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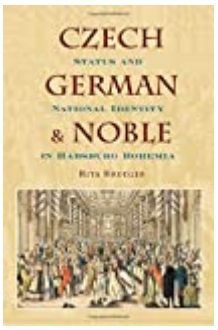

Rita Krueger. *Czech, German, and Noble: Status and National Identity in Habsburg Bohemia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 290 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-532345-0.

Nancy M. Wingfield. *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007. xviii + 353 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-02582-0.

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A Rumpus in Bohemia

Both books under review offer solid, detailed studies of nationality and identity in the Bohemian lands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) of the Habsburg monarchy. Rita Krueger examines the contribution of the aristocracy to forging a Czech national consciousness between the accession of Joseph II in 1780 and the revolutions of 1848-49. Nancy M. Wingfield's more wide-ranging survey of Czech-German relations focuses on a number of defining issues that showed, between 1880 and 1945, how each side staked its claim to the Bohemian lands, a bitter tussle that the Czechs ultimately "won."

Krueger's thesis is arresting in its originality. She argues that at least some of the Bohemian aristocracy were instrumental in shaping the "national awakening" of the Czechs in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Contrary to received opinion, the Bohemian nobility had not been Germanized in the aftermath of defeat at the White Mountain in 1620. Indeed, many of the

great aristocratic estates remained in the hands of Czech families, even if some of them became cosmopolitan and hence ethnically "deracinated." The real split between the Bohemian nobility (and the diet that represented their interests) and the Habsburgs came as a result of the centralizing reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, who sought progressively to neuter the diet in favor of a unitary imperial administration. The Bohemian nobles' tendency, until 1848, to proclaim the unique historical identity of the Bohemian kingdom in order to resist centralization, stems from this period. In the process, according to Krueger, "the Czech nature of Bohemia became absolutely central" (p. 220). If, from the viewpoint of these cultivated Enlightenment minds, this claim was not at first a vehicle for Czech nationalism, it eventually became so.

Who were these nobles who, wittingly or otherwise, initiated "the transition to a nationalized society" (Krueger, p. 221)? Krueger's focus here is necessarily a narrow one, for in a largely illiterate society the number of individuals equipped to play such a role was tiny. In late-eighteenth-century Bohemia, as in most of Europe, the nobility was the principal, if not the only, class capable of creating a public dialogue. The very concept of a "public space" (both Krueger and Wingfield are clearly influenced by the theory of JÃ¼rgen Habermas in this regard) came about because of these individuals' roles as artistic connoisseurs and patrons and as founders of scientific or other societies, as well as by their endowment of public institutions.

Krueger concentrates on the reluctant cleric and later scientist Count Kaspar Sternberg (1761-1838); his older brother Joachim; their cousin Francis Sternberg; and a number of other, walk-on figures such as Johann Rudolf Czernin, Georg Buquoy, Francis Anton Nostitz, Francis Joseph KinskÃ½, and Francis Anton Kolowrat, Clemens von Metternich's archrival. Kaspar Sternberg, however, receives the bulk of Krueger's attention, in part because of Sternberg's detailed autobiography, published posthumously in 1868 by FrantiÅ¡ek PalackÃ½, his correspondence with J. W. von Goethe, and other writings. Other primary sources used in Krueger's analysis, including numerous published and unpublished records left by key figures, strengthen her argument. The interesting aspect about all of these aristocrats is that, although their primary language was usually German, they were generally scions of old Czech families dating back to the Middle Ages. To a man (no women), they were educated, enlightened, cosmopolitan, and hardly the stuff of which nationalists were made.

Yet, the "imagined community" of the Czech nation became possible in the slowly evolving network of contact built up between these men. Much of this exchange of ideas, in a world disrupted by the French Revolution, did not fall directly into the realm of political interest. On the contrary, Kaspar Sternberg made clear in his autobiography that, as early as 1795, when Prussia abandoned its Austrian alliance against revolutionary France to devote its energies to the partition of Poland, he "decided to live less for the outer life and to dedicate [him]self to the sciences" (cited in Krueger, p. 84). Subsequent events reinforced Sternberg's commitment to this renunciation of politics. Such events included the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the Napoleonic Wars, and the long post-1815 reaction in the Habsburg monarchy and elsewhere. Sternberg and his fellow aristocrats turned inward, since purely scholarly activity was effectively the only forum left for meaningful intellectual exchange. For instance, learned societies such as the Bohemian Society of Sciences, founded in 1784, continued to serve as platforms for the promotion of scientific and historical knowledge. Patronage of the arts, especially theater, was made possible by the establishment of the Estates Theater in 1781, later renamed the Nostitz Theater after its eponymous founder, and by the Society for the Patriotic Friends of the Arts, started in 1796 by Francis Sternberg and his friends, many of whom lent their private collections to its new gallery. Aristocrats like Czernin and Johann Rudolf Chotek, adopting the latest theories about gardens and landscaping from England for their private estates, influenced the growing perception of green spaces as public places, which encouraged sociability and public health, a trend famously endorsed by Joseph II's decision to open royal parks like the Prater and SchÃ¶nbrunn to the common people. Even after 1815, in the depths of the Metternichian reaction, aristocrats like Czernin and Buquoy could still travel abroad, especially to Britain, and bring back different attitudes towards technology as well as the technology itself. Thus, Buquoy imported the first–wooden!–steam-engine into Bohemia in 1806. Such personal engagement sowed the seeds of a much wider involvement. The aging Kaspar Sternberg himself, in addition to donating his and the deceased Joachim's scientific collections to the National Museum in 1818, even promoted actively the expansion of railways, becoming the president of a joint-stock company for that purpose in 1827.

The result, as Krueger convincingly demonstrates, was that Bohemia's aristocracy acted as cultural bellwethers, despite their reservations about the creation of a

"public space." By the 1840s, with a new generation of decidedly nationalistic non-nobles like Joseph DobrovskÃ½ and PalackÃ½ (who had started out as tutors or librarians in noble households) finding their voice, the aristocracy was clearly divided between two camps: conservatives, loyal to the dynasty, and in favor of only limited political change; and those nationalists willing to identify Bohemia primarily with its Czech majority. The majority of Bohemian nobles chose dynastic loyalty in 1848, thus cementing their subsequent reputation as "anational." Despite this perception, Krueger argues, their activities in the preceding couple of generations had prepared the way for a new Czech national consciousness, as opposed to a Bohemia-centered *Landespatriotismus*.

Wingfield's study presents a painstaking, extremely detailed examination of the flashpoints in Czech-German relations, based on meticulous research in archival and newspaper sources. The primary focus falls not on the political conflict in the Bohemian lands, although early chapters deal with the crisis over the Badeni Language Ordinances of 1897, and the argument regarding a Czech-language university in overwhelmingly German-speaking BrÃ¼nn (now Brno), the capital of Moravia. In general, Wingfield concentrates on the battle for a public space, waged via public ceremonies, public monuments and institutions, and visual and even aural symbolism such as street signs and (in the interwar period) the language of films. In the Habsburg era, these culture wars raged back and forth. The German minority lost some ground in Prague and, most strikingly, in the Bohemian diet, but by and large held their own in provincial towns like BrÃ¼nn, where retention of an unequal suffrage right through 1918 meant that Germans still held a preponderant influence at the municipal level. The balance shifted in 1918 with the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. Overnight, the Germans, always a numerical minority in the Bohemian lands, found themselves at the receiving end of determined efforts by Czechs to dominate and "Czechify" public space, even in areas where German-speakers formed the local majority. After the brief but tragic interlude of the National Socialist-dominated "Protectorate" of Bohemia and Moravia (1939-45), during which the Germanness of these lands was once more stridently but vainly asserted, the whole grim saga ended with the physical expulsion of Germans after 1945.That point marked the Bohemian lands as Czech. This depressing story illustrates the juggernaut-like progress that nationalism has made since the nineteenth century.

Wingfield devotes a chapter to the peculiar way in which commemorative statues of Emperor Joseph II in the German-speaking communities of the Bohemian lands gradually became an occasion for nationalist disagreement. The Czechs opposed or derided these monuments as symbols of Habsburg oppression, and Germans increasingly treated them as national symbols that proved the German character of the locality in question. Another chapter describes how the festivities that accompanied Francis Joseph's fiftieth and sixtieth jubilees, in 1898 and 1908, became the object of unseemly and even violent squabbles, with ostentatious demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, much chauvinistic singing and breaking of glass, and more than a few broken heads. In the interwar republic, the tide flowed in a generally anti-German direction. Czech Legionaries and other nationalists not only tore down symbols of the Habsburg *ancien rÃ©gime*, including many of the monuments to Joseph II, but recruited the state itself for the erection of monuments and other symbols of Czechness in German-language communities. In response, Germans assumed a newly manufactured "Sudeten" identity, despite the fact that the Sudeten area was only one of several German-speaking enclaves in Czechoslovakia, and after 1933 turned increasingly towards Nazi Germany for salvation.

Most interesting is the chapter on the "politics of sound," in which Wingfield documents the hostility aroused among Czechs by the preponderance of German-language films in Czechoslovak cinemas after the advent of "talkies." Given the paucity of Czech-language films, in an environment where the Czechoslovak film industry was in any case dependent on the investment of German studios, not a lot was to be done about this situation except for Czech nationalists to close down cinemas temporarily through threats of violence and demonstrations in September 1930. As the Germans' sense of beleaguerment heightened in the 1930s, their attachment to such proof of national identity as folk costume, or *Tracht*, became more demonstrative, and clumsy efforts by the Czechoslovak authorities to ban such costumes, for instance white stockings, only exacerbated hostilities. In a rather rushed final chapter, Wingfield discusses the extent to which the post-1945 governments of Czechoslovakia, both non-communist and communist, not only effected the physical removal of Germans, but also worked to erase visual traces of the former German presence.

Each of these books, in its different way, makes a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature on the history of the Bohemian lands. Both are filled with details and insights for the discerning reader. Neither is an

easy read, especially for historians less comfortable with typical assumptions made by cultural historians–for example, that culture can be "consumed," or that spaces, organizations, and even sound function as "sites" of concepts (Wingfield, p. 285). Wingfield's insistence on giving both Czech and German place names for most of her book clutters the text, and the publisher should have included a bibliography in a book as densely referenced as hers. In sum, however, Krueger and Wingfield are to be congratulated on their erudition as well as the originality of their research. Any academic institution pretending to a comprehensive library on east central European history should include both books in its collection.