61} Teich, et al., Slovakia in History, 135.
Originally a member of the Slovak National Party at the beginning of the Republic, Hlinka became the leader of the Slovak People’s Party (renamed Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party in 1925). This party was the result of a split from the Slovak National Party. The split occurred because “Hlinka and his followers were upset by the anticlerical character of the new Czechoslovak regime” and felt as though this threatened the “traditional, conservative way of life in Slovakia.” This threat to conservativism was especially felt when the Czechs moved into Slovak lands at the beginning of the Republic to help them further develop. Traditionally, the Slovaks were a conservative people, and this was thanks in part to the lack of education in prewar Slovakia. Josef Korbel states that before the War “there were 276 schools for 30,000 children, with Slovak as the language of instruction…no secondary schools at all; and illiteracy in the country was at 34.9%.” By 1930, illiteracy had been reduced to 8.16%.

Hlinka’s mistrust toward the Czechs had to do, in part, with what some Slovaks saw as a broken promise. This promise was the Pittsburgh Agreement, signed on May 30, 1918. The Slovak People’s Party saw this document as a “binding promise by Masaryk that the Slovaks would enjoy autonomy in a Czechoslovak state.” The problem was that the Pittsburgh Agreement was signed by Czech- and Slovak-Americans, not by anyone who lived in the Czech or Slovak lands. Initially, the Agreement smoothed tensions between the Czechs and Slovaks, but that changed when the Czechoslovak government asserted that because the agreement was signed in a foreign land, it could not be binding in Europe.

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63 James Felak, “At the Price of the Republic”: Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, 1929-1938 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press,1994), 25-30. The Slovak People’s Party was formed because the conservative, clerical members of the Slovak National Party felt as though it was too liberal and progressive. They also felt that the latter group favored the Lutherans at the expense of the Catholic practitioners in the nation. Their end goal was autonomy for Slovakia.
64 Ibid., 24.
65 Korbel, Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia, 105.
66 Felak, “At the Price of the Republic,” 40.
What perhaps felt more personal to the Slovaks was when President Masaryk wrote to Hlinka in 1929 that “it [the Pittsburgh Agreement] was invalid because one of the parties to it, the Slovak League of America, had not yet had its charter recognized by the United States government.”

James Felak asserts that “the Pittsburgh Agreement served Masaryk’s needs of the moment [and] with it, he could show Western leaders, in particular Woodrow Wilson, that his attempts to create a Czechoslovak state had Slovak backing.” It was not clear if this statement was made public, or if Hlinka shared it with the members of his Party to gain their backing against Czechoslovakism. On November 11, 1918, the Czechoslovak government recognized that all agreements that Masaryk concluded as head of the Czechoslovak wartime independence movement were valid. In this instance, it is easy to understand why the Slovak population grew restless for recognition.

Felak explains that it was never clear what Masaryk’s relationship to the agreement was, because it was only said that the leaders of the three organizations that signed it (the Slovak League of America, the Czech National Alliance, and the Federation of Czech Catholics) “deliberated in the presence of” Masaryk. Masaryk signed the document, but it was never clear if he was legally bound to it, hence the controversy surrounding it. Clearly, since discussions of the agreement were still happening eleven years after it was signed, the Pittsburgh Agreement became important in the Slovak movement for self-determination. Slovaks like Andrej Hlinka used it to show that the Czechs did not have the best interest of the Slovaks in mind. To him, it

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67 Ibid., 41.
68 Ibid., 40.
69 Ibid., 40.
proved that the Czechs wanted hegemony over the Slovaks, not a nation of equals, as they felt
the Czechs continually backtracked their promises when it suited them to do so.

In the mid-to-late 1930s, there was a movement to strengthen centralized government. According to Teich, this triggered “radicalism and extra-parliamentary activities” by several of Slovakia’s opposition parties. He explains that Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party joined with the Slovak National Party in 1932 and adopted the Zvolen Manifesto, which “emphasized a united and energetic effort to achieve the legislative autonomy of Slovakia on the basis of recognition of the separate identity of the Slovak nation.”71 Therefore, in the span of about fifteen years, the Slovaks went from nominally supporting Czechoslovakism to advocating for autonomy.

It is important to point out that Andrej Hlinka was a Catholic priest, so governmental progressivism directly influenced him. He felt as though the centralized government was fighting against religion, and in particular, Catholicism. Even though Czech lands and Slovakia were overwhelmingly Catholic, the Czechs had a much more distant relationship with the religion than their Slovak counterparts. With the dissolution of Hungary at the end of the War, the Slovak Catholics found a new freedom. Previously, the monarchy utilized the Church as a means of Magyarization and as such, no Slovaks could hold positions within the hierarchy. Now, they had much more power. In 1933, Anton Kompánek wrote that the Catholics, particularly in Slovakia, tended to “misrepresent the real position of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia and to arouse the impression that Slovak Catholicism has reached a critical stage of decay” and the only remedy to this was “the restoration of Slovakia to Hungary,” stirring up irredentist sentiments.72 This misrepresentation can be countered by the fact that the government of Czechoslovakia did

not appoint any Catholic bishops in Slovakia; it was by a memorandum agreed upon by the Czechoslovak government and the Vatican (known as the *Modus Vivendi*) that the Holy See would be the only institution with the power to appoint bishops in all of Czechoslovakia.\(^73\)

Even more radical than Andrej Hlinka was Professor Vojtech Tuka. Tuka was a former university professor and editor of the daily publication *Slovák* with right-wing beliefs and sympathy for Italian fascism. James Felak explains that Tuka drafted the Žilina Memorandum, which “alleged Czech mistreatment of the Slovaks and demanded autonomy for Slovakia,” and in 1923, he took the document to both the League of Nations in Geneva and the Council of Ambassadors in Paris. Both institutions refused to meet with him.\(^74\) The document had phrases that spoke to the so-called decline of the Slovak people, such as the Czechs leading “a real reign of terror” and insisting how the Slovaks were “a nation of culture throttled.” The document also falsely claimed that the “word Czechoslovak was invented in order to rob the Slovaks of their position as a national minority” and that the schools in Slovakia were only used as a tool of denationalization.\(^75\) Seton-Watson argues that the tone of the memorandum was “one of sweeping generalization, which covers almost every subject, yet rarely condescends to concrete facts.”\(^76\)

With the desire to separate from the Czechs, Slovak Catholics turned their hostility toward the Protestants, as they represented more progressive thought. Seton-Watson determined that “their indignation against the methods of militant anti-clericalism [was] perfectly natural, but to fall into similar extravagances of intolerance [would] only defeat their own aim.”\(^77\) *Slovák*

\(^{73}\) There will be more on the *Modus Vivendi* in a subsequent chapter dealing with the Hungarian population.

\(^{74}\) Felak, “*At the Price of the Republic,*” 32.

\(^{75}\) Seton-Watson, “*The Religious Problem in Slovakia,*” 529.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 529.

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 531.
was “the main organ of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party” and Tuka used its 1928 New Year’s issue to refer to a secret “but really non-existent appendix to the Martin Declaration…”[that] asserted that the Slovaks agreed to be part of Czechoslovakia for a ‘probationary period’ of ten years” and that by the end of October 1928, Slovakia would “cease to be part of Czechoslovakia.”

Tuka was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison on charges of treason and spying for Hungary. Seton-Watson explained that Tuka’s “relations with Magyar circles [could not] be denied, and he appear[ed] to have at least played with the idea of a federal union with Poland and Hungary.”

With this short analysis, one can understand that Tuka was completely against the Czechoslovak government. In his tenth anniversary speech to the nation, Masaryk acknowledged that there was a certain level of discontent within some circles. He went on to say that “there is no agreement with those who on principle are opposed to the Republic and to democracy” and appealed to the nation that they could “no longer allow [themselves] to be misled by the wrapping up of incapacity in bombastic watchwords concerning nationalism, morality and religion, progress and the revolutionary spirit.”

Even though he did not mention names in his address, one can surmise that he was speaking about people who thought and behaved like Tuka and wanted them to know that he was aware of their resistance.

Economic development in the new nation also served as a point of tension between the Czechs and Slovaks. As previously mentioned, the Slovaks were mostly an agrarian society, while the Czechs were a more industrialized nation with improved transportation; one could assume that the two sectors would complement one another. At the outset of the Republic, the

agricultural sector of Slovakia was “less advanced than that of the other parts of former Hungary.” Mamatey also pointed out that the geographical shape of Czechoslovakia caused Slovak industry to be further from any provinces in the nation than they previously were while under Hungarian rule. Mamatey also postulates that compared to the numerous railway connections between Hungary and Slovakia, there were only two between Slovakia and the Czech provinces. This presented yet another challenge for the new Czechoslovak government to face: how to make industry in Slovakia more equal to the Czech lands. Korbel explains that there was “marked economic growth” between 1924 and 1929, and economic development following until 1935 was plagued by the worldwide depression. The economic depression added to the tensions between the two nationalities.

It was traditional in the years leading up to the war that “the population in Slovakia’s mountainous areas had to earn a part of the whole of its income by labor in the forests, as seasonal agricultural laborers in the flat lands of Hungary, or in industry.” Because they were now separated from Hungary, it was more difficult to get these seasonal jobs, and there were hardly any industrial opportunities within Slovakia. However, the agricultural industry in Slovakia did benefit from better organization during the interwar period. According to Zora Pryor, “acreage and yields rose, and for some crops sizeable markets were found in the western provinces.”

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81 Mamatey, A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 49.  
82 Ibid., 115.  
83 Ibid., 117.  
84 Ibid., 213.
Even with political disagreement and economic tensions concerning the status of Slovaks within the Republic, “education, culture, and art proved to be areas where progress was made more swiftly.”\(^{85}\) There was massive reform in education in Slovakia after Czechoslovakia was created, which greatly improved the development of Slovak culture. Teich explains that “by the mid-1920s, the former Hungarian school system had been totally reformed, the Slovak language had been introduced in schools, and compulsory school attendance had been reinforced by the terms of the Little Education Act of 1922.”\(^{86}\) In 1919, the Czechoslovak government created Comenius University in Bratislava and its purpose was to provide university-level education to the Slovak intelligentsia. One cannot ignore the assistance that Czech officials gave in Slovakia at this time. These Czech officials helped in all sectors, including industry, transportation, and business. In the same vein, a Czech publishing house in Prague specialized in bringing Slovak literature to Czech readers, thus expanding Slovak culture outside the Slovak lands.\(^{87}\) Stefan Krcméry explained in a 1928 article that “the literary output of the Slovaks up to 1918 was…almost exclusively clergy and teachers…who remained true to their nation and took an active part in literature and similar fields of Slovak cultural life” even though this behavior could land them in jail, or in a few cases, exiled from Upper Hungary.\(^{88}\)

Once the people living in the Slovak lands had been liberated from the rule of Hungary and Magyarization, Slovak literature became the property of the entire Slovak nation, not just of the former elite. Prewar, many of the Slovak literary intelligentsia lived in exile due to the fact that it was illegal to write about the Slovak people and in the Slovak language. As previously

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\(^{85}\) Teich, et al., *Slovakia in History*, 151.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 151.
\(^{87}\) Korbel, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia*, 105.
mentioned, Hungary wanted complete unification from the people in its lands. Krcméry further explained that “Slovakia is a classic example of the extent to which intellectual and literary forces can be checked by unnatural political pressure and can flourish once more under the sun of a new political freedom.”

The Slovak population within Czechoslovakia enjoyed much progress once the war ended: they were finally able to learn their language in schools and speak it in public without fear of retribution, the illiteracy rate dropped, and for the first few years of the Republic, there was economic growth for the Slovak population. When the worldwide depression hit, it took a toll on this region, just like the rest of the world. With the added stress and uncertainty that came from the depression, tensions between the Czechs and Slovaks mounted and right-wing radicalism increased in the 1930s, which culminated in Germany’s Third Reich supporting an autonomous Slovakia. There was a desire to return to a more traditional, conservative life for the people in Slovakia and by the end of the century, the only answer would be to separate from the more progressive Czechs.

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89 Ibid., 162.
90 Teich, et al., Slovakia in History, 158.
Chapter 2: The Germans

“We Czechs and Slovaks are a homogenous nation; our Germans on the other hand...do not represent their whole nation.”

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the relationship between the German minority and Czech majority during the interwar period in the First Czechoslovak Republic. The Czechs and Germans have a long, rich history of rivalry that spans centuries. This opposition was so embedded in the two peoples that by the time the First Republic was created, thoughts of actual unity between them were impracticable. In many cases, it seemed as though the Czech majority were attempting to take revenge on the German population they felt had controlled them during Austro-Hungarian rule. This animosity hampered the economic and social development of the Republic and drove the two populations further apart, thus making the infiltration of Nazism much easier. In part, this tension was because both groups viewed the Bohemian lands as their historical home. Bohemia was one of the oldest national states within Europe, and with the large German population within this area, it is understandable that these two people claimed this land as theirs. According to Elizabeth Wiskemann, the Czechs saw themselves as heirs to the Přemyslid dynasty and saw the Czech Lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia as representations of Slav unity. Another aspect of the tense Czecho-German relationship was the fact that, historically, the German nation had refused to assimilate to the cultures of their adopted land.

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Wiskemann gives several examples of this refusal by comparing them to the French Protestants who emigrated to England and similarly refused to adopt the cultural practices or religion of their new nation. The Hussite movement of the 15th century\textsuperscript{94} represented a heroic uprising in the interests of religious truth for the Czechs, but the Germans viewed it as an outburst of destructive brutality, which many believed was the typical behavior of Slavic people.\textsuperscript{95} Therefore, when the boundaries of the new Europe were drawn at the end of World War I and the two groups were forced into sharing a new nation, tensions ran high. The Czechoslovaks were excited by their new freedom, but the Germans had hoped (vainly) for the triumph of Austria.

Geographical and historical rivalry aside, religion also posed an issue between the two nationalities. The Czechs (especially Thomas Masaryk) were inspired by Jan Hus (1369-1415), while the German people were inspired by Martin Luther (1483-1546). Luther himself was inspired by Hus when he began his religious reform, and so during his time animosity between the two peoples faded. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Czechs were predominantly Catholic, while the Germans were Protestant. This is what led to many of the religious issues between the Czechs and Germans in the First Republic. After the death of King Louis of Bohemia in 1526, the Bohemian Diet\textsuperscript{96} elected the Habsburg Ferdinand to lead. Because Ferdinand was German, he was distrusted by the Czechs. Ferdinand’s regal position meant that German people became the most prominent and powerful. Czech representation at court became heavily influenced by German culture because Czech leaders wanted to place themselves closer to the center of power. Court administration was conducted in German instead of Czech. This

\textsuperscript{94} The influences of Jan Hus on the Czech people are covered in chapter one of Thomas G. Masaryk’s \textit{The Meaning of Czech History}, in which he credits Jan Hus with inspiring the Czech Reformation and opening Czech eyes to the importance of morality. Thomas G. Masaryk, \textit{The Meaning of Czech History}, edited by René Wellek, translated by Peter Kussi (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 3-14.
\textsuperscript{95} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 8.
\textsuperscript{96} Translated records of the demographic makeup of this specific Diet are difficult to find, to say the least, and at this time cannot be expanded upon further.
began to change in the seventeenth century when the Czech Bohemian nobility began to check the privileges of German leaders. They did this by shouting down a German-speaking representative in the Bohemian Diet in 1611 and by forbidding the acquisition of land to anyone that did not speak Czech in 1615. However, this behavior only entrenched the hostility. The Thirty Years War broke out a few years later, and at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, the Czech Bohemian nobility was so heavily defeated by the Germans that their population was reduced to only peasants and workmen. After this war, German peasants were brought to the Czech Lands from Austria, Swabia, and Bavaria to settle the depopulated areas, and this migration led to a social and economic hierarchy in which the Germans were on top and the Czechs at the bottom.

Language was another layer of the animosity, even before the creation of Czechoslovakia. Empress Maria Theresa, who understood that she was unable to completely denationalize many of her people or eliminate any non-German languages, thus introduced the study of Czech at the University of Vienna in 1775. Wiskemann postulates that Maria Theresa and her son Joseph were inspired by eighteenth-century French notions of equality, which led to the introduction of public education supported by the Habsburg government. Despite French influences, elementary and grammar schools in the empire were taught in German only. Wiskemann follows this analysis by also stating that this use of German only in public education created the beginnings of the language question that plagued the following two centuries. The future Czechoslovak nation based much, if not all, of their legislation on a person’s native language. With the Germanization of the public education system in the eighteenth century, more interest in German industry grew. The Austrian government encouraged German immigration to

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98 Ibid., 11-12.
the Bohemian and Moravian lands as long as they provided industry.\textsuperscript{99} This led to an increase in German speakers in the Czech lands and further shrunk the population of Czech speakers, or at least reduced that population. This practice of making the conqueror’s language the language of the state and forcing the conquered to learn and speak it can be found throughout imperialist history.

Wiskemann asserts that “out of the Age of Enlightenment, in the later years of the eighteenth century, was born the Romantic Revival and the spirit of modern nationalism and the Czech-German problem.”\textsuperscript{100} Then, around the turn of the century, the modern consciousness of Czechs and Germans emerged. The thinking that came from the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 was that the Slavs had been continually interrupted by outside conquerors in their attempts to create their own communities. In the vein of nationalism, traditionally the Slav people had egalitarian principles and tried to create common groups in which no one ruled over anyone else. However, the German people pontificated “aggressive ideologies” from the early nineteenth century concerning beliefs that “some races are born to rule others,” or what Wiskemann calls a racial caste-hierarchy.\textsuperscript{101} Because of forced Germanization in the eighteenth century, the rift between the two peoples grew. This contention between the two peoples was present well into the twentieth century and in the first Republic. From the mid-to-late nineteenth century, new governmental acts were written that emphasized the indispensability of the German-Czech relationship to alleviate some of the tension, but included caveats with which the Czechs disagreed: a state German language, an administrative division in Bohemia, Moravia, and Tyrol, and that the German language be equal to the Czech language in Prague (even though the

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 17.
German population here was approximately five percent).\(^\text{102}\) This was a huge request; Prague had long been the center of the Czech lands. It became the capital of the new Republic and remains the capital of Czechia today. Even though there was a state German language at this time, minority populations could still use their mother tongues in a municipal capacity as long as the minority population made up twenty percent of the overall population of the area.\(^\text{103}\) So, the fact that the Germans wanted to place their language on the same level as Czech in an area where they only made up five percent of the population showed how bold they were and emphasized the favoritism of the Austrian government.

There were two attempts to bridge the divide between these peoples: the Moravian Compromise of 1905 and the introduction of universal suffrage in 1907. The Moravian Compromise sought to fix relations between Czechs and Germans by making the representation within the Diet at Brno more equal. According to A.J.P. Taylor, the Moravian Compromise “showed how two peoples of different nationality could live together in the same province; it did not show how two nations could settle their conflicting historical claims.”\(^\text{104}\) The German minority in the Moravian Diet insisted on having more power than their population numbers should have allowed; however, being the favorite of the monarchy had its perks. The compromise guaranteed the Czechs seventy-three seats to the Germans’ forty. This still meant that the Germans had a good amount of power within the diet because, in order to pass legislation, there needed to be a two-thirds majority vote; the Germans maintained effective veto power.\(^\text{105}\) The electorate in the diet were also restricted by their registered nationality; Germans

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 52.
\(^{103}\) Ibid., 52.
could only elect Germans and Czechs could only elect Czechs. However, a person was unable to choose which nationality they registered as. In other words, some Czechs found themselves registered with the Germans because these registries came “from above.” One of the goals of the Moravian Compromise was to set up another Czech university (they only had one at this time), however, this goal was unattainable due to the resistance of municipal or local elections thanks to the power of the Germans in the municipal diets. When universal suffrage came in 1907 (“universal” did not mean every person in these lands could vote, it only meant the men in the intelligentsia and above), a poor man had no say in his local elections because only the nobility could vote. While this appears somewhat backwards, it served a purpose for the powerful as it enabled them to maintain regional control while projecting an image of expanded suffrage. At this time in prewar Austria, the number of rich Czechs was increasing, but these lands were still heavily German. While questions about nationality were important to the nobility of this time, the lower class did not worry as much about what nationality they belonged to as they were likely more concerned about keeping food on the table.

Before 1918, predominantly Czech towns were run by German councils. Places such as Olomouc and Ostrava (in Moravia), and Budějovice (in Southern Bohemia) “were administered wholly by Germans,” while in Brno (in which the population was at least half Czech), there was not a single Czech local councilor. The nationalist arguments of the time were rooted in class struggles between the privileged (German) and the underprivileged (Czech). Essentially, because a person was born into a German family, their mother tongue was German, which meant they

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106 Bruegel, Czechoslovakia Before Munich, 9. “From above” quoted by Bruegel on page 9. Bruegel implies that an elector was not able to choose which nationality they registered as, but she was not specific about who was choosing the nationalities for these electors.

107 Wiskemann, Czechs and Germans, 53.

108 Bruegel, Czechoslovakia Before Munich, 6.
had an advantage over non-Germans from birth. This is another example of colonizer behavior: they kept the Czechs disenfranchised so that they could not gain enough power to make changes.

World War I presented opportunities and obstacles to the Czech anti-Habsburg resistance since, as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they were called to war alongside the Central Powers. During the War, the progress of the Czech anti-Habsburg resistance was based on the ups and downs of the war. The Czech right-wing hoped that the Russian Czar would come to their rescue, but ultimately those hopes waned after the Russians were driven out of Galicia in May 1915 and German and Austro-Hungarian occupation overtook large areas of prewar Russia.\textsuperscript{109} The Czechs found themselves tasked with defending German imperialism (in the form of both Germany and Austria-Hungary), even though this imperialism was associated with aggressive policies and oppression toward the Czechs themselves. Eduard Beneš and Thomas Masaryk spent their time trying to stimulate interest for an independent Czech state among foreign powers like France, Britain, and the United States. Czech history was (and arguably still is) less known in the West. The Easter Demands, written by the Germans in Austria and published in March 1916, outlined a postwar Austria in the event the Germans and Austro-Hungarians were successful in the war. Their demands were such that “Slav numerical predominance was to be…curtailed by cutting away…Galicia, Bukovina, and Dalmatia…from central parliamentary representation.” German would be the official language throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They specified that “even in Prague, Czech could only be used in lower courts and no longer in appeals to the higher ones.”\textsuperscript{110} Bohemia would be split up into a German and a bilingual administrative area, rather than half-and-half German and Czech.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 11.
However, as the war went on, it became obvious that things were not working out for the Central Powers and the Easter Demands, from the start, were extremely optimistic. During this time, many Czechs were conscripted to fight for the nation that had oppressed them for centuries and “went to the front with their hearts full of hatred…[and] fought as little as possible and entered the Allies’ ranks whenever they could.”\textsuperscript{111} Austro-Hungarian Emperor Francis Joseph’s successor Charles attempted to appease the Czechs when he released Karel Kramář and Alois Rašín (who had been sentenced to death).\textsuperscript{112} He also attempted to pacify the angry Germans by agreeing to create a province in the Czech Lands: German-Bohemia. Importantly, in 1918, Charles decided to completely side with the Germans to “implement the plans for splitting up Bohemia into two parts;” however, he did not consult the Czechs. So, at this point, the Germans still had hope when it came to who would rule once the war was done.\textsuperscript{113} According to Wiskemann, “the democratic rationalist tradition, which they were striving to build up, caused them to honor the professor rather than the general,” and it was this lack of military aggression that led to the Czechs resisting fighting for the German military.\textsuperscript{114}

Masaryk’s advocacy for a Czechoslovak state during the war consisted of demanding unity of the Czech Lands, with the addition of the Slovaks. Masaryk was determined to keep the German minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic because “Bohemia [was] a quite unique example of a mixed country; in no country [were] there two nationalities so intermixed and

\textsuperscript{111} Josef Pešek, \textit{The Story of Czechoslovakia} (Praha: Professors’ Printing House and Library, 1930), 194.

\textsuperscript{112} Alois Rašín and Karel Kramář were Czech patriots that fought against the Habsburg monarchy in WWI. Both were arrested in 1915 and sentenced to death for high treason in 1916. This was not the first time that Rašín had been arrested and imprisoned for his anti-Austrian beliefs. He had also been arrested and put on trial in 1893 for “planning a secret society…with…subversive and anti-dynastic aims,” and was imprisoned for two years following that trial. R.W. Seton-Watson, “Alois Rašín,” \textit{The Slavonic Review} 1, no. 3 (March 1923): 636-37. There will be more on Kramář in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{113} Bruegel, \textit{Czechoslovakia Before Munich}, 12.

\textsuperscript{114} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 70.
interwoven...as Bohemia.” Masaryk’s solution to the issue between Czechs and Germans was that no singular group should rule over the other, but seeing as that was a long shot, he asked this: “Which is more just – that 10 million Czechs should live under foreign rule, or that 2½ million non-Czechs should be under Czech rule?” Masaryk believed that the Czech State (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) was economically viable enough to handle being independent.

When it came to the Germans in Bohemia, Eduard Beneš wrote:

The Prague delegates also laid emphasis on the question of the Germans in Bohemia. It was also recognized that in this respect we must proceed cautiously so as not to create any prejudice for ourselves when vindicating the historical frontiers of the Czech territories. We therefore unanimously passed a resolution that the definitive government should include one German as a regional Minister without Portfolio.

This action was an appeasement to the Germans in hopes that they would cooperate with the burgeoning government. The Czechs were at least attempting to offer representation to the Germans (even if it was in the form of just one person).

At the first meeting of the provisional Parliament on November 14, 1918, the Czech Social Democrat František Tomášek and the first Premier Karel Kramář addressed the German population. The former commented on the fact that the only representation at this meeting was that of Czech and Slovak; no Germans were present. Kramář made the claim that “the German people living within the borders of [the] State need not to harbor the least fear for the national development.” Here, he was assuring the German population that although Czechs, Slovaks, and Germans were different, no one needed to worry about their treatment under the state.

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115 Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 16.
When Masaryk addressed the provisional National Assembly on December 22, 1918, he delivered a message that was understood by the German population as an insult to their rights to live in the Czechoslovak lands. In his address, he referred to the German citizens of the Republic as “immigrants” and the Czech population as “indigenous.” While it may be true that historically the lands that now made up the First Republic had been settled by the Czechs, German speakers had been in these lands for centuries leading up to the twentieth and it was problematic for Masaryk to leave out that part of the very tangled history. These comments fueled anti-Czech propaganda. Masaryk somewhat retracted his words in an address to the nation in 1919, saying:

Democracy is also my guideline in the question of nationalities. I recognize the national principle and the right to self-determination but the given administrative circumstances there are boundaries which are the result of national interrelationships and which make any straight frontier demarcation impracticable. A union of the German minorities is geographically not feasible, just as it is not feasible to unite all Czech minorities geographically. There is no other way for them, but to remain together…There is moreover an obvious difference in the application of the right to self-determination. With the exception of a few small frontier minorities, we Czechs and Slovaks are a homogenous nation; our Germans on the other hand do not represent their whole nation.119

The biggest takeaway from this passage is that no clean frontier lines could be drawn around the different ethnicities that lived in the First Republic. Masaryk believed that the only viable option for both Czechs and Slovaks was the combination of the two into one state. He knew that the citizens of the German minority could look to another state when it came to representation, while the Czechoslovaks had only had each other.

Just as the Slovaks found inspiration in the Wilsonian notion of self-determination, so too did the Germans under the First Republic. They believed that US President Woodrow Wilson’s definition of this concept in his Fourteen Point Plan applied to them as well and they resented the

119 Ibid., 19-20.
fact that the Czech liberator, Masaryk, was not a champion for the Germans as well.\textsuperscript{120} Before 1918, the two most prominent German political groups, the German Social Democrats and German Nationalists, had been at odds with one another, unable to agree on almost anything. But now, they had a mutual interest: achieving self-determination. On October 21, 1918, German politicians (previously elected in Austria in 1911) proclaimed “jurisdiction over the whole German ethnic area, particularly the Sudeten territories.” They declared themselves the Provisional Provincial Diet for the entirety of German Bohemia. This area was not defined by any boundary lines; instead, it was more of a concept written down on paper.\textsuperscript{121} Districts in both north and south Moravia and Silesia were created in addition to German-Bohemia as well. However, none of these provincial diets lasted more than a few weeks. Bruegel explains that one of the biggest challenges facing the German-Bohemian Diet was malnutrition and starvation left over from the war, but they were ill-equipped to deal with the issues unless an agreement (\textit{Modus Vivendi}) could be reached between the Germans and the Czechs in Prague. Despite the fact that these provincial diets dissolved within a few weeks of their creation, this was a clear attempt the Germans made toward achieving their own self-determination within the First Republic.

Once the delegates at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference approved the First Republic, “the absolutely democratic character of the Czechoslovak Republic increased the power of population agitation, while its insistence upon the Czech language and tradition meant that, in spite of fairly liberal laws, the new state was frequently tempted to accept an alliance with the Czech societies against the Sudeten German organizations.”\textsuperscript{122} Leadership in the First Republic was based

\textsuperscript{120} Woodrow Wilson delivered his Fourteen Point Plan to Congress on January 8, 1918. In it, he listed his hope for the future rebuilding of various states including Belgium, France, and the peoples of Austria-Hungary. The speech can be found via the Avalon Project at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp. It is also highly important to mention that the area defined as the Sudetenland in 1918 is not the same area that was ceded to Adolf Hitler in 1938; that area was much bigger than the borderlands that were up for discussion in 1918.

\textsuperscript{121} Bruegel, \textit{Czechoslovakia Before Munich}, 22.

\textsuperscript{122} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 117.
proportionately on the population. The Sudeten Germans were a fairly large population within the Republic, but they were outnumbered by the Czechoslovaks. The founders of the Republic and the delegates at the Paris Peace Conference intentionally did this so that the Germans could not gain too much power. According to Wiskemann, when the Republic was created, the Czechs set out to humiliate the Germans in the way that they believed they had been humiliated under German rule for the centuries leading up to the First World War. For example, the chief Czech-Austrian frontier station Břeclav replaced all German words and street names with French, as if to punish German speakers, a particularly potent gesture given their defeat in the war by the French.\textsuperscript{123}

When confronted with the question of why there was no formal invitation to the Germans as the new state was being formed, Masaryk responded, saying:

As long as this [German] attitude continued, it was not formally possible to offer membership of the National Assembly to the Germans. This would have created a conflict of conscience for them and we would have risked our advances being rebuffed. But even if they had accepted, what use would their presence there have been, considering their attitude at the time?

By “attitude,” Masaryk meant that until the Peace Treaty was signed, most Germans in the Czech Lands referred to themselves as citizens of Austria.\textsuperscript{124} The first discussion of the German Social Democrats with the government happened on December 20, 1919, in which their main demand was full representation within the Constituent Assembly. However, the premier who had replaced Kramář, a prominent Czech journalist and Social Democrat named Vlastimil Tusar, shot down that idea, citing that Germans had always formed “governments of defiance.”\textsuperscript{125} It is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[123] Ibid., 118.  
\item[124] Bruegel, \textit{Czechoslovakia Before Munich}, 56.  
\item[125] Ibid., 56.  
\end{footnotes}
important to note that the National Assembly was formed out of revolutionary law, in which the new government was formed in the wake of the Habsburg Empire’s collapse, meaning that the new state was created based on the needs at the time with less regard to a solid future.

One of the most important pieces of legislation during this period was the Language Law. This law passed on February 29, 1920, along with the rest of the Czechoslovak Constitution. While reading through the Constitution, one would be hard-pressed to find any sort of innate bias in relation to the German population. All citizens of the First Republic were guaranteed equal rights before the law, as well as the right to use the language of their choosing; no more would a person be subjected to ridicule or poverty because of their mother tongue. In fact, it was not the actual constitution that created the issues the Sudeten Germans faced; it was other laws passed outside the constitution that led to an inherent inequality between the Czechoslovaks and minorities within the state. In regard to the Language Law, Bruegel explains that it “was, more than anything else, an act of revenge for the discrimination the Czechs in Austria, and the Slovaks in Hungary, had had to bear and, vicariously, for the even worse fate that would have been in store for the Slav nations had the Germans won the war.” Masaryk was adamant that he wanted full justice for both the Czechoslovaks and Germans, and when the first draft of the law was submitted to him, he returned it with lengthy comments regarding its fairness.

Fairness also came in the form of regulating language. Within the smallest juridical unit (that of local districts), if a minority made up twenty percent or more of the population, then the courts were obliged to accept all requests (written and oral) in the mother tongue while replies

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126 The use of “revolutionary law” only means that the Czechoslovaks saw themselves as revolutionizing their people against the Austrian regime. They viewed their fight for independence in a similar light to that of the French Revolution. They fought for and won a radical change with the help of the Allied Powers.
127 Ibid., 59.
were to be given in Czech and the minority language the request was submitted in.\textsuperscript{128} The twenty percent rule was a remnant from the old Austrian regime.\textsuperscript{129} The last article of the constitution stated that “every manner whatsoever of forcible denationalization is prohibited. Non-observance of this principle may be proclaimed by law to be a punishable act.”\textsuperscript{130} Here, the law prohibited any kind of denationalization, the opposite of Austro-Hungarian Empire imperial policies that sought to homogenize the population under Germanic culture. This article created an issue with language equality: Czech and Slovak (or Czechoslovak) could be used no matter what, whereas languages such as German required a particular number of citizens before they could use their language in any official capacity. Thus, while the language law offered what looked like equality for everyone, this equality came with a few caveats. Wiskemann explains that in the time leading up to the formation of the First Republic, there was ardent protest among the Czechs regarding an official national language. However, the Sudeten Germans were eager to point out that as soon as the Czechs had their own nation, they were quick to claim the national language as Czechoslovak.\textsuperscript{131}

Countries like Britain and France believed that Czechoslovakia was a united national state. On the surface, this was true. Underneath, the nationalities of the First Republic were not united, and this disconnect between the Allies and the new Republic contributed to many of the border issues throughout the first iteration of the Czechoslovak Republic. The Paris Conference determined that all successor states from the old Austro-Hungarian rule were “national states” even though the states themselves could not be formed solely around cultural or ethnic lines; it

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{129} It is unclear if this rule was leftover for any other reason than ease of implementation. Since the Republic was brand new, and the government was still struggling to figure everything out, it made sense for them to just keep the rule in place.
\textsuperscript{131} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 120.
was more like randomly selecting pieces of land and carving them out without any particular thought as to who lived there. According to Beneš, the Conference referred to them as national states because they had fulfilled national aspirations. However, they conceded that the states could not have been formed around any one people. He also mentioned later that these expressions were used to contrast the old Austro-Hungarian State.\textsuperscript{132}

During the first census of the new Republic, recorded in 1921, more problems arose between the Sudeten Germans and Czechs. The nationality of a citizen within the republic was based on mother tongue (first language spoken), but the use of another language within daily life was considered. The Jewish citizens of Czechoslovakia were allowed to choose their nationality separately from the rest of the population and because of this, the German minority actually lost more people who claimed to be German. Coupled with the emigration of old German officials to Austria and young officials to Germany, the Sudeten German population faced heavy losses between 1910 and 1920.\textsuperscript{133} The confusion that came with the very first census of the Republic was somewhat expected because, with the loss of the Habsburg regime structure, the entirety of Central-Eastern Europe was unsure of the future.

Language was not the only factor that affected national identity at this time; education also played a major role in the relationship between Germans and Czechs. Both German and Czech demonstrations occurred on any given day through 1921 to 1925, and a large portion of them were focused on the closing of German schools. The Germans complained that Czech families moved into German districts and thus a Czech school was needed. Before the collapse of the Empire, Germans moving into predominantly Czech districts led to the creation of German

\textsuperscript{132} Bruegel, \textit{Czechoslovakia Before Munich}, 60-61.
\textsuperscript{133} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 123.
But the Germans in Czechoslovakia chose to have selective memories about this particularity. Even the building of Czech schools in areas where Czechs were the minority was a massive change from the old regime. Before the First Republic, there were few Czech schools in comparison to German schools. Wiskemann argues that the German officials in Czechoslovakia held disdain towards the state as a whole and “made it clear that they believed the Republic to be merely a temporary misfortune.”

By 1925, the socioeconomic status of German citizens was much worse than that of their Czechoslovak counterparts, but they only received five percent of state scholarships. The number of German elementary schools fell by 285 between 1921 and 1934. Because of this decline, some Germans felt as though the Sudeten and Bohemian German citizens were that much closer to being cut off from the motherland. By 1935, the number of minority schools in Czechoslovakia (including German schools) had declined, proving that the idea of the Minorities Treaty was good on paper but was not upheld by the Czechoslovak government.

Another issue for the German minority was the foreign policy of the First Republic, which appeared to have a strong emphasis on the new status quo that was built at the end of the war. The most important figure in Czechoslovakia’s foreign policy was the Foreign Minister Dr. Eduard Beneš. His most ardent concern was maintaining good relationships with Czechoslovakia’s allies and ensuring cooperation. In 1920 and 1921, Beneš created the Little

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134 It is unclear if the Germans were upset because funds were taken from their schools and put into a budget for Czech schools, or if they were just upset because they felt as though they were losing their status to the Czechs.

135 Ibid., 126.

136 Ibid., 145. The decline in socioeconomic status of German minority citizens was in part due to industrial collapses in 1922 and 1923. Many manufacturers at this time were Sudeten Germans. The collapses were due to the fall of Austria and Hungary’s currency (both of which Sudeten Germans exported goods to) at the end of WWI.

137 Ibid., 145.

138 The Minorities Treaty was an addendum to the Czechoslovak Constitution that ensured the protection of all minorities under the League of Nations. The treaty can be found within the Czechoslovak Constitution.

Entente with Yugoslavia and Romania, two small states similarly created at the end of the war and “whose existence depended upon the maintenance of the Treaty of Trianon.”\textsuperscript{140} Beneš explained in an interview with TR Ybarra for \textit{The New York Times} on September 26, 1920, that “one of the principals underlying causes for this alliance of these three southeastern European nations is their mutual protection against Hungary.”\textsuperscript{141}

According to Wiskemann, the Sudeten Germans resented the Little Entente and saw it as a form of French subjugation. They looked down on Yugoslavia and Romania because “they were ‘wretched little states,’ and the Serbs were the ‘ruffians’ who had started the War.”\textsuperscript{142} They also believed that in order to be successful, Czechoslovakia needed to cooperate with Austria and Germany. Czechoslovakia’s initial relations with Weimar Germany were diplomatic and the German government regarded Czechoslovakia with “far less contempt than Poland.”\textsuperscript{143} However, good relations with Germany did not last long. In 1925 and 1926, Beneš was involved in the Locarno discussions,\textsuperscript{144} and was presiding on the day in which Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. Sudeten Germans viewed this as an advantage because if they presented their concerns with the Minority Treaty in Czechoslovakia, the issue was more likely to receive support from a major power.\textsuperscript{145} Some, like Gustav Stresemann, then Minister of Foreign Affairs for the German Reich, believed that the Sudeten Germans should have worked with the

\textsuperscript{140} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 127. The Treaty of Trianon was signed on June 4, 1920, by representatives of the Allies and Hungary. It set the boundaries for the new nations that had won freedom from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Beneš created the Little Entente as a way to ensure all of their borders were protected.


\textsuperscript{142} Wiskemann, \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 127.

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 127.

\textsuperscript{144} These discussions were negotiated in Locarno, Switzerland in 1925 and formally signed in London in 1926. The discussions led to a series of agreements between Germany and the League of Nations (referred to as the Locarno Treaties), including an arbitration treaty with Czechoslovakia. Wiskemann briefly covers this in \textit{Czechs and Germans}, 128.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 129.
Czechoslovak government to accomplish what they wanted. Although, one could ask how a group of people were supposed to work with a government accused of failing to uphold constitutional law. One issue that the Sudeten Germans had with Czechoslovakia’s foreign policy was that it seemed to favor France over Germany. Wiskemann mentions that any Sudeten German petitions sent to Geneva never actually made it before the League.\textsuperscript{146} Whether or not this was due to Beneš, who definitely favored France, is up for debate.

When Adolf Hitler became Germany’s Chancellor in 1933, Germany’s relationship with Czechoslovakia began to sour as Hitler became more intentional about his expansionist desires into Eastern Europe. The Sudeten Germans felt that Beneš’s Parisian career could lead to a French-Czechoslovak alliance that would block German expansionism. According to Wiskemann, both the Sudeten Germans and the Third Reich felt that Beneš was “a particularly venomous enemy of Germany.”\textsuperscript{147} The right-wing German parties in Czechoslovakia claimed they wanted nothing but “national demarcation and the complete autonomy of every racial group” within the borders; however, they also stated that “a greater German empire…which economically dominates the Balkans and the southeastern states, are war demands which are justified by [their] superior military position.”\textsuperscript{148} Here, it is obvious that the Germans in Czechoslovakia were struggling under a government they saw as not fully representative. There were several different German political parties within Czechoslovakia, and they tended to lean one of two ways: toward activism or negativism.\textsuperscript{149}

The German National Socialist party in the Sudetenland was staunchly against activism. When Hitler rose to the top of the National-Sozilitische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei in Munich, the

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 129.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{149} Seton-Watson, “The German Minority in Czechoslovakia”, 659.
German-Bohemian Nazis were thrilled with this development. Just like the Nazis of Germany, the Czechoslovak Nazis were anti-Semitic and anti-democratic; Hitler gave them something to back. Wiskemann states that the Nazis of Czechoslovakia wore the same uniforms and displayed the same banners as their German counterparts.¹⁵⁰ The Sudeten Nazis protested against activism and emphasized Pan-German unity, but other German groups claimed the Nazis were the one group that presented the most obstacles to achieving what they wanted. The Sudeten Nazis attracted young people and, in doing so, their representation in Parliament rose from five in 1920 to eight in 1929. After 1929, all Sudeten Nazi youths were organized into the Volkssport, which behaved the same as Hitler’s Brownshirts in the Reich and wore a very similar uniform.¹⁵¹

Between 1931 and 1932, the Sudeten Nazis were able to expand their activities to outside the Sudetenland, but the Czechoslovak authorities put a stop to it. Because of Nazi activities and the rhetoric of Hitlerism, many Czechs (particularly the ones who were already prone to “Germanophobia”) felt this to be the true light of the German people and thus a justification of their aversion to Germans.¹⁵² The line was further drawn between the two people when Jewish refugees crossed into Czechoslovakia with stories of Hitler’s Germany. The Czechs were “not as surprised as Western Europe” when they heard, and they believed the only way to stop it was to take a strong line against fascism by “stealing the enemy’s weapons” and not holding up their hands passively.¹⁵³ When the Austrian government repressed the Nazis in June 1933, Czechoslovakia sought to do the same. Pressure for the dissolution of the German National Party in Czechoslovakia mounted and they did in fact dissolve themselves in October of that year;

¹⁵⁰ Wiskemann, Czechs and Germans, 135.
¹⁵¹ Ibid., 135.
¹⁵² Ibid., 197.
¹⁵³ Ibid., 198.
however, that did not mean the end of the Nazi movement in the Sudetenland. As a result of this
dissolution, several members of municipal governments were replaced by activist nominees.\textsuperscript{154}

Hitler sent two emissaries to Czechoslovakia toward the end of 1936: Albrecht Haushofer
and Count Trauttmansdorff. He intended them to negotiate with Beneš (now President of the
Republic) on a return to peaceful negotiations between Germany and Czechoslovakia concerning
the Sudetenland. The emissaries proposed a nonaggression pact with Czechoslovakia in which
“Germany would not raise the boundary question for an appropriate period of time in return for
the complete cultural autonomy and economic equality of the Sudeten Germans.” This proposal
essentially enabled Germany to interfere with internal Czechoslovakian affairs.\textsuperscript{155}

When Haushofer returned to Berlin, he presented Heinrich Himmler and Hitler with a list
of aims he thought could be achieved: a bilateral nonaggression pact, Czechoslovak neutrality in
the event of a Russian attack on Germany, a trade agreement, and improvement in the Sudeten
German situation.\textsuperscript{156} Hitler rejected the nonaggression pact due to his desire to invade
Czechoslovakia in the future. When Germany invaded Austria in March of 1938, the German
government assured the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin that Germany was solely concerned
with Austria and there would not be any impact on Czechoslovakia. Of course, this was untrue,
as Hitler told his generals that he fully intended to invade both Austria and Czechoslovakia
simultaneously in order to gain food for five to six million people, given a few million in each
respective country emigrated.\textsuperscript{157} The plan to invade Czechoslovakia was called Operation Green
and the German government pushed it enthusiastically. In May 1938, Britain reported German
troops occupying southern Silesia and Austria and the Czechoslovak government with small

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{155} Bruegel, \textit{Czechoslovakia Before Munich}, 180.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 181.
This pressure by Germany on Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland, citing the ethnic Germans living there, led to the infamous 1938 Munich Crises during which Hitler, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and French Premier Édouard Daladier met to negotiate the cession of the territory. While Czechoslovak politicians were not invited to this important meeting, they were ultimately forced to cede the Sudetenland to the Third Reich. While Britain and France had supported the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1919, they failed to support the First Republic in the face of the Nazi threat.

The bitter, shared history of the German and Czech peoples in this land led to a plethora of issues once the borders were drawn for the First Republic. The Germans felt as though they were cut off from their motherland. Much of the interaction between the two seemed as though the Czechs were vengeful against the Germans for centuries of Austrian oppression. These tensions helped foster a growth in Nazism in the Sudetenland and made it that much easier for Hitler to invade. The anger on both sides is understandable: the Czechs had been taken over centuries beforehand when the Germans were favorites of the crown, and the Germans were angry at their sudden minority status after having lost the war.

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158 Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 189-190.
Chapter 3: The Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Jews

“There is no uniform solution for the problem of national minorities; each minority presents a special problem of its own.”

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate several of the smaller minorities’ identities within the First Republic. There are very few writings in English concerning these smaller minorities, and consequently, the examination of their roles within the Republic is very limited for this study. While the Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Jewish populations are the focus of this chapter, there were also small populations of Roma, Polish, and Russian nationalities. The historical relationships between the Czechoslovaks and the three nationalities presented in this chapter led the Czechoslovak government to treat each of these minorities differently, despite presenting a bastion of democracy and equality to the world.

Academic literature on the Roma, Russian, and Polish minorities in the First Republic in English is severely lacking and knowledge concerning the question of the Republic’s commitment to equality would benefit greatly from more accessible sources. While English language scholarship on the Roma is wanting, there is a large volume entitled Roma Voices in History edited by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, in which they “propose a new approach and to lay the foundations for a new reading of Roma history.” There is a forty-page chapter that uses letters (both in the original language and translated) to a few municipal

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159 Thomas G. Masaryk, “Speech by President Masaryk on the Tenth Anniversary of Czechoslovak Independence, October 28, 1928” Czechoslovak Sources and Documents, no. 4 (1928): 382.

160 Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, eds. Roma Voices in History, A Sourcebook: Roma Civic Emancipation in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II (Brill: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021), XVIII.
governments and President Masaryk concerning the Roma in Czechoslovakia. While this is an excellent contribution to the historiography, unfortunately it does not provide enough information to warrant an entire section on the Roma in this chapter.\textsuperscript{161} A similar lack of English language publications exists for the Polish and Russian population, and the literature that does exist relates to statistics and the Minority Law, of which Jan Kuklík and René Petráš offer a thorough study in their book \textit{Minorities and Law in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1992}. Because of the date range for their study, there are only a few sections on the smaller minorities. Given that the history of Czechoslovakia was not well researched by western historians until more recently, it is unsurprising that there is less on these minorities than the other populations in the Republic.

The attitude of the Czechoslovak government toward these nationalities was not uniform because it supported some while it seemed as though the government was seeking vengeance against others. The Hungarians had been favored by the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy prior to World War I, and this favor meant the Slovak population was often treated as lower class (much in the same way that the Czechs were treated by the Germans during their time under Austria, albeit not nearly as brutally). The Czechoslovak government supported the Ukrainian population (particularly the intelligentsia) in their pursuits to spread information about their homeland. An interesting juxtaposition exists when one looks at the Hungarian and Ukrainian populations. While Masaryk dreamt of a European democracy that ensured equality to all, in reality, there was too much bad history between the Hungarians and the Czechoslovaks under the Dual Monarchy, which is a similar problem to the issues between the Czechs and Germans. The

\textsuperscript{161} To go a bit further, there was a special class created for Roma children in Uzrhorod in 1926 that functioned until 1938. One of the biggest issues at this time was assimilation and how this would take place. The Roma minority was different than the Jewish in that they were not supported by their government in the same way the Jewish were. Ibid, 574. For more information concerning the Roma Question in Czechoslovakia, see chapter 8 in \textit{Roma Voices in History}.
Ukrainian population in the First Republic had more freedom to celebrate their nationality than the Hungarians did. The Jewish population, like the Ukrainians, had the support of Masaryk, but still struggled under Czechoslovak government because of centuries of anti-Semitism that affected their daily lives in the Republic.

There was a long history between the Hungarians and the Slovak population in East-Central Europe. After the destruction of the Habsburg Empire at the end of WWI, new multinational state lines were formed. As discussed in earlier chapters, the establishment of the First Republic involved negotiating around many ethnic groups with historically tense relationships, and the Hungarian minority population experienced their own difficulties in the new state. The Hungarians in interwar Czechoslovakia were cut off from their homeland (very similarly to the Sudeten German population) and the Hungarians expressed an irredentist conception of their relationship with the newly formed government. The Slovaks resented the Hungarians for the previous regime’s policy of Magyarization. This antipathy toward their new government contributed to some of the issues they faced during the First Republic because of emigration. Although the Czechoslovak government prided itself on the equality of all of its citizens, and their constitution stated that all citizens within the Republic would be treated equally before the law, in practice this was not always the case and the Hungarian population steadily declined throughout the twenty years of the First Republic’s existence. László Szarka comments that the Hungarian populations in “Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia almost without exception considered minority status to have been forced upon them by international

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162 Magyarization was a state-sponsored program of forced denationalization that the Slovak population endured during the Dual Monarchy. There were linguistic and cultural programs that the Slovaks had to follow which almost lost their entire cultural identity. Maxwell, Alexander. “Multiple Nationalism: National Concepts in Nineteenth-Century Hungary and Benedict Anderson’s ‘Imagined Communities,’” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11, no. 3 (June 2006): 386.
constitutional and geopolitical changes." This sentiment made sense because the Hungarians felt that they had been unlucky when the border lines were drawn and they got stuck on the wrong side.

In the first census after WWI, taken in 1920, the Hungarian population measured about 650,500 and represented about 21% of the population in Slovakia. The concentration of the Hungarian population in Slovakia is due to the fact that, prior to the war, the Slovak lands were under the control of the Hungarian half of the dual monarchy, and Hungary bordered the southern part of Slovakia. The 1930 Czechoslovak census recorded a decline to about 585,400 Hungarians and their population in Slovakia dropped to 17.6%. This was due to several factors, including governmental representation, religious issues, and educational policies.

Religious and ethnic identity were intertwined for many people in the First Republic, and the Hungarians were no exception. The “majority of the population in Slovakia belonged to the Roman Catholics,” but Martin Hetényi states that “synergetic links of ethnic and religious identity, in the case of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, was reflected in the Reformed Church.” The religious beliefs of this minority affected both their social and political development within the nation. According to Hetényi:

Henrik Geduly, a bishop of the Evangelical Church, appealed through a pastoral letter to Slovak believers to remain in the bond of the Hungarian Church. Besides Geduly, two other pro-Hungarian oriented bishops were at the head of this church in Slovakia. The government promptly intervened against them and since January 1919, they were prohibited to perform rights and responsibilities associated with their ranks, and consequently emigrated.

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166 Ibid., 113.
The Hungarians left Czechoslovakia during the same time period the Germans were emigrating to Austria and Germany. Hetényi goes on to say that the Protestants appeared from Hungarian organizations, and by 1924, the Hungarian Evangelical Alliance was established in Slovakia.\textsuperscript{167}

Catholic Church districts were not considered when the Czechoslovak lands were carved out at the Paris Peace Conference, and when the Treaty of Trianon officially established borders, many dioceses had offices that were, at that point, abroad. Because of this new geographic context, Czechoslovak officials often interfered with the clergy.\textsuperscript{168} In 1921, Pope Pius XI established diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia and appointed three Slovak bishops. Many priests in Slovakia were of Hungarian nationality because the majority of this population in Slovakia were Roman Catholic and “during the interwar period, the ratio of this religion remained at the level of 71\%.”\textsuperscript{169} These priests pledged allegiance to the Republic but did not want to give up their pro-Hungarian loyalty.\textsuperscript{170} The Constitution of 1920 had regulations regarding the relationship between church and state; it allowed for complete religious freedom for all citizens within the Republic. The adoption of the \textit{Modus Vivendi} in 1928 ruled that no diocese could exceed the borders of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{171} Anyone who wanted to be part of the clergy at this time would have to sign an agreement pledging their allegiance to the Republic.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{168} Martin Hetényi, “The Hungarian Minority and Confessional Question,” 72.
\textsuperscript{170} Hetényi, “The Hungarian Minority and Confessional Question”, 73.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, 73. In regard to the \textit{Modus Vivendi}: The Holy See sent the undersecretary of the Section for Relations with States (Peter Ciriaci) and Saverio Ritter to Prague in March 1927 to “hold talks with the Czechoslovak side about” a diplomatic dispute between the Czech government (in particular, Masaryk’s anti-Catholic attitude) and the apostolic nuncios in Czechoslovakia. The Holy See signed the \textit{Modus Vivendi} as a compromise in 1928. Marek Šmíd, “The Personage of Vatican Dignitary, Diplomat, and Priest Antonio Arata before his Arrival in the Baltics in the 1930s,” \textit{Moderní Dějiny} 24, no. 1 (2016): 161.
\textsuperscript{172} Hetényi, “The Hungarian Minority and Confessional Question”, 74.
While Hungarians struggled for church acceptance in Slovakia because of their previous Magyarization of the Slovak population during Hungarian rule, they were also banned from singing the Hungarian national anthem. The national anthem was a reminder for Czechs and Slovaks of their past suppression under Austria-Hungary and thus was prohibited. Officials claimed the song had irredentist undertones, and under Act No. 50/1923 singing it was a misdemeanor crime. Here, one can discern the irony that existed within the First Republic: the government espoused equality yet disallowed even the most basic level of freedom of speech for one of their minorities. Because of the majority’s hesitation to accept Hungarian pride in their nationality, many Hungarians stopped attending religious gatherings such as their “commemoration of St. Stephen’s tradition” and Hungarian feasts.

Foreign policy and religion were not the only political issues that affected the Hungarian minority; representation within the government also affected how the Hungarians were treated. According to Andrej Tóth and Lukáš Novotný, “in both electoral districts with Hungarian minority…one deputy mandate represented about ten thousand more voters than in other electoral districts in Slovakia.” Although “Czechoslovak legislation was relatively generous with minority rights…there were obstacles to applying [the Language Act] in practice, as the Czech officials who had replaced the Hungarians were unable to speak the local language.”

Again, there is a discrepancy with official policy not holding up to the nation’s claims to equality. There were now government officials in positions where they would have to

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173 As cited by Hetényi in “The Hungarian Minority and Confessional Question” 74.
174 Ibid., 74. Hetényi does not offer much explanation of St. Stephen’s tradition, but to emphasize the importance of the tradition, he quotes the “local Hungarian press” stating that on August 20, “wherever Hungarians have lived to date…churches will become overcrowded.”
communicate with the populace, but they had no way of doing so effectively. However, because of the historical and contemporary issues between the Czechoslovaks and the Hungarians, Czech and Slovak officials did not want Hungarians in governmental positions.

Not only did the Czechoslovak government fear irredentism from its Hungarian minority; the new state’s diplomatic relationship with fellow new state, Hungary, was also tense. Hetényi postulates that this foreign policy, in international eyes, was a threat to the Republic’s existence, along with Adolf Hitler’s Germany and Józef Beck’s Poland. Hungary aided Hitler to permanently change the Treaty of Trianon to grant land back to the “mother countries.”177 Some Hungarians (along with the German minority) viewed Czech and Slovak rule as an “ethnical dictatorship.”178 Fear of irredentist rhetoric was not present only in the political sphere, but in education as well. There were a few differences as to how education was handled for the Hungarians compared to other minorities. For example, the Ukrainians had a free university in Prague, but most Hungarian educational institutions were shut down after 1918. The Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment justified the removal of schools by measures it adopted. Quoted in “University Education and Hungarian Minority in Slovakia 1918-1938,” Sona Gabzdilová wrote that the “abolishment of Hungarian Universit[ies] was not ‘a heavy cultural injustice, because also during [the] previous regime [the Universities were] not exceptional and had no tradition.’”179 Gabzdilová goes on to explain that the government justified its actions by explaining that universities such as The Academy of Law in Košice “was not considered by [the] government as equal to [the] level of university education,” or these universities did not offer the

177 Ibid., 75.
right kind of education in the eyes of the Czechoslovak government. The Czechoslovaks viewed the Hungarian schools as one of the “primary tool[s] of Hungarization [or Magyarization],” and thus were reminders of the past.\textsuperscript{180} Some of the universities that were shut down were the Hungarian Regal University of Queen Elizabeth (also known as Elizabeth University) in Bratislava and the Academy of Law in Košice.\textsuperscript{181} The significance of these institutions is that they taught in the Hungarian language. Without them, Hungarians in Czechoslovakia were left without a facility for higher education in their mother tongue.

Lack of access to an advanced education in their mother tongue led many Hungarians living in Slovakia to attend university in Hungary, but this brought on its own issues. According to Gabzdilová, Security authorities monitored Hungarian minority students and they were documented by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They listed the names of students and their families, as well as their military obligations and loyalty to the Republic. Gabzdilová goes on to explain that the Ministry also took note of which government authorities issued passports to these students. Minister Vavro Štrobar adopted government regulations in July 1921, which restricted the issuance of passports to students who intended to study in Hungary: they could only obtain the passports if they could not complete their diploma in the Republic or if they had to perform tests to complete said diploma in Hungary. The Ministry of Schools and National Enlightenment ruled that diplomas issued in Hungary after 1928 would not be honored in the Czechoslovak Republic. Hungary adopted the same approach when it came to Hungarian citizens earning a diploma in the Czechoslovak Republic. This meant that the Hungarian minority students in the Republic had two options: continue their education in Czech, German, or

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 35.
\end{itemize}
Slovak schools, or they could go to school in Hungary but not be able to utilize their diploma back in Czechoslovakia.¹⁸²

Similar to the dearth of scholarship on the Hungarian minority, too little English language scholarship exists on the Ukrainian minority. A recent and welcome addition to this topic in English is *Scholars in Exile: The Ukrainian Intellectual World in Interwar Czechoslovakia* by Nadia Zavorotna. The volume focuses on the

history of…individuals who had just lost their chance of building their own state during the events from 1917 to 1921 in Ukraine. For them, the experience of living, studying, and working in democratic Czechoslovakia was a positive lesson, and an impactful one. In their host country, they carried out scholarly and educational activities that were often remarkable.¹⁸³

With this excerpt alone, one can discern why the Hungarian minority was frustrated with the government. There is a stark difference between how they treated the Ukrainians with how they treated the Hungarians. This is to say that even while the Czechoslovak government feared irredentism from their Hungarian citizens, they were far more forgiving of Ukrainian cultural autonomy and identity.

While there are scant details about the lives of regular Ukrainian citizens in Czechoslovakia at this time, there is a wealth of information concerning the intellectual Ukrainian minority in Zavorotna’s book. There are works on Ukrainian history as well; however, their focus is not on those living in Czechoslovakia but rather, Ukrainian history as a whole. A perfect example of this is Paul Kubicek’s *The History of Ukraine* in which he explores Ukrainian history beginning with the pre-Slavic era through 2007. While this is a particularly important work for Eastern European history as a whole, there is little on Czechoslovakia in the volume.

¹⁸² Ibid., 38-39.
Another historian, Vic Satzewich, focuses on the relationship between Ukrainians in North America and their ancestral homeland in his book *The Ukrainian Diaspora*. He deals with the “second wave of migration, which occurred between the wars. In particular [he] asks why Ukrainians left their homelands during those years, and it traces the impact of World War I and the Russian Revolution on the way that group boundaries were formed within the Ukrainian diaspora.”

In the aftermath of WWI, there were disagreements among Ukrainians and powers in Eastern Europe about how those lands should be split up. The Czechoslovak government related to those Ukrainians that yearned for an independent state and thus supported the Ukrainian immigrants that came across their borders.

After WWI, Czechoslovakia was faced with finding a balance between the various nationalities in the fledgling country. When the war ended, the majority of the Ukrainian lands found themselves under Soviet rule (called the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), while the rest were divided among Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania. The carving out of the boundaries of the First Republic, plus the migration of Ukrainian immigrants, created the Ukrainian population in Czechoslovakia. It is also important to point out the fact that the Allies did support an independent Ukraine and “still hoped for a single Russia under an anti-Bolshevik government.”

The Czechoslovak government created a space within their nation for the immigrant Ukrainians who wanted to show the world they were also capable of being independent and provided the means for them to receive advance education. As has been previously pointed out, this region of Europe was (and remains) rich in diverse ethnicities,

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185 Ibid., 49.
languages, and religions, and Wilson had to admit during the Peace Conference that when he “gave utterance to [national self-determination]…[he] said them without the knowledge that nationalities existed.”¹⁸⁸ Being from the United States gave Wilson a very different understanding of nationalities than Europeans. In America, part of the categorization of different people was done by skin color. In Europe, it was done by nation of origin. He really had no way of knowing that the nationalism within Eastern Europe was so deeply rooted in linguistic and historical ties and that the number of new nations would be as large as it was. According to Satzewich, with “the Bolshevik consolidation of control over eastern Ukraine…emigration to the west was frowned upon, and indeed prohibited by the Soviet authorities partly because they feared that the very existence of emigrants would send the wrong message about life in the emergent workers’ paradise.”¹⁸⁹ Just as the Czechoslovak Republic wanted to present a democratic face to Europe, the Soviets wanted to show the world that their people were happy; an exodus of their populace threatened that façade.

In the mid-1920s, many Ukrainian soldiers moved to Czechoslovakia in an effort to get away from Soviet-controlled Ukraine, and upon arrival, they “articulate[d] a social democratic critique of Soviet Ukraine.”¹⁹⁰ At this time, there were at least fifty different Ukrainian organizations in Czechoslovakia, and a large part of the population in these organizations consisted of émigré students who had moved to Prague. By the end of the 1920s, the Czechs were resigned to Galicia remaining part of Poland and pulled the funding for Ukrainian organizations that wanted an independent Ukrainian state, and most of them dissolved. One of the few groups to survive was the Group of Ukrainian National Youth (Hrupa Ukrains’koi

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 40.
¹⁸⁹ Satzewich, Ukrainian Diaspora, 55.
¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 62.
National’noi Molodi - HUNM). This group was created in 1922 with the “aim of establishing an independent Ukrainian state in Galicia.” The loss of financial support caused the dissolution of many of the Ukrainian groups, and the HUNM attempted to align themselves with several other organizations; they ended up founding the Union of Organizations of Ukrainian Nationalists with the League of Ukrainian Nationalists.191

The Czechoslovak government created an assistance program for émigrés in order to “rescue existing intellectuals and professionals and prepare them for future work…[and] lent great credibility to the Czechoslovak government in the eyes of all Europeans.”192 This government program had three main objectives: establish housing, provide medical services, and give young people the opportunity to finish their education. Applicants were not discriminated against based on nationality, religion, or political affiliation. The government divided émigrés into three groups: intellectuals, individuals who performed physical work, and the elderly, school-age children, and people who otherwise could not perform intellectual or physical work.193 Slavic unity was a major reason the Czechoslovak government set up the émigré program. Pan-Slavism had existed since before World War I and was almost a mirror of Pan-Germanism (minus the stipulation that everyone had to speak the same language). An underlying reason for the émigré program was to shine a light on the fledgling democracy and to align themselves with the ideals of Western Europe.

President Masaryk looked to Western Europe as inspiration for government programs and the first prime minister Karel Kramář looked to Russia. Thus, the two disagreed on the reason for setting up the program, but their disagreement still had an impact on it. Kramář was a Russophile

191 Ibid., 65.
192 Zavorotna, Scholars in Exile, 13.
193 Ibid., 14.
and saw this program as an opportunity for the new country to prove itself to Russia, while Masaryk saw it as an opportunity “to create a positive international image of Czechoslovakia as a liberal and democratic country.” The Czechoslovak government again showed that they were less concerned with domestic policy ensuring the equality ostensibly guaranteed in the Constitution and more concerned with their image on the world stage. Even after his time as the prime minister, Kramář held indirect influence over his National Democratic Party, the goal of which was “that ‘[the] republic would [not] be socialistic.’”194 Before the war, Kramář was a supporter of Russia – in his mind, the “greatest of Slav States, and [he had] a keen sympathy for Russian traditions.”195 After the Bolshevik Revolution, Kramář felt that an independent Czech state “seemed hardly worth having, if Russia were to go down in chaos” and was angry at the other major powers in Europe for being “glad to see [Russia] unrepresented that they might the more easily settle their own affairs” at the Peace Conference.196 Masaryk expressed a more “statesmanlike realism” of prewar Russia wherein he believed that “Bohemia could only hope for a separate existence if she had a strong and regenerated Russia upon which she could lean.”197

In the education sector, Masaryk “believed it was necessary for Slavonic peoples to study one another and wanted to make Prague the Slavonic academic and cultural center of Europe.”198

196 Ibid., 187-188.
197 Ibid., 185-6.
199 Ibid., 5.
Czechoslovakia – including the Ukrainians – benefitted from it.”\textsuperscript{200} The Ukrainian Free University in Prague had originally begun in Vienna but moved to Prague by 1922. At first, there was some opposition, especially from some Russophile circles, but numerous discussions lowered the resistance.\textsuperscript{201} It seems very ironic, though not all that surprising, that the Czech government was so willing to offer educational resources to one of their smallest minorities and yet they barred the Hungarians from learning in their own language based on their past affiliation with Austria-Hungary. The Ukrainians were coming into the Czechoslovak Republic and contributing to the democratic image that the government wanted to show the world, while the Hungarians felt as though they had been forced into a minority status and many wanted to return to their mother country.

In addition to the free university in Prague, the Ukrainian Economic Academy was set up in Poděbrady. This academy was built thanks to the Ukrainian Civic Committee, which played an important role in distributing government funds to Ukrainians. Along with the academy, the committee also established the Ukrainian Higher Pedagogical Institute, the Ukrainian Sociological Institute, the Ukrainian Civic Publishing Fund, and the Ukrainian National Museum and Archive. The goal of the academy (and all the rest) was to provide help to Ukrainian scholars and to also help “prepare young Ukrainian intellectuals enter the technical and economic sectors.”\textsuperscript{202}

The Czechoslovak government provided many opportunities for Ukrainian intellectuals that settled in Prague. The goal of these Ukrainians was to spread awareness of Ukraine to the West and the rest of the world. Until this time, Russia was one of the few European countries

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 53.
with any interest in Ukraine. The Ukrainians, much like the Czechs and Slovaks during the First World War, were inspired by the philosophy of national self-determination and wanted to use the programs offered at the different academies to study Ukrainian literature and to learn the skills needed to form their own nation. According to Zavorotna,

Ukrainian life had been largely suppressed in the Ukrainian lands: Soviet Ukraine, Polish-ruled Galicia, and Romanian-ruled Bukovyna. After the failed attempt to found an independent state, many émigrés in Czechoslovakia devoted themselves entirely to scholarly work and to educating the younger generation.203

The Czechoslovak government offered many opportunities to the Ukrainian population. The Czechoslovaks likely saw commonalities between themselves and their Ukrainian counterparts; both were trying to build up their nations and spread information about their cultures to the rest of Europe and the world. Even though they saw themselves as similar to the Ukrainians in their fight for an independent nation, but refused to see those same similarities in the Germans or Hungarians because of their bitter pasts. Payback for the oppression they faced under Austria-Hungary led to the oppression of some, but not all, of the minorities within the First Republic.

Compared to the Ukrainian population, the Jewish population was well-known in Europe. This population was unique compared to the rest because being Jewish was not only one’s religion but was also their nationality. Unlike other minority groups, the Jewish nationality was not determined by language, and the population ended up separated into three groups: German Jews, Czechoslovak Jews, and Zionists.204 According to T.V. Pikovska, “Jewish self-identification had two options – national and religious, which influenced the commitment of the Jewish population to certain political forces.”205 In 1924, there were 354,000 Jewish people in

203 Ibid., 5.
205 Ibid., 16.
Czechoslovakia, but only 53% of the overall Jewish population “acknowledge[d] themselves as
Jewish, while 21% registered as Czechoslovaks and 14% as Germans.” 206 President Masaryk’s
defense of the Jewish people in Czechoslovakia helped build a “fairly loyal” relationship.
Masaryk particularly “characterized Zionism as a ‘national liberation movement of great moral
importance.’” 207 Although Masaryk admired and protected the Jewish citizens of the Republic,
there were those opposed to this protection within the general population. Most of the opposition
were part of the German nationality.

Coming from the Germans in October the same year, the Senate of the German
University in Prague issued instructions that the Academic Council of the university would
consist only of German members, implying that one could not be both German and Jewish. This
division represented a conflict within the Jewish population: they often felt as though they had to
choose between two possible identities instead of being both at the same time. In response, Dr.
Ludwig Singer called on the Minister of Education, stating that this instruction was a “violation
of the constitutional guarantee of the principle of equality of all citizens” and the Minister agreed
to investigate. 208 Dr. Singer was a very prominent Jewish representative and led the Prague
Jewish National Council after it was formed in 1918 until his death in 1931. The Council sought
to “legitimize their self-proclaimed position as the natural representatives of the country’s
Jews.” 209 He was also integral in the negotiations for the Jewish population when the Republic
was formed. In addition to council president, “he was also president of the Jewish Welfare

206 “Only Half the Jews in Czechoslovakia Admit their Jewishness,” Daily News Bulletin Cable and Telegraphic
Despatches Issued by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 6, 1924.
208 “Jewish Nationality Point of Dispute Between Prague German University and Czechoslovakian Authorities,”
Jewish Daily Bulletin, October 16, 1924.
209 Tatjana Lichtenstein, “Racializing Jewishness: Zionist Responses to National Indifference in Interwar
Federation, a member of the Prague City Council and president of the Prague Jewish Community.”^210

When the Jewish National Council was formed, it “declared a favorable attitude towards the Czechoslovak state and stressed the need to unite the entire Jewish population on a national basis.” In January the following year, it convened a congress of the “national Jews in the Czechoslovak Republic” at which they wanted to create a national organization that would represent Czechoslovak Jews. Two months later, the People’s Union of Jews of Slovakia was established in Bratislava. This organization was “essentially the Slovak representation of the Prague Jewish Council.”^211 The purpose of this group was to represent the population that were of Slovak and Jewish nationality. Even though one could claim Jewish as their nationality, that was not the only thing that people identified as, and so those of Slovak-Jewish descent felt they needed representation in Slovakia the way that Czech-Jews were represented in Prague. Along with the Prague Jewish National Council, there were several other parties within the state. The largest of these was the United Jewish Party, the roots of which were Zionist. The United Jewish Party’s intention was to focus “exclusively on the rights and interests of the Jewish minority” and was formed from both the Prague Jewish National Council and the Union of Jews of Slovakia, along with several other, smaller Jewish political parties.^212

Even with the support of the president, the Jewish population faced anti-Semitic hostility both before and during the First Republic. Martin Pekar states that when Austria-Hungary fell, the Jewish population in Slovakia faced pillaging and violence, as they were associated with the Magyarization that Hungary had forced upon the Slovaks. Pekar goes on to state that “in

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^211 Pikovska, “Political Parties of National Minorities,” 16.
^212 Ibid., 17.
particular, the Slovak People’s Party…in the Party press and public gatherings repeatedly criticized the ties to the Hungarian culture and the preference for using the Hungarian language, the criticism having often passed into threats.”

While anti-Semitism was prevalent in Czechoslovakia, the Jewish people in the First Republic also endured anti-Hungarian prejudice.

In 1926, according to the *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, it was announced by Dr. Eduard Beneš (misnamed Alfred in the article, the Minister of Foreign Affairs) that there had been “irregularities committed by government officials during the last elections” and as a result “the number of Jewish representatives in the Czechoslovakian Parliament was diminished.” He further announced that the “Czechoslovakian government never fails to show favorable attitude toward Zionism in the country and in the international arena” and that outside of this incident, “there [was] no Jewish Question in Czechoslovakia [as] the Jews [were] even recognized as a separate nationality.” Here, Beneš attempted to smooth over tension between Jewish representatives and members of the government who did not want them to be there. Even though Beneš may have believed that the Czechoslovak government had the best interests of the Jewish population in mind, and that official national policy lent full support to the Jewish population, that did not stop anti-Semitic beliefs from existing. There were members of the government who actively played a role in lowering the number of Jewish representatives in Parliament, and Beneš glossed over this by stating that the Jewish population had the support of the government.

On August 8, 1926, the government announced an ordinance that pertained to the Jewish population in Carpathian Ruthenia, asserting that Jewish families could gain citizenship even if they were not part of the older families in these lands. The ordinance allowed for “Jewish war

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invalids to obtain pensions from the Czechoslovakian government.” However, even with the path to citizenship open for the Jewish population, this did not mean they were always welcome in the wider public. The *Jewish Daily Bulletin* reported on September 1, 1926, that “several scores of Jewish families in the city of Jassina, Czechoslovakia, [were] threatened with expulsion from the country” due to Czech officials refusing to “recognize the citizenship of the Jewish residents, although they had been resident in the city for fifty years and their sons had served in the Czechoslovak army.” It was a double-standard: even though the Jewish veterans had fought for Austria-Hungary, they still were supposed to be protected by the Minorities Treaty, and these Czech officials were blatantly breaking it.

In the educational sector, there was anti-Semitic rhetoric as well. In October 1926, Professor Theodor Lessing, who was a “noted philosopher and pacifist” and a professor at Hanover Technical College in Germany, was “invited by the Zionist Organization of Czechoslovakia to make a lecture tour [there].” However, when he arrived and was about to speak at Brno, “German students interrupted the meeting, throwing gas bombs into the audience.” In 1933, Professor Lessing was shot to death in Marienbad (now Mariánske Lazne) while he was sleeping. He was regarded as “one of the bitterest foes of the Nazi regime and the man most thoroughly hated by Nazi leaders.” He had received death threats previously and it “was a current belief that a substantial price had been set on the famous philosopher’s head.” After his assassination, the perpetrators (Rudolf Eckert and Franz Zischka) fled to Germany and the Czech government in Prague requested an extradition of the two men. However, in the Nazi press, they were celebrated as heroes and there was much doubt that Germany would cooperate.

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216 “Jewish Families Threatened with Expulsion from Czechoslovakia” *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, September 1, 1926.
217 “Hate of Anti-Semites Follows Prof. Lessing to Czechoslovakia” *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, October 26, 1926.
in their apprehension. Even though the Czechoslovak authorities knew who the assassins were, they received no help from Nazi Germany, and it was not until 1945 that one of them, Rudolf Eckert, was brought in for questioning in reference to Lessing’s murder.\textsuperscript{219} The Jewish population faced many issues within the First Republic. These pale in comparison to the horror they faced during the Second World War, but that does not detract from their fight for rights in the twenty-year life of The First Czechoslovak Republic.

**Conclusion: Historical Implications**

The promise of the post-World War I era was, for the First Czechoslovak Republic, the opportunity to create a democracy that could successfully unite and govern a disparate population. While the new government hoped to project this image to the world, in reality each of the national minority populations within the First Czechoslovak Republic came with its own set of issues and grievances with the government. Some resented what they perceived as a demotion to minority status when they had very recently been favored by the elite, while others were elevated and praised for their hard work and almost pitied for their bad luck. A running theme for the minorities within this nation was the quest for national self-determination. Wilson’s philosophy gave them a sense of hope for a future defined by self-determination and increased rights within new nation-states. Yet in practice, the government created uneven policies that simultaneously restricted the Hungarian minority, while the Ukrainians were celebrated and given the opportunity to study their culture without fear of arrest. The Czechoslovak government supported the Jewish population, while Germans fought against the Jewish population’s rights. The self determination that in many ways fueled the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic, was also a weapon against it from those minorities, like the Germans and Slovaks, who viewed the new state as even more oppressive than the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Much of what the Czechoslovak government was concerned with during the first iteration of the Republic was the image they sent to the world. The Czechs, in particular, were eager to show the Allies just how democratic and free they could be, now that they were free of the
Austro-Hungarian Empire. Part of this desire to impress the allies was to protect the new nation-state from foreign governments interested in reclaiming land. Although they wanted to present a perfect image of democracy in a politically divided Europe, they failed to completely include all nationalities within the state. The Czechoslovak government took on the enormous task of attempting to decolonize their land and people from the previous imperialist rule and struggled to govern those thrust under their control. Indeed, several of the minorities felt as though they had been forced into their minority positions and resented the Czechoslovak government. All minority issues within the First Republic had roots in their historical relationships with each other. Unfortunately, the First Republic did not last long enough to solve any of their minority questions due to the loss of land in 1938 with the Munich Crisis and World War II.

The Czech-Slovak relationship in the First Republic was affected by the separation of the two lands under the Dual Monarchy. While neither was favored under Austro-Hungarian rule, but the Slovaks suffered relatively more oppression than their Czech counterparts. The more conservative Slovak population was unhappy with the majority Czech government of the First Republic because of what the Slovaks believed was a progressive attitude and disdain for Catholicism. This led to the Slovak fight for national self-determination. Both people had experienced colonization by outside foreign rulers, but the Slovaks wanted to be their own nation-state separate from an alliance with the Czechs.

Historical difficulties also drove the problems between the Czechs and Germans. The complete switch from crown favorites to a minority population with far less power than they were used to, along with the feeling of separation from their homeland, contributed to the tensions between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs. The tensions then translated to an increase in Nazism in the Sudetenland leading up to the Second World War. The Germans in
Czechoslovakia were ready to reunite with their home country, so supported Hitler when he took the Sudetenland in 1938. Like the Slovaks, the Germans used national self-determination to fight for their right to be unified with Germany.

Similar to the Germans, the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia felt as though they had been thrust into a minority position by outside forces. Their position in these lands fell when the Dual Monarchy did and they resented their new one. The Magyarization of the Slovak population prior to the War put a bad taste in the Slovaks’ mouths and they were determined to do what they could to reverse it. However, in the Czechoslovak endeavor to end Magyarization and support the Slovak right to learn and celebrate who they were, the Hungarians lost governmental encouragement to pursue their own national self-determination.

Unlike the Hungarian population, the Ukrainians within the First Republic were practically celebrated. Indeed, the Czech government saw similarities between themselves and the Ukrainian population and welcomed emigrants from Soviet Ukraine. The Czechoslovak government even set up an assistance program for those émigrés that helped establish housing, medical services, and education. Of course, this was not done strictly out of the goodness of the Czechoslovaks’ hearts; the program also offered the opportunity for Czechoslovakia to prove itself as a country that had the same ideals as Western Europe.

Finally, the Jewish population was supported by the Czech government, particularly Thomas Masaryk, but the Germans within the government and other sectors of the state were against any Jewish power, even the power to claim a nationality outside their religion. The Jewish population’s previous relationship to Hungary and Magyarization contributed to issues between them and the Slovak population as well. Not to mention that centuries of anti-Semitism could not have been expected to fade solely because of the support of the Czech government.
The power of democracy was not enough to quell the rise of Nazism leading up to the Second World War.

Interwar interaction between Central-Eastern European countries also contributed to many of the tensions between the Czechoslovak government of the First Republic and the rest of the population. Several of the minority populations felt like outsiders in the fledgling nation because of the lines drawn at the Paris Peace Conference. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, got separated from their homeland, and placed in a position where they felt as though their government was working against them. The states surrounding the First Republic also worked to regain their territory after the War and Germany was even successful in the cession of previously held territory in 1938. Hitler was able to capitalize on the German population’s anger at their demotion, and even though the Czechoslovak government worked tirelessly to prove that they had the ideals of Western Europe, they were never truly seen by the West.

The Allies were content with setting up a democracy in war-torn Europe, but they seemed uninterested beyond that. In wanting to keep the peace in the 1930s, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Premier Édouard Daladier met with Hitler to negotiate the cession of the Sudetenland without the input of Czechoslovak representatives. This proves that the West was ready to dictate the lives of others in Central-Eastern Europe without even trying to negotiate with them, as if they were only interested in making decisions for them rather than with them. The twenty-year life of The First Czechoslovak Republic was met with tension and disdain by those living within its borders, as well as outside forces influencing the lives of its citizens. It seemed as though those surrounding the First Republic wanted to pick at its corpse before it even died, and the West was content to help in order to avoid another war.
The lack of Western familiarity with this part of the world was not unique to the interwar period. There has been a continued disinterest until very recently. Many times, when one thinks of Czechoslovakia, their mind goes to the cession of the Sudetenland in 1938 or its association with communism. The focus on the formation of the First Republic and minority relations feeds directly into future struggles faced by the people who lived in this area. Relations between different nationalities within Central-Eastern Europe continue to contribute directly to inter-European imperialism. Even now, the relationship between Ukraine and Russia has been thrust into the global spotlight with Russia’s invasion. By studying the historical relationships between European nationalities, one can gain better context for contemporary issues.
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