The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the First World War, a so-called 'minority problem' loomed large in European politics. This problem was understood, moreover, to be peculiar to central and eastern Europe. In fact, however, linguistic diversity was not a unique feature of the east, but also an ongoing challenge in states that had long claimed to have a unified national culture. This article compares policies of national classification and minority rights in France and Czechoslovakia after the First World War. It suggests that even as east/west binaries structured the unequal application of new international minority rights protections, France, rather than Czechoslovakia, implemented a more radical and racist policy of forcible national classification.

In 1922 a Lithuanian delegate to the League of Nations suggested to the General Assembly that the League consider adopting universal standards of minority protection. He insisted that all League members should be required to respect the same standards of minority rights imposed at the end of the First World War on eastern Europe's new nation-states. His proposal was quickly derided and dismissed by the great powers. Representing France, Henry de Jouvenel responded that 'France has not signed any Minorities Treaty because she has no minorities. To find minorities in France, they would have to be created in the imagination.' When a Romanian delegate, referring to an ethnographic map, suggested that the linguistic and ethnic minorities dotting western Europe were not a figment of his imagination, a League

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expert bluntly replied that the map was irrelevant. 'Minorities only exist where there is a treaty', he explained.[1]

The so-called 'minority problem' loomed large in Europe at the end of the First World War. This problem, moreover, was understood by contemporaries and, since, by historians to be peculiar to what the political scientist Oscar Janowsky designated the 'war-breeding zone' of central and eastern Europe, the lands of the dismembered Habsburg, Prussian, Ottoman and Russian empires.[2] Diplomats, scholars, journalists and international activists agreed that the peace and prosperity of Europe depended on finding a solution to the minority problem, defusing what Henry Wolfe called eastern Europe's 'human dynamite'.[3] Contrary to de Jouvenel's confident universalism, however, the 'minority problem' was not peculiar to eastern Europe. It was also an ongoing challenge in west European nation-states, such as France, which had long claimed to have a unified national culture. Both France and Czechoslovakia confronted what appeared to be a threatening German minority in 1918. Approximately 87.2 per cent of Alsatian population – over 1,500,000 people – spoke a German dialect as their first language in 1910, amounting to 4 per cent of the total French population. Czechoslovakia, meanwhile, was home to three million German-speakers – over 23 per cent of the state's population.[4] Juxtaposing these two so-called borderland regions after the First World War suggests that the histories of minority rights, of borderlands, and of national classification in eastern and western Europe were both comparable and deeply entangled.

Across Europe, the end of the First World War brought revolution, the collapse of empires, changing borders, and radical new practices of identity ascription and classification. Following the German defeat in 1918, the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were re-annexed to France after almost fifty years of German rule. Beginning in February 1919, French officials classified the entire adult population of Alsace into four categories, issuing different identity cards to each, entitling the holders to different forms of treatment. The Carte A was reserved for Alsatians who were born in Alsace and whose parents or grandparents had carried French citizenship before 1870, and was bestowed on approximately 1,082,650 people. Another 183,500

[1] Cited in C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 482.

[2] Oscar Janowsky, *Nationalities and National Minorities* (New York: Macmillan, 1945), 2. More recently, this region has been depicted as a 'war-breeding zone' by Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz, whose borderlands project took as its starting point a view of central and eastern Europe as the 'site of the most sustained and intense ethnic violence in the modern era'. See http://www.watsoninstitute.org/borderlands/region.cfm (last visited 3 August 2007).

[3] Henry C. Wolfe, *Human Dynamite: The Story of Europe's Minorities* (New York: Foreign Policy Asssociation,1939).

[4] For French statistics see Laird Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials in the "Mythic Provinces": Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918–1920', *French Historical Studies* 23, 1 (2000), 132; Samuel Goodfellow, 'From Germany to France? Inter-war Alsatian National Identity', *French History* 7, 4 (1993), 455. For Czechoslovak statistics see Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 89. These statistics should be taken with a pinch of salt. The Czechoslovak statistics are based on the census, which, as we shall see, was not a transparent reflection of national loyalties or language use.

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individuals of so-called mixed heritage – those with one parent or grandparent who had carried French citizenship – were assigned the Carte B. The Carte C was issued to foreigners from allied states. Finally, the Carte D was conferred on 513,800 individuals who were born in Germany or Austria or whose parents or grandparents were born in Germany or Austria.[5] The 28 per cent of Alsatians assigned the lowly D card and the 10 per cent assigned the B card were subjected to punitive measures; they exchanged currency at a lower rate, were restricted in their freedom of movement, and were sometimes fired from their jobs or expelled from university. Additionally, over 10,000 Alsatians were brought before so-called *commissions de triage* after the war, typically based on private denunciations, and prosecuted for harbouring pro-German loyalties. Over 200,000 individuals were expelled to Germany, in an early (and mostly forgotten) episode of ethnic cleansing.[6]

Until 1918, the Bohemian lands (the Austrian crown lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) belonged to the Habsburg monarchy. Czechoslovakia was one of the many new nation-states carved out of the defeated Habsburg empire at the end of the First World War, officially declaring its independence on 28 October 1918, and signing its minority treaties on 10 September 1919. In Czechoslovakia after 1918, citizens were also subject to new forms of forcible national classification. Under Habsburg rule an individual's national affiliation had been considered to be a matter of personal choice. In 1881 the Austrian Supreme Administrative Court ruled that in cases in which a person's national identity was disputed, officials were simply to ask that person about his national affiliation and treat him 'as a member of that nation to which he himself professes'.[7] Until the collapse of the Habsburg empire, individuals retained a degree of choice about their national affiliation.[8] After 1918, however, laws in Moravia stipulated that a child could only attend a school that corresponded to his or her nationality. German children were required to attend German schools and Czech children required to attend Czech schools. It was no longer sufficient, moreover, for parents simply to declare themselves (and their children) Germans or Czechs in order to establish their nationality. In cases of conflict the state was

[5] For numbers see Christopher J. Fischer, 'Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism, 1890–1930', Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2003, 238.

[6] Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials', 129–62. On Alsace see also Christopher J. Fischer, 'Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism, 1890–1930', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, 36 (2005), 55–62; David Allen Harvey, *Constructing Class and Nationality in Alsace, 1830–1945* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); Bruno Cabanes, *La victoire endeuillé. La sortie de guerre des soldats français 1918–1920* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 97–180; Steven L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation-Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850–1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998).

[7] Gerald Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), 171. All translations of quotations from untranslated sources are by the author.

[8] For more on national classification under the Habsburg monarchy, and on the shift from individual choice to objective characteristics, see Tara Zahra, 'Reclaiming Children for the Nation: Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian lands, 1900–1945', *Central European History* 37, 4 (2004), 501–43.

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empowered to assign parents and children to a single national community based on an investigation of so-called 'objective characteristics'.[9]

National classification was not limited to children in Moravia. When the first census was held in Czechoslovakia, on 15 February 1921, all citizens were also obliged to report their nationality based strictly on objective traits. The census law passed in October of 1920 specified, 'Statements about nationality must be made with full cognisance and strictly based on the truth.' In the event that census-takers or local officials doubted the truth of a person's claimed nationality, they were empowered to conduct an investigation and interrogate witnesses in order to reclassify that person within fourteen days. A Supreme Administrative Court decision of 1923 specified, 'In doubtful cases, nationality is to be determined based upon various objective characteristics (podle jiných objektivných znáků)', including 'the language that a person uses in daily relations, the environment in which he lives at the moment nationality is determined, ethnic descent, the language of a spouse and other members of the family, manner of raising children, membership in associations, political convictions, the place of long-term residence etc'.[10] Anyone found guilty of having 'consciously' declared a false nationality on the census was subject to fines of up to 10,000 crowns and up to three months' imprisonment. State officials changed thousands of people who declared themselves Germans on the census of 1921 into Czechoslovaks against their will.[11]

This essay focuses on Czechoslovakia and France, but practices of national classification were widespread throughout Europe after 1918. In the aftermath of war and revolution, national classification represented one strategy through which governments sought to re-establish order, distinguishing citizens and foreigners, majorities and minorities.[12] In many regions, national classification followed closely on the recognition of new principles of minority rights. The institutionalisation of

[9] The phrase 'objective characteristics' comes from the decisions of the Czechoslovak Supreme Administrative Court, which regulated the application of the Lex Perek. Z. 6962/22, carton 857, Nejvyšší správní soud (NSS), Národní archiv, Prague (NA).

[10] NSS, Decision from 10 February 1923, č. 10967/22, Oddělení spisovny 8, číslo 113, podčislo 4, carton 1238, Ministerstvo Vnitra – Stará Registratura (MV-SR), NA.

[11] See Vládní nařízení, č. 256/1920, 8 April 1920, and č. 592/1920, 20 Ocbober 1920, in *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československu* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství, 1920), 1503–6. The following cartons in the National Archive in Prague contain several thousand files of individuals whose nationalities were changed from German to Czech in 1921 and 1930, and who protested to the Ministry of Interior: NA, MV-SR, Cartons 251–8, 1238, 1239, 2995, 2996–8.

[12] On efforts to re-establish order following the First World War and the revolutions of 1917–19 see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 41–138; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79–179; Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Eliza Ablovatski, 'Between Red Army and White Guard: Women in Budapest, 1918–1919', in Maria Bucur and Nancy Wingfield, eds., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2006); Istvan Deak, 'The Habsburg Empire', in Mark von Hagen and Karen Barkey, eds., *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*

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minority rights in international law generated heated conflicts over who belonged to which minority and would be entitled to claim those rights. For example, a 1922 agreement between Poland and Germany regarding Upper Silesia specified that German children were to enjoy the 'minority right' to attend German-language elementary schools. But which children were German and which were Polish? Disputes over the national affiliation of individual children ultimately reached the League of Nations, which ruled in 1927 that any child who understood German well enough to follow instruction should be allowed to enrol in a German elementary school. 'Doubtful' cases were decided by a League of Nations commission headed by a Swiss pedagogical expert, who administered language tests to the children. But there was continued disgruntlement on all sides when the tests continued in 1927–8, 1928–9 and 1929–30.[13]

The problem in Silesia, as in Alsace-Lorraine and Czechoslovakia's bilingual regions, was that neither nationality nor language abilities were transparent facts. In Silesia many children spoke neither literary German nor literary Polish, but a local dialect or several languages, and many children were born of so-called mixed marriages. While Polish officials claimed that these children were 'Germanised' Poles, German minority rights activists held that they were 'Polonised' Germans.[14] The League of Nation's World Court ultimately defended the right of Silesian parents to choose their national affiliation (and their children's schools), but the same treaties did not bind Czechoslovakia and France. Nor were citizens protected from involuntary classification in Yugoslavia after 1918. While German children technically enjoyed a minority right to attend German elementary schools, local authorities were empowered to investigate and dispute any individual's claim to be German. Children with Slovene-sounding family names in southern Styria were therefore routinely forced to attend Slovene schools, regardless of their claims to be German.[15]

France and Czechoslovakia confronted and classified their German minorities in ways that challenged conventional wisdom about east–west difference. Implicitly or explicitly, social scientists have long condemned eastern and central Europe for not conforming to models set by Britain or France. The Cold War seemed to confirm long-standing images of Europe as a divided continent. Until recently, historians typically contrasted the allegedly backward and undemocratic societies of the multinational east to the modern and democratic nation-states in the west.[16]

(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 129–42; Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 153–68.

[13] For the details of the case see Manley O. Hudson, ed., *World Court Reports. A Collection of the Judgments, Orders and Opinions of the Permanent Court of International Justice*, Vol. 2, 1927–1932 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1935), 268–320, 690–91.

[14] Hudson, *World Court Reports*, 292.

[15] See Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Nationalitätenpolitik in Jugoslawien: die deutsche Minderheit, 1918–1978* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980), 23.

[16] For the classic examples see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1981); C. A. Macartney *The Habsburg Empire 1790–1918* (New York: Macmillan, 1969). For more recent examples see George Schöpflin, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity in Europe, East and West', in

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They denounced the supposedly illiberal ethnic nationalisms of central and eastern Europe, while praising western Europe's ostensibly more liberal civic creeds.[17] The Habsburg monarchy and its successor states, in this view, were doomed by their allegedly peculiar linguistic and cultural diversity.

In recent years, however, historians of both western and eastern Europe have challenged several assumptions underpinning the presumption of east–west difference. Historians of France have exposed the limits of de Jouvenel's universalist rhetoric. Not far beneath the surface, republican France was plagued by tensions between its assimilationist ideology and persistent forms of religious, linguistic, cultural, regional and racial difference. In particular, recent scholarship on immigration, antisemitism, race and the French colonial empire has questioned idealised views of French nationalism as a benign and successful motor of inclusion. Historians of France have thereby exposed and problematised the French diversity that de Jouvenel so vehemently denied in 1918.[18]

Charles A. Kupchan, ed., *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 37–65; Solomon Wank, 'Some Reflections of the Habsburg Empire and its Legacy in the Nationalities Question', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 28 (1997), 140–41; Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ivan Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[17] For theoretical literature drawing distinctions between eastern and western nationalism see Hans Kohn, T*he Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins* (New York: Macmillan,1944); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 101–30; Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1–26; Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[18] There is a vast and growing literature on tensions between universalism and regional, religious, ethnic and linguistic difference in the French metropole and empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the classic text on regional and linguistic diversity in nineteenth-century France see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976). On regionalism in France see Stéphane Gerson, *A Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). On the tensions between universalism and difference posed by immigration see especially Mary Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918–1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: the Origins of Modern Immigration Control Between the Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Gerard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français? Histoire de la nationalité français depuis la Révolution* (Paris: Grasset, 2002). On the French Empire and race see Tyler Stovall and Sue Peabody, eds., *The Color of Liberty. Histories of Race in France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Herrick Chapman and Laura Frader, eds., *Race in France* (New York: Berghahn, 2004); Fred Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1996); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Alice L. Conklin and Julia Clancy-Smith, 'Introduction: Writing French Colonial Histories', *French Historical Studies* 27, 3 (2004), 497–505; J. P. Daughton, *An Empire*

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At the same time, recent scholarship on the Habsburg monarchy and successor states has attempted to deproblematise east European diversity, challenging narratives in which religious, linguistic or cultural difference lead inevitably to bloodshed. They have questioned the basic assumption that east central Europe has always and inevitably been dominated by nationalist division, focusing on the persistence of bilingualism, national ambiguity and indifference to nationalism.[19] Historians have also explored the multiple loyalties – dynastic, religious, local, class and regional – that coexisted with or competed with national affiliation. Finally, without idealising the Habsburg monarchy, they have shed light on the potential for serious reform within the Austrian state, economy and society, challenging a view of the Habsburg empire as an anachronistic and authoritarian 'prison of the peoples'.[20]

Both of these revisionist approaches are now well established, but they are rarely brought together. This essay attempts to connect the dots between east and west through a transnational history of nationalism. It is critical to historicise perceptions of east/west difference, and to consider previously ignored similarities between eastern and western Europe. The point of this comparison, however, is not that inter-war eastern and western Europe were equally diverse, equally homogenous, equally modern, equally democratic or equally threatened by the 'minority problem'. Rather, while acknowledging the social, political and cultural differences that distinguished France and Czechoslovakia after the First World War, I attempt to locate those differences in historical rather than ahistorical factors.

Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880–1914 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[19] For a fuller analysis of the nature and extent of national ambivalence, indifference, and flexibility in eastern Europe see Gary M. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists*; Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Robert Luft, 'Nationale Utraquisten in Böhmen: Zur Problematik nationaler Zwischenstellungen am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts', in Maurice Godé et al., eds., *Allemands, Juifs et Tchèques à Prague, 1890–1924* (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry-Montpellier III, 1994), 37–54; Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[20] For examples of this revisionist approach to east central Europe see Gary B. Cohen, 'Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867–1914', *Central European History* 40, 2 (2007), 241–78; Gary B. Cohen, 'Neither Absolutism Nor Anarchy: New Narratives of Society and Government in Late Imperial Austria', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 29, 1 (1998), 37–61; Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists*; Daniel Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848–1916* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

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While French and Czechoslovak approaches to the minority problem were distinct, these differences did not necessarily conform to the expectations of Oscar Janowsky. Theorists of nationalism have traditionally contrasted west European 'civic' nationalism to central and east European 'ethnic' nationalism, but France institutionalised a more exclusive and racist policy of national classification after 1918.[21] Finally, if both France and Czechoslovakia confronted a German minority problem after the First World War, that problem was not necessarily a product of deep-rooted national hostility or conflict at the local level. As we shall see, the minority problem did not necessarily pit Czech or French citizens against Germans, but entailed bitter disputes over who was Czech, who was French and who was German. Through national classification state officials and citizens debated and transformed the very meaning of Frenchness, Czechness, and Germanness.[22]

The 'minority problem' and the invention of the homogenous west

Alsace-Lorraine and the bilingual regions of Czechoslovakia shared a great deal in the inter-war period. Both borderland regions formed part of avowedly republican, democratic states. Across Europe the Wilsonian ideals of 1918 linked democracy and the nation-state. As Hannah Arendt observed two decades later, in 1918 the world stood convinced 'that true freedom, true emancipation, and true popular sovereignty could be attained only with full national emancipation, that people without their own national government were deprived of human rights'. This fusion of nationalist and democratic rhetoric resonated strongly in France and Czechoslovakia, where nationalist self-understanding had long rested on oppositions between an essentially democratic French or Czech nation and the alleged authoritarianism and 'barbarism' of neighbouring Germans. In the eyes of many French and Czech nationalists, protecting democracy required aggressive measures to subdue a threatening German minority.[23] Both Alsace and Czechoslovakia also saw the rise of disgruntled German

[21] For recent challenges to the east–west division see Maria Todorova, 'The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism', *Slavic Review*, 64 (2005), 140–65; Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials'; Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Introduction', in Eley and Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3–38.

[22] This approach borrows from the insights of Peter Sahlins and Pieter Judson, who have both explored the ways in which nationalists constructed their self-image in so-called borderlands. See Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[23] Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), 152. On perceived links between democracy and the nation-state in 1918 see also Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 41–138; Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 79–179; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*. On the influence of Germany in shaping French nationalism see Alan Mitchell, *A Stranger in Paris: Germany's Role in Republican Paris, 1870–1940* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde: Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstversändnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792–1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992).

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autonomist movements between the two world wars. Hermann Bickler, who led the Alsatian autonomist movement, was even dubbed the 'Konrad Henlein of Alsace' by the French press.[24] Finally, both Alsace-Lorraine and Czechoslovakia were overrun by the Nazi regime, which claimed to be liberating an oppressed German minority.

In spite of these similarities, however, striking differences marked the French and Czechoslovak approaches to national classification in 1918. French policies of national classification aimed to exclude from the ranks of the French nation those identified as Germans in Alsace-Lorraine, and to protect French racial purity. In Czechoslovakia, by contrast, state officials classified many self-declared Germans as Czechoslovaks against their will, in order to create the impression of a strong Czechoslovak majority. These differences were rooted in distinct local histories as well as international hierarchies. Pre-existing degrees of linguistic or cultural diversity did not predestine eastern Europe to become a 'war-breeding zone'. As Eugen Weber famously argued, French was a foreign language to roughly half of the French population as late as 1870. In the late nineteenth century, however, the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy and the French nation-state diverged in their basic approaches to defining and managing the diversity of their respective populations, with important consequences for the period following the First World War.[25] The French Third Republic typically promoted a universalist vision of cultural and linguistic unity through its education and language policies, resisting pressure for various forms of collective linguistic, regional or religious rights. It transformed peasants into Frenchmen with reasonable success, but not without considerable effort.[26] The Habsburg state, meanwhile, also contributed to the development and institutionalisation of nationalist politics. The Austrian constitution of 1867 officially declared, 'All national groups within the state are equal, and each one has the inviolable right to preserve and cultivate its nationality and language.' Although officially supranational, the Habsburg state thereby created the very conditions under which nineteenth-century nationalists strengthened their demands for collective linguistic and national rights. While the French state intentionally nationalised its population, the Habsburg state unintentionally *multinationalised* its population.[27]

Other historical conditions also fostered a less exclusive approach to national classification in Czechoslovakia. In the bilingual regions of the Bohemian lands under Habsburg rule, Czech and German nationalist movements competed simultaneously for the loyalties of many citizens who lacked a strong sense of national affiliation, and sought to mobilise those who already identified themselves as Germans or Czechs

[24] Lothar Kettenacker, *Nationalsozialistische Volkspolitik in Elsass* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1973), 31.

[25] After 1867 the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy was governed much more like a nation-state along the French model than were the Austrian crown lands. The government of Hungary sought to assimilate its linguistic minorities through policies of Magyarisation.

[26] Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 67–94.

[27] On the role of the Austrian state in facilitating nationalist movements see especially King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten*; Tara Zahra, 'Each Nation Only Cares for its Own: Empire, Nation, and Child Welfare Activism in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1918', *American Historical Review*, 111, 5 (2006), 1378–402.

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in expanding mass political movements. Especially after 1880, this battle for numbers entailed a mass campaign to convince as many citizens as possible to register as Czech- or German-speakers on the decennial census, and to send their children to German- or Czech-language elementary schools. Heated competition to make Bohemians and Moravians into Czechs and Germans encouraged a flexible approach to nationality. While both Czech and German nationalists claimed to be defending their rightful 'national (human) property' against alleged Germanisation or Czechification, both movements typically accepted any willing candidate into their schools and ranks, regardless of linguistic abilities. In Alsace-Lorraine, by contrast, German and French nationalists never competed on equal ground for Alsatian loyalties: one nation-state or the other always held the upper hand.

Alsatians and Bohemians also experienced and remembered the First World War differently. Contrary to the claims of Czechoslovak revolutionaries in the 1920s, most Czech-speakers remained loyal to the Habsburg dynasty until very late in the war, although many celebrated the end of the war by attacking symbols of Austrian rule, such as statues of the Emperor Franz Joseph.[28] In France, the Great War unleashed a wave of rabid anti-German propaganda demonising Germans as a 'race' of violent and sub-human 'barbarians'. These wartime images set the stage for the harsh treatment of those labelled German in Alsace-Lorraine after the First World War, and for campaigns to protect French 'blood' from German infiltration. The French obsession with preventing racial 'contamination' in Alsace-Lorraine formed part of a broader set of colonial discourses and practices in the French colonial empire at the time.[29]

Finally, diverging approaches to the minority problem in France and Czechoslovakia developed in the context of explicitly international and transnational institutions and hierarchies. Specifically, emerging minority rights protections (and the lack thereof) in Europe after 1918 coalesced through imagined oppositions between a fragmented, multi-ethnic east and a homogenous and democratic west. These dichotomies built on long-standing Orientalist hierarchies that pathologised

[28] For more on the loyalty (and perceptions of disloyalty) of Czech-speakers to the Austrian state during the First World War see Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (New York: Berg, 2002); Jan Křen, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft. Tschechen und Deutschen 1780–1918* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), 303–400; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 147–52; Zahra, 'Each Nation Only Cares for its Own'; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, ch. 3. On popular protest, anti-Austrian sentiment, and the revolutions of 1918 in Austria see Healy, *Vienna*; Nancy Wingfield, 'Conflicting Constructions of Memory: Attacks on Statues of Joseph II in the Bohemian Lands after the Great War', *Austrian History Yearbook* (1997),147–71; Peter Heumos, 'Kartoffeln her oder es gibt eine Revolution: Hungerkrawalle, Streiks, und Massenproteste in den böhmischen Ländern, 1914–1918', in Hans Mommsen et al., eds., *Der erste Weltkrieg und die Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen, Slowaken, und Deutschen* (Essen: Klartext, 2001), 255–87; John W. Boyer, 'Silent War and Bitter Peace: The Revolution of 1918 in Austria', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 35 (2003).

[29] See Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2002), 135–58. On French images of the German enemy see also Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde*. On fears of racial 'contamination' in the French empire see Ann Stoler, 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia', in Eley and Suny, *Becoming National*, 286–324.

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east European diversity.[30] In France in 1918, a widespread view of minorities as a distinctly east European vexation rendered the Third Republic's own linguistic, regional, religious and ethnic minorities unproblematic, or at least outside the realm of international scrutiny. Specifically, an image of France, the United States and Britain as successful, unified nation-states and democracies, along with their power as victors in the war, enabled them to impose the minority treaties on the new east European successor states without guaranteeing the same rights to minorities within their own borders.

It was certainly true that by 1918 more of Europe's minority populations lived in eastern Europe than in western Europe. According to one contemporary estimate, out of 35 million minority inhabitants in inter-war Europe, only 8.6 million lived in western Europe, while about 25 million lived in central and eastern Europe.[31] Diplomats and scholars did not simply justify the exclusion of the great powers from the minority treaties in numerical terms, however. Rather, it was the alleged backwardness and immaturity of the new east European successor states that demanded the violation of their sovereignty. While many peasants only became Frenchmen in the second half of the nineteenth century, inter-war analysts often located the sources of east/west difference in ancient history, pathologising the east as unenlightened and undemocratic. In a typical formulation, C. A. Macartney's 1934 study of the inter-war minority rights question began, 'Before written history began, Eastern and Western Europe had already begun to go down different roads.' In the west Macartney found national awakening and democracy, in the east nations 'slumbering' under the heavy chains of despotism:

> In the eighteenth century, when the national state was beginning to take shape in England and France, the sentiment of nationality . . . had slumbered in Eastern Europe for many centuries. The chains that lay upon the people were heavy. Nowhere was there any approximation of democracy.[32]

Even those who acknowledged the cultural heterogeneity of western Europe often deproblematised it, by locating it in a distant past. According to the Hungarian historian and émigré Oscar Jaszi, France and Britain had once been as diverse as east central Europe. Centralising dynasties had, however, 'succeeded' over many centuries in creating unified national and linguistic cultures in the west. The Habsburg empire, in contrast, had 'failed' in this endeavour, resulting in its inevitable fragmentation and dissolution.[33]

Other diplomats conceded the existence of minorities in the contemporary west, but deproblematised western minority issues by insisting on the more democratic

[30] On the role of Orientalism in constructing the idea of the civilised West see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); On images of eastern Europe as a violent, backward, and fragmented borderland region see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[31] Otto Junghann, *National Minorities in Europe* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1932), 116, 119.

[32] Macartney, *National States and National Minorities*, 23, 90.

[33] Oscar Jaszi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 31. See also Junghann, *National Minorities in Europe* (New York, 1932), 18.

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and tolerant nature of west European nation-states. In the words of Gilbert Murray, an Oxford classicist and member of the British delegation to the League of Nations, 'Minorities of alien race, language, and religion have existed for centuries in the great nations of Europe, and in many places seem to have caused no trouble and suffered no persecution. But in central and eastern Europe the situation was more difficult . . . from Turkey to Posen the alien subjects of the great governments have been in varying degrees stinted of their civic liberties and their opportunities of development'.[34]

The great powers' refusal to endorse universal minority protections ultimately crippled the minority protection treaties, as the new east European successor states resented them as an unwarranted infringement of their national sovereignty. Carole Fink has argued that this glaring double standard in inter-war minority rights 'undermined the moral as well as political basis for outside intervention and gave the treaty states ample opportunity to criticise, subvert, and ultimately opt out of the international protection system'.[35] Not surprisingly, several attempts to force all members of the League of Nations (east and west) to uphold universal standards of minority rights failed in the 1920s. One 1922 proposal was sponsored by Gilbert Murray himself. Lithuania, Poland and Czechoslovakia introduced other unsuccessful initiatives.[36] Officially, the great powers refused to sign up to international minority rights protections by invoking east–west oppositions that effaced their own diversity and insisting on the 'immaturity' of the new east European states. In practice, however, at the very moment that the minority treaties were drafted, they consciously defended their rights to treat their own minorities (including regional autonomists, Germans in Alsace-Lorraine, racial minorities in the United States, the Irish in the United Kingdom, and colonial subjects, immigrants and refugees across western Europe) as they saw fit. France explicitly rejected Poland's proposals to generalise the minority treaties, based partly on fears of the German autonomist movement in Alsace-Lorraine.[37] It is worth considering the extent to which weak enforcement of the minority protection treaties in inter-war Europe resulted from western Europe's own nagging diversity. As we shall see, at the very moment that the minority protection treaties were negotiated in the Parisian suburbs in 1919, French officials were self-consciously handling their own minority problem in Alsace with identity cards, purges, expropriation and expulsion. The radical approach to the 'minority

[34] Gilbert Murray, 'Introduction', in L. P. Mair, *The Protection of Minorities: The Working and Scope of the Minorities Treaties under the League of Nations* (London: Christophers, 1928), v–vi.

[35] Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 360. On the political considerations which shaped the minority treaties see also Patrick Finney, 'An Evil for All Concerned: Great Britain and Minority Protection after 1919', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30, 3 (1995), 533–51. On inter-war minority protection see also Mark Mazower, 'Minorities and the League of Nations in Inter-war Europe', *Daedelus*, 126 (1997), 47–61 and 'The Strange Triumph of Human Rights', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 379–89. For an excellent overview of work on the League of Nations see Susan Pederson, 'Back to the League of Nations', *American Historical Review*, 112 (October 2007), 1091–117.

[36] Murray, 'Introduction', *The Protection of Minorities*, vii.

[37] Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 278, 287, 298, 310–11. See also Mazower, 'Minorities and the League of Nations', 47–61.

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problem' in France was therefore enabled partly by international hierarchies that structured European politics and diplomacy after the First World War. Both France and Czechoslovakia confronted a German minority problem in 1918, and resorted to national classification to solve it. In France, however, national classification served to forcibly *exclude* the 'German' enemy from enjoying the privileges of French 'natives' and to protect French racial purity. The Czechoslovak state, meanwhile, used new practices of national classification forcibly to *include* individuals in the Czechoslovak nation, in order to bolster the basic legitimacy of Czechoslovakia as a nation-state.

'Sniffing out the Teutons' in Alsace-Lorraine

'Whenever the presence of Germans seems pernicious to the public tranquillity, you should not hesitate to remove this danger.' With these words, the post-war expulsion of Germans began in earnest: not from eastern Europe after the Second World War, but from the newly re-annexed French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine after the First World War.[38] Alsace and Lorraine had belonged to France until 1871, when they were ceded to the German empire after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Almost fifty years later, the so-called 'lost provinces' were returned to France following the First World War. The re-annexation was celebrated in 1918 as a return of 'lost children' to an adoring French motherland. On the eve of the First World War, however, approximately 300,000 individuals labelled German lived in Alsace and Lorraine (out of a population of 1,874,014 in 1910), many deeply integrated in local society.

The persecution of 'enemy populations' in both the Bohemian lands and Alsace-Lorraine had already begun during the First World War. In the Austrian empire, state officials treated the entire Czech-speaking population with suspicion during the war, although Czechs were no more likely to be unpatriotic than Germans or Magyars. Of the 4,600 prosecutions in Bohemia for political disloyalty during the war, 87 per cent of those punished were Czech-speakers, although these comprised only 65 per cent of the Bohemian population.[39] While the war may have exacerbated nationalist tensions in the Bohemian lands, however, the population was not exposed to state-sponsored propaganda vilifying Czechs or Germans. In France, the state itself demonised the German population, and both schools and popular culture reinforced images of German barbarism.[40] The demonisation of the German enemy in wartime France intensified in the wake of a brutal occupation in northern France and Belgium in

[38] French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, on 24 January 1919. Cited in Harvey, *Constructing Class and Nationality*, 544.

[39] On the Habsburg state's anti-Czech politics during the First World War see Jan Havránek, 'Politische Repression und Versorgungsengpässe in den böhmischen Ländern 1914 bis 1918', in Mommsen et al., *Der erste Weltkrieg*, 47–67; Křen, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft*, 312; Healy, *Vienna*, 122–159; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*.

[40] On war pedagogy and propaganda in France see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *La guerre des enfants. Essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1993).

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August 1914. French propagandists, journalists and rumour-mongers widely invoked real and imagined tales of the German occupation to illustrate the barbaric nature of Germans, including, infamously, the claim that German soldiers cut off the hands of French and Belgian children.[41] The First World War also accelerated a more general trend towards the surveillance of foreigners in France. Beginning in April 1917, all foreigners over the age of 15 were required to carry identity cards.[42]

While Alsatians were not quite branded as foreigners during the war, both German and French military authorities treated them with suspicion. The German government arrested and interned Alsatians accused of anti-German sentiment and imposed martial law on the provinces, limiting freedom of movement, censoring the press and banning the use of the French language in public. Because soldiers from Alsace who served in the German army were considered potential turncoats, they were mostly sent to the eastern front, where 50,000 perished. French authorities were less severe, seeing the war as an opportunity to win Alsatian loyalties.[43] The French military, however, simultaneously introduced new practices of 'triage' during the war. Beginning in 1914, the state interned many Alsatians and Lorrainers, Germans and Austrians in what were officially called 'concentration camps'. Other Alsatians were displaced to the French interior by wartime evacuation schemes.[44]

A French military commission visited these camps in 1914–15 and began to sort Alsatians into three distinct categories that prefigured the post-war classification scheme: 'The good ones, who are assigned a tricolour identity card designed to encourage kindness on the part of the authorities and the population; the dubious Alsatians who are detained in camps and equipped with a white card attesting only to their French origins; and the suspects who are interned in camps.'[45] Even Alsatian evacuees who were rewarded for their loyalty with the tricolour identity card were often greeted with hostility by their French hosts, who were not inclined to trust the German-speaking Alsatians in their midst.[46] In 1915 the francophile Alsatian exile and former senator Émile Wetterlé observed with regret, 'Equipped with the tricolour identity card, which should be a certificate of their French public-spirit, Alsatians

[41] For a detailed investigation of both the realities and myths of German war atrocities in 1914 see John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 207–14.

[42] See Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 61.

[43] Fischer, 'Alsace to the Alsatians?', dissertation, 208–12.

[44] Jean Claude Farcy, *Les camps de concentration français de la première guerre mondiale* (Paris: Anthropos, 1995), 51–63. Among the 10,000 people classified by the military commission, 5,247 were issued the carte tricolore, 219 were considered suspect, 936 were freed before the commission arrived, 219 were considered hostages and 4,214 were classified as Austro-Germans. See Fischer, 'Alsace to the Alsatians?', 212.

[45] Commissions interministerielle de classement des Alsaciens Lorrains, Paris 25 Mars 1919, 121 AL 902, Archives départmentales du Bas-Rhin (ADBR).

[46] Fischer, 'Alsace to the Alsatians', 214–16. On similar tensions between Alsatian evacuees and French hosts in the south-west during the Second World War see Laird Boswell, 'Franco-Alsatian Conflict and the Crises of National Sentiment During the Phoney War', *Journal of Modern History*, 71 (September 1999), 552–84.

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and Lorrainers are finding it difficult to obtain employment. When by chance they do find a job, they remain exposed to a thousand and one petty local suspicions that poison the existence of these simple-hearted people, who simply don't understand this hostility from their new-found brothers.'[47]

The French state re-annexed Alsace-Lorraine in 1918, claiming to liberate an essentially French population from the alleged yoke of German domination. In spite of effusive propaganda celebrating the French qualities of Alsace-Lorraine and its people, however, many ordinary French citizens were loath to trust a population that seemed suspiciously German. Not only did 90 per cent of the population speak a German dialect, but Alsace's religious heritage was contentious in Third-Republic France. In Alsace, church–state relations were still regulated by the concordat of 1801. Whereas a 1905 law in France had established a firm separation between church and state, banishing religion from public schools, many Alsatians were deeply attached to their system of confessional education. The 'lost provinces' were economically distinct as well – industrialised and relatively wealthy compared with much of France, where agriculture and small-scale enterprise dominated the economy. Alsatian workers also enjoyed a more generous system of social welfare benefits and insurance, the fruit of Bismarck's reforms and imperial Germany's strong social democratic movement. As Laird Boswell has argued, 'The seeds of future misunderstandings can be found in the paradoxical situation of a nonfrancophone and culturally distinct region being invested with a degree of patriotic symbolism on a scale known to no other French province.' In many cases it was far from clear who was a German and who was French or Alsatian, since intermarriage and bilingualism were widespread, especially among the popular classes in urban areas such as Strasbourg.[48]

National classification promised to resolve these tensions, by clearly distinguishing the 'French-Alsatian' loyalists from the German 'immigrants', 'colonisers' or 'barbarians'. This sorting process began during the war, when alarming reports began to circulate about encounters between French troops and Alsatian civilians. In 1915, shortly after French soldiers began to occupy parts of Alsace-Lorraine, Wetterlé observed,

> [D]uring the past few weeks, an anguishing doubt has surged in the spirits of some French people. In effect, the soldiers who have ... penetrated Alsace-Lorraine have returned very disappointed. They report that the civilian population of the annexed province has outrageously betrayed them.

Wetterlé, however, was not disturbed by these reports, for which he offered a simple explanation. He blamed the Germans, insisting that it was not authentic Alsatian natives who greeted French soldiers with treasonous ingratitude, but rather German 'immigrants' and their descendants, individuals who had moved into Alsace and Lorraine from other parts of Germany after 1871.

[47] L'abbé Émile Wetterlé, *Ce qu'était l'Alsace-Lorraine et ce qu'elle sera* (Paris: L'Édition française illustrée, 1915), 308.

[48] Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials', 131–2. On Alsatian particularities see also Fischer, 'Alsace to the Alsatians?', 55–62; François Uberfill, *La société strasbourgeoise entre France et Allemagne, 1871–1924* (Strasbourg: Société Savante d'Alsace, 2001).

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State officials and francophile Alsatians buttressed the myth of a loyally French Alsatian population by contrasting treasonous German 'immigrants' with patriotic French-Alsatian 'natives', and promoting a fantasy of absolute separation between the two populations. This myth of separation enabled French officials to blame the German enemy for any lack of French patriotism among Alsatians, depicting Alsatian natives as bitter adversaries of their German neighbours. Wetterlé explained,

> In Alsace-Lorraine there are two populations who have lived side by side for forty years, without understanding one another or mixing with one another. Out of 1,800,000 residents, 300,000 are of German origin. These immigrants, who occupy all avenues of power, are at first glance indistinguishable from the indigenous population. They call themselves Alsatians and Lorrainers like the native residents, but they are not natives by any means.[49]

The problem, according to Wetterlé, was that it required a trained local eye to distinguish between 'authentic' natives and German 'immigrants'. He explained, 'It is necessary to have lived in Alsace-Lorraine for a long time in order to know the extent to which the immigrants and the natives were distant from one another and how much their mentalities remain in conflict.'[50] Indeed, Wetterlé insisted on the need to use experienced local experts to 'sniff out' devious 'German' impostors.

> Too often the Austro-Germans, who don't shy away from any disloyal manoeuvre in order to assure their own impunity, have attempted to pass for locals ... those of us who have a great deal of practical experience with the two populations of our provinces, we can recognise the true German and the true Alsatian or Lorrainer of old stock at first glance and after an interview of a few minutes. We sniff out the Teuton like a hunting dog sniffs its prey, and I assure you that with a little practice it is not difficult, because the odour is so particular and so strong.[51]

The metaphor of smell was significant, as it reflected the contemporary racialisation of German–French difference. French nationalists repeatedly attempted to prove that Alsace was French not simply by choice, but by blood or race. While the terms 'race' and 'nation' were often used interchangeably, French medical experts and social scientists increasingly promoted a biological understanding of race based on alleged physiological difference in the years leading up to 1914.[52] During the First World War, images of Germans as a separate and barbarian race proliferated in French newspapers and popular culture, and among social scientists. A French psychologist, Edgar Bérillon, for example, attributed differences between German and French character and culture to allegedly distinct cranial structures, digestive organs, facial features and even feet.[53] In 1917 Bérillon confidently compared racial differences between Germans and French in Alsace-Lorraine with racial distinctions in the

[49] Wetterlé, *Ce qu'était l'Alsace-Lorraine*, 27.

[50] On efforts by states to render populations 'legible' see James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[51] Wetterlé, *Ce qu'était l'Alsace-Lorraine*, 305.

[52] On fears of racial 'degeneration' in France see Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[53] On the ethnicisation of German–French difference in France see Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde*, 349–64.

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United States. In both cases, he insisted, racial enmity had an important olfactory component:

> The hatred between the black and white races, which manifests itself with such intensity in the United States, is principally caused by the odour that Americans attribute to negroes . . . There's a reason why the populations of Alsace-Lorraine have been so resistant in recent times to Germanic assimilation. It is because there's a racial odour that deeply separates the indigenous race from the invading race. The odour of the German race has always produced very unpleasant sensations for the olfactory functions of our compatriots in Alsace-Lorraine.[54]

Meanwhile, the occupation of northern France provoked widespread fears of blood 'contamination' through unions between German soldiers and French women in occupied regions. These so-called 'children of barbarians', Ruth Harris has shown, were often depicted as a moral and biological threat to the French race.[55]

The French state anchored this racialised vision of nationality in law after 1918. Citizens were classified in categories A to D, based on the citizenship of their parents and grandparents, not on their physical appearance, skull size or smell. Nonetheless, a desire to protect French 'blood' and a firm conviction that Germans constituted a distinct race underpinned the classification scheme. In February 1918, a government Comité d'études économiques et administratives relatives a l'Alsace-Lorraine was established as a part of the Conférence d'Alsace-Lorraine, created in Paris in 1915 to plan for the eventual re-annexation of the provinces. The Committee produced an official 'report on nationality questions', authored by Alfred Zeil, which addressed the fate of the German minority. While Zeil affirmed that 'there is no difference of race or origin' between Alsatians and French nationals, he simultaneously asserted the need to guard vigilantly against a perceived threat of racial contamination in Alsace. Individuals would thus enjoy the privileges of French citizenship only insofar as 'their quality as Alsatians and Lorrainers of French origin are incontestable, that is to say that their blood remains pure of any addition of German blood'.[56]

Zeil's proposal for dealing with the significant German minority in Alsace-Lorraine drew considerably on France's colonial experience. The despised German 'immigrants' comprised a valuable workforce, so they could not simply be expelled en masse, but neither could they be safely assimilated. Germans in Alsace were therefore to become French 'subjects but not citizens'. Zeil elaborated, 'There is nothing

[54] Edgar Bérillon, 'La psychologie de la race allemande d'après ses caricteristiques objectives et spécifiques', lecture, 4 February 1917, Association française pour l'avancement des sciences, (Paris, 1917), 77–139, 118, 121, cited in Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la grande guerre. Humanitaires et culture de guerre, 1914–1918. Populations occupées, déportés civils, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris: Noêsis, 1998), 328. For other contemporary examples of the racialisation of French–German difference see Louis Battifol, *L'alsace est française par ses origines, sa race, son passé* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1919); E. Sainte-Marie Perrin, *Ce que pense l'Alsace* (Paris: Cussac, 1918), 29.

[55] Harris also discusses the vigorous debate about abortion provoked by racial fears about children of German soldiers. Ruth Harris, 'The "Child of the Barbarian": Rape, Race, and Nationalism in France during the First World War', *Past and Present*, 141 (1993), 170–206. See also Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *L'enfant de l'ennemi: vol, avortement, infanticide pendant le Grande Guerre* (Paris: Aubier, 1995).

[56] Alfred Zeil, Rapport sur les questions de nationalité. Comités d'études économiques et administratives relatives a l'Alsace-Lorraine, Adopté en séance du Comité du 23 Fevrier 1918, 4, 30/AJ/96, Archives nationales françaises (AN).

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original about this idea. It recalls the status of the natives of Algeria.' The German minority, he suggested, would be 'subject to the same obligations as French nationals, without ever enjoying the same rights'. That meant that Germans would not only be denied the right to vote but also barred from employment in the civil service and as teachers, lawyers or religious leaders.[57] Zeil was well aware that this plan might raise eyebrows in the international community, at a moment when the great powers were imposing so-called western standards of minority protection on the new east European nation-states. But he counted on the silence of the great powers, which had done little to protest against previous abuses of minority rights:

> The other powers, who have never protested against the treatment meted out to non-native populations in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and, in spite of formal treaties, Turkey and Romania, will hardly be justified in protesting . . . If we fear rubbing up against certain 'European' sensibilities, we should avoid using the term 'subjects' – that won't change anything essential.[58]

French experiences in the colonies thus provided a model for the treatment of the German minority in Alsace in 1918, exposing the limits of the French civilising mission. But, as in colonial contexts, the ideology of racial difference in Alsace was often challenged in everyday life, as officials struggled to determine which Alsatians were German 'barbarians' and which were loyal French patriots.

The fiction of racial difference between German and French Alsatians was also challenged by many Alsatians themselves, who sought to avoid the persecution and stigma attached to the Carte D. Thousands of angry Alsatians wrote to French officials to insist that they were not *boches*. At least 4,440 cases in which citizens contested their classification as Germans came before the *commissions de triage* in Strasbourg in 1919–20 alone, and many more such petitions never reached the commissions.[59] These protests reveal how ordinary Alsatians attempted to negotiate with government officials over the defining qualities of Frenchness, strategically invoking culture, descent, race and conviction in their demands to be reclassified.

The classification of so-called mixed families proved particularly contentious. In France in 1918, children of married parents legally carried the citizenship of their fathers, and women acquired the citizenship of their husbands on marriage. The French state was, however, surprisingly quick to violate this patriarchal legal tradition in the distribution of identity cards. In Alsace, women labelled 'Germans' married to 'French' men were classified as Germans. Children born to French men and German women were also denied the status of French nationals. In his 1918 proposal Alfred Zeil discussed the problem of so-called 'mixed' marriages in detail. Zeil argued in gendered terms against preferential status for children with French fathers (rather than French mothers), insisting, 'It is much more the mentality that the mother carries from her origins and her education that determines the sentiments and the ideas of the child than the accident of the father's nationality.' He was not, however,

[57] Ibid., 27. Zeil also cited the Jews of Romania as a model for the treatment of Germans in Alsace.
[58] Ibid., 28.
[59] 121 AL 907–8, ADBR; 286 D 175, ADBR.

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a proponent of greater inclusion. Zeil concluded with the recommendation that *all* children of 'mixed' marriages be subject 'to the same restrictions as pure Germans'.[60]

Contrary to Zeil's proposal, children of 'mixed' descent (regardless of which parent was French) ultimately received the Carte B, and a status higher than those classified as pure Germans. Children with only one German grandparent were considered French and accorded the Carte A. But the national disaggregation of families provoked noisy complaints from the Alsatian population. In letters of protest, Alsatians repeatedly depicted their families as organic national units in order to claim an identity (and an identity card) as a French-Alsatian. Cathérine Lefevre's appeal was typical. Born in Baden-Wurttemburg, in 1898 she had moved to work as a domestic servant in Strasbourg, where she married an Alsatian. She received a Carte D, while her husband was accorded the Carte A and her four-year-old child the Carte B. Lefevre demanded the same classification as her husband in the name of family unity, protesting,

> I voluntarily and in good faith accepted the nationality of my husband when I married. I bitterly resent being classified in the category D as a degradation of my role in the family . . . I kindly ask you the favour of being placed at the same rank as my husband.[61]

Her appeal was refused, but the issue of mixed marriages remained a thorn in the side of French officials. The decision to classify wives of French-Alsatian men as Germans not only contradicted French legal norms but flew in the face of longstanding ideals of patriarchal privilege and family unity.[62] In 1921 a civic defence group in the Moselle began to 'vehemently protest' against 'local authorities who impose German identity cards on our wives threatening recalcitrants with expulsions'. A telegram from the group in Metz addressed to French military officials proclaimed 'the indivisibility of the French family', and demanded that authorities 'urgently intervene and to stop these unmerited and undignified humiliations'.[63] A senator from the region meanwhile warned French authorities that the group had the sympathies of the local press and that the issue was generating hostility towards the French state.[64]

While traditions of patriarchal privilege shaped one language of protest, French women also took exception when their husbands were classified as Germans. These appeals were equally gendered, as women invoked their status as dependents. They depicted their husbands' classification as Germans as a threat to their economic livelihood and that of their (loyally French) children. In one dramatic, but unsuccessful plea in March 1919, Hélène Herr protested,

> The day is approaching – the confiscation of our possessions has announced it – when I shall be forced to leave my birthplace with my four children, to finish my life in exile. To be forced to leave

[60] Zeil, Rapport sur les questions de nationalité, 46–7.
[61] Cathérine Lefevre à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 17 April 1919, 286 D 175, ADBR.
[62] For similar debates in both French and German colonial contexts see Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); and Stoler, 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers', 286–322.
[63] Telegram, Metz 4305 11/10, 23 May 1921, 30/AJ/296, AN.
[64] Memo from Hirschauer, 30 June 1921, 30/AJ/296, AN.

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my country, where my ancestors lived as good French citizens, even before the revolution – no, France couldn't possibly demand that of one of its children.

She explicitly invoked the French orientation of her children in her appeal, posing the question, 'Is it necessary to mention the education of the children and the language spoken in the family?'[65]

Many of these petitioners insisted that their voluntary ties to France through marriage or culture should outweigh the stain of their German origins. In his request for a Carte A, for example, Joseph Kropfinger argued that although he had been born to German parents in Strasbourg, both his mother and father were dead by his fourth birthday. He had been raised in an orphanage. 'I love my native country Alsace, and I am its adopted child. From the moment I lost my parents they had had no influence on me', he maintained.[66] Race was not, however, altogether absent in these appeals. Other petitioners shifted strategically between racial, cultural and civic understandings of nationality. Some Alsatians even attempted to prove to officials that they were free of the taint of 'German blood', affirming the racialisation of German–French difference. Jacques Guthier, who had arrived in Strasbourg in 1888, thus maintained, 'My parents, who are both buried in Strasbourg, always told us that our family is of French origin . . . my father told me that German blood has never run in our veins.'[67] Some Alsatians invoked both race and more voluntary ties in order to prove their Frenchness. M. Ziegler, a 65-year-old prison inspector, demanded a Carte B on account of his wife's racial credentials as well as his own civic loyalties, explaining, 'Married to a pure-blood Alsatian, living among the people of Alsace, thinking and feeling like them, I have become attached to the land and more Alsatian than some of them.'[68] His appeal was rejected with the typical reply, 'Being born of German parents you cannot be issued the card B which you request.'[69]

Not surprisingly, some Alsatians sought to demonstrate their Frenchness to the state by denouncing their neighbours. In a July 1919 report to the Commissaire Général de la République in Strasbourg, officials in charge of the *commissions de triage* in Metz conceded that, immediately after the armistice, many Alsatians with dubious loyalties informed on their neighbours in order to prove their own status as loyal French nationals. The report lamented that the triage commissions

too readily lent an ear to slanderous denunciations or those motivated by village rivalries, political grievances, professional jealousy, or finally, to denunciations emanating from compromised

[65] Hélène Herr à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 27 March 1919, 286 D 175, ADBR.
[66] Joseph Kropfinger à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, May 9, 1919, 286 D 175, ADBR.
[67] Jacques Guthier à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 28 March 1919, 286 D 175, ADBR.
[68] Monsieur Ziegler à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 11 April 1919, 286 D 175, ADBR.
[69] Le commissaire de la République à Strasbourg à Monsieur Ziegler, Inspecteur de la Prison Civile, 16 April 1919, 286 D 175, ADBR.

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individuals who were seeking to regain a French virginity by delivering themselves to the sad trade of informants, in the vain hope of themselves escaping from a feared investigation.[70]

One such denunciation, signed by 'a pure-blood Alsatian who suffered under the German regime', informed French officials that Ludzig Bauni was an imposter: 'After having fed the Germans during the war by firing his Alsatian workers . . . today he attempts to pose as an Alsatian, all the while retaining his desire for revenge'. Bauni had been wrongly classified, the informant insisted: 'Bauni has received an identity card that he doesn't deserve, because he is of the class D, and on this subject, someone should investigate the mayor's sister Jost, who also should not have a completely clear conscience.'[71]

Some petitioners even gathered witness testimony to document officially their record of anti-German sentiment, invoking their hatred of Germans as the ultimate mark of French identity. (During the Second World War, this same strategy would be employed by dubious 'ethnic Germans' in east European borderlands, who sought, according to Doris Bergen, to prove that they were Germans through antisemitic violence.[72]) In a typical case, Otto Lergenmueller, born in Strasbourg in 1876, petitioned the Commissaire de la République in Strasbourg in March 1919, demanding a Carte A to replace his Carte D. Lergenmueller supplied letters from several witnesses attesting to his reputation as a 'good Alsatian'. One supporter testified,

> Monsieur Lergenmueller was stationed as a German soldier in our valley for more than a year. It was severely forbidden to speak French and we wouldn't have dared it in front of the German soldiers, who would have denounced us immediately. In front of Monsieur Lergenmueller there was no cause for worry. On the contrary he was always in agreement with us when we cursed the Germans. We believe that he deserves an identity card A.

Another witness agreed:

> As a retailer I often had the opportunity to speak with M. Lergenmueller about the events of the day, and so I can say that he always showed himself to be a good Alsatian, and I saw many times that he hated the Germans. As far as I am concerned he deserves the identity card A.[73]

National classification in Alsace-Lorraine, as in Czechoslovakia, provoked bitter debates between citizens and state officials about what it meant to be French or German. Classification also encouraged individuals to inform on their neighbours,

[70] Commission de triage et de classement du 2ème degré (Metz) à Commissaire général de la République (Strasbourg), 7 July 1919, 121 AL 902, ADBR.

[71] Denunciation of Ludzig Bauni, 21 January 1919, AL 121 906, ADBR.

[72] Doris L. Bergen, 'The Nazi Conception of "Volksdeutsche" and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939–45', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29, 4 (1994), 569–82.

[73] Otto Lergenmueller à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 9 March 1919; Le Commissaire de la République à Monsieur Lergenmueller, Otto, 18 March 1919. For other uses of anti-German sentiment as 'proof' of Frenchness see Charles Thomas à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 29 April 1919; Emile Ruos à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 16 April 1919; Charles Kraft à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 19 March 1919; Chrétien Knösel à Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République, 14 March 1919. All in 286 D 175, ADBR.

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generating the very forms of local ethnic conflict that classification claimed to redress. Was an individual's nationality written in blood at birth, a matter of political loyalties, a product of culture and language or a function of marital and social ties? Could nationality be changed, like citizenship, or was it an unalterable biological fact? Could Frenchness be proven in acts of patriotism, or in acts of cruelty to German neighbours? The many denunciations and appeals to be reclassified that flooded state offices in Alsace in 1918 reflected both the ambiguity of national loyalties in this borderland region, and the ambiguity of the very concept of nation in Europe's most celebrated nation-state.

Eradicating 'borderland souls' in Czechoslovakia

The line separating Germans from Czechs was no clearer in Czechoslovakia's bilingual borderlands. In the Bohemian lands, national classification began in the last decade of Habsburg rule. In 1905, in the Austrian crown land of Moravia, representatives from German and Czech political parties had ratified an innovative national compromise. The Moravian Compromise was intended to reduce national tensions in the province by dividing voters into two national cadastres and providing significant autonomy to each, both in legislative institutions and in the management of schools and cultural institutions. According to the Compromise, for example, German and Czech nationals would elect their own deputies to the regional parliament and their children would attend schools in their native language. By forcing all Moravian voters to enrol in either the Czech or German cadastre, the Moravian Compromise forced many individuals who were bilingual or indifferent to the nation to choose sides. The Compromise also had nationalising consequences for children. The Lex Perek – Paragraph 20 of the Compromise – stipulated that children could attend a school only if they were proficient in the language of instruction. Local Czech school boards were henceforth empowered to 'reclaim' children from German classrooms if they suspected that the children were not proficient in German. Thousands of six-year-olds were soon subjected to German language tests each September.

Czech nationalists were not satisfied, since parents of bilingual children could still choose to enrol their children in either a German or a Czech school, and a fair number of families were bilingual. In 1905, for example, German demographer Heinrich Rauchberg had estimated that in Prague 16.6 per cent of school-age children were completely bilingual.[74] Czech nationalists in Moravia pressed for more stringent rules that would prevent such parents from 'Germanising' their own children. In 1910 the Austrian Supreme Administrative Court ruled that parents were entitled to send

[74] Heinrich Rauchberg, *Der nationale Besitzstand in Böhmen* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1905), 435. Other districts in Bohemia with a high percentage of bilingual children included Most/Brüx (22.4 per cent), Budějovice/Budweis (16.2 per cent), Liberec/Reichenberg (16.1 per cent) Duchcov/Dux (17.1 per cent) and Litoměřice/Leitmeritz (13.4 per cent). Statistics are not available for Moravia, but one nationalist pedagogue referred to bilingual education in the home as a 'Moravian specialty' in 1883. See Jan Kapras, *Řeč mateřská orgánem školy obecné a znakem národnosti* (Prague: Urbánek, 1883), 9–10.

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their children to a German school even if they could not speak German, as long as they belonged to the German nation. In a victory for Czech nationalists, however, the court also stipulated that when a child's nationality was contested, school officials and political authorities were to assign the child to a national community, on the basis of an investigation of 'objective characteristics'. A 1913 guide for Czech teachers and schools specified that the officials in charge of these investigations should gather testimony from parents and witnesses 'about the family, origins, language of everyday life at home and in private and public life, knowledge of the German language, inclinations, education, knowledge of songs, literature, magazines, national history and ideas, and other similar markers of national belonging'.[75]

In Czechoslovakia after 1918 the Lex Perek remained in effect, albeit with important changes. Now children in Moravia could legally attend only a school that corresponded to their nationality, regardless of their language skills or their parents' claims about their national loyalties.[76] Adults were also now subject to national classification through new laws regulating the decennial census. In 1921, the year of the first census in Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovak officials and nationalists sought to boost the new state's legitimacy as a nation-state both domestically and internationally, by increasing the number of Czechoslovaks and decreasing the number of Germans and other national minorities counted by census-takers. This effort was successful: census-takers counted 420,000 fewer Germans in the Bohemian lands in 1921 than had been counted by Habsburg authorities in 1910. In some towns such as Budějovice/Budweis, the number of Germans plummeted by 50 per cent.[77] Where did all these Germans go? Many nationally indifferent citizens voluntarily registered as Czechoslovaks for the first time in 1921, for practical or opportunist reasons, or out of genuine enthusiasm for the new state. Some German-speakers also transferred their children to Czech schools, so that they would become fluent in the state language and enjoy opportunities for social mobility and employment in the civil service. German nationalists vehemently denounced these individuals. Such parents 'don't realise that they don't serve their children in this way, but that they certainly seriously damage their nation and thereby work for its extinction ... This is the result of a lack of *völkisch* feeling, national indifference that should be a punishable offence', insisted one 1920 pamphlet.[78]

Other citizens, however, did not rush to become Czechoslovaks after 1918. State officials therefore resorted to a variety of creative measures to increase the number of Czechoslovaks. First, Czech-speakers and Slovak-speakers were counted together as Czechoslovaks in order to create the illusion of a two-thirds 'Czechoslovak' majority.

[75] Richard Indra, 'Návod, jak reklamovati české dítky z německých škol', *Zákon perkův, právní příručky pro učitelstvo* (Zábřeh: Družstvo knihtiskárny, 1913), 43.

[76] Z. 6962/22, Carton 857, NSS, NA. For more on the Lex Perek and reclamations see Zahra, 'Reclaiming Children for the Nation'. More than 300 cases reached the Czechoslovak Supreme Administrative Court, in which the court was charged with determining whether individual children were Czech or German.

[77] See King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 164–5, for a discussion of the 1921 census.

[78] No author, *Unsere deutsche Schulen und das Vernichtungsgesetz* (Eger: Böhmerland Verlag, 1920), 7.

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Second, Jewish citizens had the new option of declaring themselves members of the Jewish nation. Since many Jews in Czechoslovakia were also German-speakers, officials hoped that this would decrease the overall number of citizens counted as Germans.[79] Finally, when possible, census-takers forcibly changed self-professed Germans into Czechoslovaks against their will. On census day, all individuals were required to report their nationality 'strictly according to the truth'. If a person insisted that he or she had two nationalities or no nationality at all, census-takers were required to register a single nationality for that person based on his or her 'maternal language'.[80] In the event that census-takers or local officials disputed a person's claim to be German, local political authorities were empowered to reclassify him or her based on an investigation of objective characteristics. Declaring a 'false' nationality on the census was punishable with fines up to 10,000 crowns and three months' imprisonment. Typically, offenders were fined between 50 and 300 crowns, the latter almost a week's salary for some workers. Adolf Adámek, a miner from Hultschin/Hlučín who earned 49 crowns a day, was fined 300 crowns for declaring himself German after local officials had concluded that he was 'objectively' a Czechoslovak. There is no record of any citizen ever being sanctioned for falsely registering as a Czechoslovak national.[81]

These corrections were widespread. In the small town of Bruntál/Freudenthal, for example, fifty-two people were summoned for investigation under suspicion of having falsely declared themselves German in 1921.[82] The procedure for changing a person's national affiliation on the census directly followed a model that had been fine-tuned through the Lex Perek. In the town of Brawin/Bravín in Silesia, for example, Sophie Broßmann, a 38-year-old woman, declared herself a German on census day. The census-taker objected that she was really a Czech, but Broßmann refused to yield. As a result, she was invited to the municipal office in Bílovec/Wagstadt for further investigation. Over the course of three interrogations, she answered questions about her language use, origins, education, family, social life and other so-called objective markers of nationality. Czech officials insisted that Frau Broßman had been born in a Czech village, attended a Czech elementary school, had Czech parents, and that her sisters had declared themselves Czechs on the census. Broßman, however, countered that she had been born in a bilingual town. Her father's German nationality was proven by his German last name (Schindler), she insisted, and she had always attended German schools. Agitated, she finally declared that she 'always was and always will be German', and stormed out of the office in a huff. Shortly thereafter she was notified in writing that she had been changed to a Czechoslovak anyway, and was subject to a

[79] This strategy was successful. For statistics see František Friedmann, *Mravnost či oportunita? Několik poznámek k anketě acad. spolku 'Kapper' a českožidovství a sionismu* (Prague: Sionistický výbor pracovní pro Čechy a Moravu, 1927), 24–6, 36.

[80] See Vládní nařízení č. 256/1920, 8 April 1920 and č. 592/1920, 20 Ocbober 1920 in *Sbirka zákonů a nařízení státu československu* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství, 1920), 1503–6.

[81] Oddělení spisovny 11, č. 57, podčislo 15, Carton 251, MV-SR, NA.

[82] Oddělení spisovny 11, č. 58, podčislo 4, Carton 251, MV-SR, NA.

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fine of 50 crowns and two days' imprisonment for having declared a false nationality on the census and for her impertinent behaviour during the interrogations.[83]

At least 1,000 citizens who were reclassified as Czechoslovaks in 1921 appealed against their respective fines and prison sentences all the way to the ministry of the interior, and many appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court. These cases represent only a fraction of the individuals who were forcibly classified as Czechs, since a legal appeal was a costly and time-consuming undertaking. These appeals reveal that, as in Alsace, many Czechoslovak citizens did not share the state's rigid definition of nationality. Many were shocked to learn that they no longer enjoyed the right freely to choose a national affiliation. In Litovel/Littau, Terezie Bürglová protested against her classification as a Czech in the name of individual rights, challenging the descent-based conception of the nation on which the census law was based. Although she admitted that her mother had been a Czech, she maintained that 'no regulation . . . stipulates that nationality should be decided based on racial belonging rather than the personal will of an independent individual'. Her classification as a Czech by the state, she argued, represented nothing less than an 'unjustified infringement of the personal liberty of the individual'.[84] Emmanuel Biskup, a store clerk, agreed that nationality was a matter of conviction:

> The decision about nationality is an individual right, and ancestry and race are irrelevant . . . Children do not have to have the same nationality as their parents, they can profess the nationality that corresponds to their education and calling, even if they decide that they are English, French, or Hottentots.[85]

The ministry of the interior, however, disagreed, and formulaically rejected each appeal. The plaintiffs were each informed that their 'subjective' feelings about their nationalities were irrelevant. In the case of Magdalena Brhlehová, for example, the ministry responded, 'The plaintiff here believes that she can declare any incorrect nationality that pleases her, but the official census records controllable, objective characteristics, and not subjective opinions and personal convictions'. Ludvík Beneš's claim to be German was likewise dismissed, with the firm admonishment that 'it is completely irrelevant what the plaintiff wishes or feels'.[86]

These conflicts between the state and its citizens stemmed both from the fundamental ambiguity of national belonging in bilingual regions, and the fact that the 1920 census law supplied no clear legal definition of 'nationality'. In 1930, lawmakers returned to the drawing board, and attempted to define nationality with greater precision. In an unusual concession to the nationally indifferent population, the Czechoslovak State Statistical Office even proposed that citizens be permitted to declare themselves 'without nationality' (*bez národnosti*) or 'of unknown nationality' (*národnost neznáma*), just as it was possible to register a lack of religious affiliation on the census. 'Not all people have national feelings or consciousness, or the desire to

[83] Ibid., podčislo 7, carton 251, MV-SR, NA.
[84] Ibid., podčislo 38, carton 251, MV-SR, NA.
[85] Ibid., podčislo 44, carton 251, MV-SR, NA.
[86] Ibid., podčislo 19, podčislo 17, podčislo 28, podčislo 38, all in carton 251, MV-SR, NA.

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belong to a specific national community', officials in the Statistical Office conceded. But this view was harshly rejected by Czech nationalists. Activists in the Czech National Council, an umbrella organisation for Czech voluntary associations and political parties, warned that allowing citizens to opt out of the nation on the census would 'make it impossible to obtain a clear overview of the national composition of the state, wearing away at its borders'.[87] The Council's viewpoint prevailed, and the census law ratified in June 1930 included the most precise guidelines to date for national classification:

> Nationality is determined based on maternal language. A different nationality, other than that which corresponds to an individual's maternal language, may be declared only in cases in which the person counted does not speak his maternal language with his family or in his household and is also completely fluent in the language of the declared nationality.[88]

Local officials quickly learned and applied these rules during the 1930 census. In Brno, for example, Josef Miček was summoned for interrogation when he refused to allow a census-taker to change him into a Czechoslovak. Shortly after the investigation concluded, an official letter informed Miček that his appeal had been rejected, explaining:

> Your father was called Miček, and he was of Czech origins, as his name demonstrates. Your mother Antonie was born Carblová. Based on her name, she was also certainly of Czech origins. According to the testimony of the witness Josef Tyleček, your mother was a Czech and didn't speak German. You admit that you speak Czech fluently. Since you attended the German schools in Frýdek, the only logical conclusion is that you learned Czech from your parents, therefore your maternal language is Czech. That is not changed by the fact that you now belong to a Communist organization and are also currently a member of the German organization Volksbund deutscher Katholiken and other German Catholic organizations, as you claim in your appeal.[89]

Miček had plenty of company. In Brno/Brünn alone in 1930, a total of 3,718 individuals were reclassified by census officials. Government officials in the State Statistical Office became suspicious of the results, and hired a handwriting expert to scrutinise the entire city's census forms. The handwriting expert determined that the census in Brno/Brünn had been systematically falsified by four agitators, most likely officials in the city statistical office. The Czechoslovak ministry of the interior was forced to conclude, 'On the basis of this investigation there is reason to believe that the census in Brno was intentionally and systematically manipulated, with the goal of reducing the German minority to below 20 per cent of the population'. Not coincidentally, in Czechoslovakia political districts with a 20 per cent linguistic minority were obliged to guarantee a host of minority-rights protections, such as the right to use the minority language in public offices and courts.[90]

[87] Sčitání lidu 1930, Memo from the NRČ to the State Statistical Office and the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 16 May 1930, carton 183, NRČ, NA.

[88] Vládní nařízení ze dne 26 června 1930 o sčitání lidu v roce 1930, *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství, 1930), 480.

[89] Memo to Josef Mičkov in Frýdek, Odděleni spisovny 8, č. 247, podčislo 19, carton 2995, MV-SR, NA.

[90] Odděleni spisovny 8, č. 249, podčislo 16, carton 2996, MV-SR, NA.

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In Czechoslovakia, as in Alsace, the minority problem often entailed disputes about what it meant to be German or Czech. Who belonged to what nation, and who had the right to decide: the individual or the state? National classification represented a strategy for policing the boundaries of the nation in a context in which individuals could slip easily between national communities. Ultimately, however, the stakes in Czechoslovakia were very different from those in France. In Brno, being classified as a German might carry potential advantages, thanks to the minority rights protections anchored in both domestic and international law. Citizens therefore battled with state officials for the right to be counted as a member of the German minority. Czechoslovak officials, meanwhile, used forcible national classification in order to avoid their obligation to uphold minority rights protection, and to prevent potential 'Czechoslovaks' from becoming Germans. In Alsace-Lorraine in 1918, minority rights protection was unheard of, thanks in part to France's status as a great power and its reputation as a model democracy and nation-state. Being saddled with the Carte D guaranteed nothing but social stigmatisation and economic and political discrimination. French officials used classification to punish the German enemy and protect French racial purity, to prevent 'Germans' from becoming French. It is therefore not surprising that Alsatians fought to be included in the French majority in 1918, rather than to be recognised as members of a German minority, although the inter-war autonomist movement would later make demands on the French state for greater accommodation for Alsatian regional differences. East and west were different, but not because France lacked minorities, while Czechoslovakia strained under the weight of its diversity. Rather, distinct local histories and international hierarchies enabled France to make self-declared Frenchmen into Germans after 1918, while Czechoslovakia forcibly made Germans into Czechoslovaks.

Conclusions

As former east European communist states have begun to join the European Union (EU), debates about minority rights once again occupy an important place in discussions of democratisation. The double standards institutionalised in 1918 have also resurfaced in new forms. As a condition for membership, the EU and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have pressured east European governments to guarantee standards of minority rights that are not necessarily upheld by west European member states. The governments of Latvia and Estonia, for example, have been pressured to speed up the process for granting citizenship to members of their Russian minorities. Turkish-Germans, meanwhile, continue to face restrictive barriers to citizenship.[91] Similarly, while the EU has

[91] Germany's 2000 citizenship law automatically grants citizenship to children of non-citizens born on German soil, if at least one parent has the status of permanent resident and has been residing in Germany for at least eight years. Such children are required to apply to retain citizenship status at the age of 23, and may not have dual citizenship. Germany's naturalisation law requires prospective citizens to live in Germany for eight years and take 650 hours of German language instruction.

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pressured new east European member states to guarantee better treatment of their Roma populations, there has been little intervention in Italy or other west European member states where Roma also face considerable obstacles to civic inclusion, including police violence, barriers to education, employment discrimination and limits on mobility. By some measures, the Muslim community in France, the Turkish community in Germany, the Afro-Caribbean community in Britain and the Roma community in Italy may face as much political and economic discrimination as minorities in eastern Europe. As in inter-war Europe, however, the sovereignty of 'old' states remains more sacred than the sovereignty of 'new' democracies.[92]

The history of the French and Czechoslovak borderlands after the First World War helps us to rethink the divisions between eastern and western Europe that remain entrenched in our historical imagination and political institutions. Understandings of the 'minority problem' in 1918 reflected transnational hierarchies that pervaded European politics. These hierarchies positioned France, in opposition to eastern Europe, as a paragon of both national unity and democracy, enabling a radical and racist approach to the German minority problem in Alsace-Lorraine. A view of the 'minority problem' as a peculiar, east European pathology undermined the minority treaties, and buttressed the problematic assumption that peace and democracy are dependent on cultural homogeneity. This latter assumption continues to inform scholarly and popular accounts of Europe's twentieth century. In his recent history of post-war Europe, Tony Judt has argued,

> The continent of Europe was once an intricate, overwoven tapestry of overlapping languages, religions, communities, and nations ... Between 1914 and 1945, however, that Europe was smashed into the dust. The tidier Europe that emerged, blinking, into the second half of the twentieth century had fewer loose ends. Thanks to war, occupation, boundary adjustments, expulsions, and genocide, almost everybody now lived in their own country, among their own people ... Since 1989 it has become clearer ... just how much the stability of post-war Europe rested upon the accomplishments of Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler.[93]

Many historians would dispute the notion that post-war Europe was 'tidy' or homogenous, given the waves of guest workers, displaced persons, immigrants, refugees, former colonial subjects and other cultural, linguistic and national minorities scattered across the continent after 1945, creating new kinds of complexity and diversity. Judt's narrative, moreover, reflects the assumption that linguistic and religious diversity are intrinsic sources of instability, that the nation-state is the only hope for peace and prosperity, and that people are 'among their own' only in homogenous nation-states. He confuses causes and effects. Linguistic diversity did not lead inevitably to nationalist conflict in Europe. As the history of national ascription in Europe's borderlands reveals, national minorities across Europe were at least partly created and consolidated, even after 1918, through the classifying projects of

[92] Michael Johns, 'Do as I Say, not as I Do: the European Union, Eastern Europe, and Minority Rights', *East European Politics and Societies*, 17, 4 (2003), 682–99. For Minority at Risk data see http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/ (last visited 3 August 2007).

[93] Tony Judt, *Post-war: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 8–9.

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nation-states.[94] The radical practices of national classification, denunciations, purges and ethnic cleansing that caused so much instability and violence in twentieth-century Europe were not simply the inevitable consequence of age-old antagonisms. On the contrary, they often resulted from the ambiguity of national loyalties in borderland regions, as nationalising states attempted to segregate citizens from subjects, and individuals attempted to prove their own loyalties to new regimes. Far from 'resolving' the problem of difference in Europe, Hitler took practices of national classification to new extremes. Classification soon served a hierarchical racial order, guaranteeing German hegemony and distinguishing those who had a right to live from those who did not.

France and Czechoslovakia, typically cited as models of republican democracy in inter-war Europe, introduced new practices of national classification in the name of subduing a threatening German minority. Citizens protested and participated in national classification in both contexts, negotiating with officials over what it meant to be French, Czech and German. National classification after the First World War nonetheless represented a critical step in the gradual transformation of national identity from a political choice to a 'racial' destiny. The creation of nation-states was not a natural, inevitable, organic or peaceful process; even after 1918, in Europe's most celebrated democracies, many individuals became Germans, French, or Czechoslovaks only through the force of law.

[94] For further discussion on the creation of minorities in Europe after 1918 see Karl F. Bahm, 'The Inconveniences of Nationality: German Bohemians, the Disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Attempt to Create a "Sudeten German" Identity', *Nationalities Papers*, 27, 3 (1999), 375–405; John Swanson, 'Nation, Volk, Minderheit, Volksgruppe: Die deutsche Minderheit in Ungarn in den Begriffskämpfen der Zwischenkriegsära', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* 55, 4 (2006), 526–47; Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 55–78; Theodora Dragostinova, 'Between two Motherlands: Struggles for Nationhood among the Greeks in Bulgaria, 1906–49', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 2006; Winson Chu, '"Volksgemeinschaften unter sich": German Minorities and Regionalism in Poland, 1918–39', in Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer and Mark Roseman, eds., *German History from the Margins*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 104–26; Brown, *Biography of No Place*, 18–51.

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