Rewriting history is a favorite activity in most nation-forming processes, whether they are nations from above or nations from below. In the Czech and to a lesser extent in the Slovak case, the interpretation of history has played a major role in defining the contents of national identity. A brief outline of the history of the two nations may thus be useful for readers not familiar with central facts. The purpose of this chapter is mainly to provide an overview of the periods and events of Czech and Slovak history that are important for understanding the rest of the narrative. Thus, this account will be highly selective in emphasis.2

It is not always easy to distinguish between history the way it "really" was, and history the way it is presented. There are two traps that should be avoided. One is to present the history of nations as if they were nations from the very dawn of time, the other is to presume that national identity suddenly appeared out of nowhere at the threshold of the modern era. National historians of the 19th century have often been accused of the former; many contemporary scholars are guilty of the latter. We need to distinguish between an early awareness of being a culturally separate group, confined to a (small) elite, and the subsequent development of a national identity and its diffusion to the masses.

National identities are historically constituted, which means they are contingent on the specific historical circumstances that brought them about. Under other circumstances Czechs and Slovaks might have been one nation, or they might not have been nations at all. Let us turn to the history that shaped these two nations.

**The coming of the Slavs and their first states**

Because of the lack of indigenous sources, it is not clear exactly when the first Slavs arrived in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, nor where they came from. On the basis of archeological data and Roman sources, the forefathers of the Czechs and Slovaks have been located in the area around the Great Migrations of 500–600 AD. Smaller groups may have been there already in the first or second century AD. It is believed that they came from the area between the Carpathian mountains and the Baltic, or further east. Archeological data show that the area had been inhabited by a multitude of groups long before the arrival of the first Slavs.

The Western Slavs, often referred to as Wends (Venedae) or Slavs (Sclavi) by Roman sources, were already at this point a separate group, different from the Southern and the Eastern Slavs.³ They were not united politically, but divided into several clans or tribes. It was the tribe that occupied the central area around present-day Prague that eventually gave its name to all Czechs. As for the divide between Czechs and Slovaks, there is no evidence that they were at that time separate peoples, although it is likely that they were organized in separate tribes.

The first Slav state⁴ was the state of Samo, a Frankish merchant who united Slav tribes in the face of an Avar attack around 623 AD. The core area is believed to have been southern Moravia, but the exact extent is not known. It fell apart after Samo's death in 658.

The next Slav state is more important, especially because of the emphasis it has been given in Czechoslovak and Slovak historiography. This is the so-called Great Moravia of the 9th century, alternately presented as the first Czechoslovak state and as the first Slovak state.⁵ In geographical extension it obviously was the first state that, at least for a while, roughly covered the area that was to become Czechoslovakia more than 1000 years later. It appeared on the scene around 830 under the ruler Mojmír, who was followed by Rastislav (846–70), and Svätopluk (870–94). The core area of the state was Southern Moravia, but it later expanded to include parts of present-day Slovakia, Bohemia, Silesia as well as a part of the Hungarian plain. Great Moravia reached its maximum extension under Svätopluk.

During the 830s Mojmír conquered the lands of Pribina, a local ruler in the Nitra area. Whether he was a Moravian nobleman or the ruler of a separate tribe is still a matter of dispute. Pribina is known for introducing Christianity to the area. The Archbishop of Salzburg consecrated the first church in Nitra between 821 and 836, supposedly in 833. Christianity was first brought to present-day Czech and Slovak areas by Frankish (Germanic) missionaries, using Latin. Rastislav requested missionaries who could preach the Gospel in a Slavic tongue.

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⁴ States in the modern sense of the word developed only towards the end of the Middle Ages – some would say as late as 1648 (the Peace of Westphalia). See Anthony Black: Political thought in Europe 1250–1450 (1992:186–91).
⁵ According to Richard Marsina et al. it was not the first Czechoslovak state because the Bohemian Czechs were part of it only for a short time, and besides they considered it as forcefully imposed. On the other hand it was not a purely Slovak state either, but more a Slovak-Moravian state. See R. Marsina, V. Čičaj, D. Kováč, L. Lipták: Slovenské dejiny (1992:33). Labels like Slovak, Moravian or Czechoslovak are of course imposed afterwards; Great Moravia was a Slav state.
Upon receiving no answer from Rome, he turned to the Byzantine emperor Michael III, who sent the bilingual (Greek and a Macedonian or Bulgarian dialect) brothers Constantin (Cyril) and Methodius. They devised the Glagolitic alphabet and the first Slav literary language (Old Church Slavonic), sometimes referred to as Old Bulgarian. The cultural legacy bequeathed by Constantin and Methodius was a lasting one: Old Church Slavonic provided the foundation for literacy and education among the Slavs of Eastern Europe, including the Czechs and Slovaks. It was, for instance, the language of the first legends of the Czech St. Václav.

Constantin and Methodius spent the years between 863 and 867 in Great Moravia. The object of their mission was not to convert the masses, but to educate the local clergy. Through their educational activities, the translation of parts of the Bible, and the founding of a Slav liturgy they established the basis for a church organization in Great Moravia. A few months before he died in 869, Constantin entered a monastery in Rome, where he took the name Cyril, while Methodius returned to Pannonia. The struggle over the church language between the Slav and the Latin camp was temporary won by the former when Great Moravia got its own archdiocese in 880 and Methodius became the first archbishop. After the death of Methodius in 885, the papal decision was reversed, and Frankish missionaries regained the upper hand. Yet, despite their combined efforts, paganism was still dominant when Great Moravia was conquered.

After the death of Svátopluk in 894, Great Moravia and its new ruler Mojmír II ran into trouble from two sides. Mojmír II lost control over Bohemia to a local prince of Přemyslid stock (Spytihněv); and, after he lost several decisive battles against the Magyars around 904–05, Great Moravia was doomed. Mojmír II died in battle against the Magyars in 907, which spelled the death of that state as well. The southern parts of present-day Slovakia came under direct Magyar rule, while Moravia lost its ruling dynasty and much of its church organization. This also meant that what was to become the Czech core area gravitated westwards.

### Czechs under Přemyslid rule

The first Přemyslid to rule the Bohemian Czechs was prince Bořivoj I, who made Prague the center of the embryonic Bohemian state. He and his wife Ludmila were baptized around 870–80, probably by Methodius, and he accepted the suzerainty of Svátopluk in 889. After Bořivoj's death in 890, Svátopluk ruled Bohemia directly. It is not clear exactly when the next ruler of Přemyslid stock, Spytihněv, took office (in 894 or later), but historians agree that he was succeeded by Vratislav (915–21) and his wife Drahomíra (921–24), who ruled in the name of her under-age son, prince Václav I. The latter was canonized after his death and is normally referred to as Václav the Saint in Czech history.

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6 Scholars disagree on whether Old Church Slavonic was oriented towards Moravian, since this is the area where it was first used, or based on a Macedonian/Bulgarian dialect of the missionaries' native area. The latter seems most likely. See Henrik Birnbaum: Aspects of the Slavic Middle Ages and Slavic Renaissance culture (1991:532 pp.)

7 Archeological evidence indicates that the Slav forefathers of the Czechs and Slovaks remained out of touch with Christianity for the entire eight century. See Urban (1991:15).
The historical Václav ruled for eleven years at the most. He was born around 907, and ascended the throne at the age of seventeen. Whether he died in 929 or 935 is a matter of dispute, but he was murdered in Stará Boleslav by his own brother Boleslav I, apparently for reasons of power. Václav is credited with consolidating Přemyslid power in the face of Magyar and Saxon threats, even though he did swear allegiance to the Saxon king after a decisive battle in 929. He is also known as an ardent Christian, bent on converting his people, and in honor of the Saxon patron St. Vitus he had a church built at the royal castle Hradčany, in Prague. After his death, he became the patron saint of Bohemia and a symbol of Czech statehood.

Legends about him are many, and it seems that the cult of Václav started already under Boleslav, after Václav was laid to rest in his own church of St. Vitus. The first Old Church Slavonic legend about Václav the Saint appeared as early as in the first half of the 10th century, i.e. shortly after his death, followed by a host of Latin legends. Václav seems to have been an extraordinary ruler for his time, in that he knew how to read and write. According to legend, he learned both from his grandmother Ludmila. Legend also has it that Václav's mother Drahomíra had Ludmila killed because she had too great influence on him. In the legends Václav is presented as the pious Christian, a martyr who went to his brother knowing he would be killed. Drahomíra represents paganism against the proto-martyr Ludmila. To the English-speaking world, he is known as "Good King Wenceslaus" of the Christmas carol.

Boleslav I (935–c. 972), known in chronicles as the Cruel, is generally forgiven for killing Václav because of his abilities as a warrior. He engaged in a long-lasting conflict with Otto I (936–73), yet sided with him against the pagan Magyars in a decisive battle near Augsburg in 955. As a result of that battle, the Přemyslids acquired control of Moravia, Silesia and parts of present-day Slovakia (in the west) and Poland (the area around Kraków). This expansion was linked to the diffusion of Christianity. During the reign of his son Boleslav II (the Pious, 972–99) the first monastery was established in 973, again at Hradčany, which became the center of the cult of Ludmila. At the same time the Pope agreed to establish a bishopric in Prague. Boleslav II also finished the act of uniting of the Czechs under direct Přemyslid rule.

Towards the turn of the century, the Přemyslids got competition from Poland under the Piast dynasty and Hungary under Arpad rule. Boleslav III (999–1002, 1003) lost most of what his grandfather had gained. It was his brother Oldřich who reconquered Moravia from Poland around 1019, and thus established the borders that were to last until modern times. In order to prevent the state from falling apart and to resolve the power struggle between the members of the dynasty, Oldřich's son Břetislav I (1035–55) in 1054 enforced the principle of seniority, according to which the oldest Přemyslid would inherit the throne. This law was abolished in 1216, after which the primogeniture principle (from father to eldest son) was valid.

The first Czech prince to become crowned king was Vratislav II (1061–92), in 1085. The next was Vladislav II (1140–72), who received his title in 1158. The Royal title was, however, bestowed on them personally. It became hereditary only when Přemysl Otakar I (1197–1230) was made king in 1198. This also signaled a more independent position for the Czech ruler, confirmed by the Papacy in 1204, and then by the Sicilian Golden Bull of Friedrich II in 1212.
The last century of Přemyslid rule was in many ways a Golden Age, not least in terms of territorial expansion. Austria first came under Czech rule in 1246. Under the reign of Přemysl II Otakar (1253–78) the Czech kingdom expanded in several directions. In 1260 he won Styria in a battle with the Hungarian king, in 1266 he received Cheb as dowry for his mother, in 1269 Carinthia and Carniola was added. His war against Rudolf I of Habsburg in 1276 was less of a success, and he had to give up the Alpine regions, Cheb and Austria. He died in battle in Marchfeld (in Austria) in 1278, leaving the throne to his under-age son Václav II (1278–1305). During this period, the power of the nobility increased. Václav II got back Cheb, acquired Silesia, the area around Kraków, and was proclaimed king of Poland in 1300. In 1301 he was offered the Hungarian crown, but let it pass to his son Václav III (1305–06). The male line of the Přemyslids died out when Václav III was murdered in 1306.

During the 400 years of (male) Přemyslid rule, the Czech lands underwent great changes. Christianity was firmly established by the turn of the 12th century. The interior was gradually colonized, feudal relations were established and market places developed into agglomerations of people. The first towns were founded under the kings Přemysl Otakar I (1197–1230) and Václav I (1230–53). The establishment of town privileges was closely linked to two other developments: the mining and processing of precious metals, mainly silver and gold, and the German colonization that accompanied it. Mining was also an important foundation for Czech Royal power. As early as in the first half of the 13th century rich silver mines were opened in the areas of Jihlava and Havlíčkův Brod, while mining in Kutná Hora started after the middle of the century. Also German merchants, craftsmen and artisans came in large numbers.

The German migration to the Czech lands during the 13th century was concentrated in time and mainly confined to town communities, which meant that the newcomers were not readily assimilated into the Czech population. Major long-term effects were stabilization and legal delimitation of feudal relations through the (German) town privileges, urbanization of the Czech lands, and cultural and linguistic division. The Germans formed a patrician class in the towns, thus comprising culturally separate islands in an otherwise Slav population.

What about Czech consciousness of being a culturally separate group? The chronicle of Kosmas (c. 1045–1125), a Canon and later Dean at the St. Vitus chapter of Prague, indicates that such an awareness did exist, at least among the nobility. Kosmas’ *Chronica Boemorum* was written towards the end of his life, between approximately 1119 and his death in 1125. Here the legends about forefather Czech (Praotec Čech) and Libuše and Přemysl are presented for the first time (see Appendix A); Kosmas also put the finishing touches on the cult of Holy Václav. He sided with the Czech rulers against all foreign enemies, including the Holy Roman Empire and the Poles. But in the conflict between the bishop of Prague and the ruler, Kosmas sided with the bishop. Thus, the fact that a certain Czech awareness existed by no means implies that it was the dominant identity, or that it was very widespread. It is quite obvious that Kosmas' primary loyalty was to the Church and not to any Czech "nation."
The so-called Dalimil chronicle is the oldest chronicle written in the Czech language, probably by a man of noble origin, yet the author remains unknown. It was finished between 1310 and 1314. The chronicle was occasioned by the ascension of a ruler of a foreign dynasty to the Czech throne (Jan of Luxembourg, 1310), and reflected the hostility of the Czech nobility to the German patrician class. The author obviously also resented the rulers' habit of taking German princesses as wives: "I would rather marry a Czech peasant girl, than to take a German woman of imperial stock. Everyone's heart follows their language, and therefore my people will not accept a German woman." That is a rather strong statement, considering the gulf in social standing between peasantry and nobility at the time.

**Slovaks under Arpad rule**

The Magyars were originally organized in tribes, but after 950 AD a state gradually formed around two of the strongest tribes. Gejza, a prince of the Arpad dynasty, is known to have ruled from around 972 to 997. Arpad, the founder of the dynasty, had led the Magyars in the battle against Great Moravia. He was known as a fierce warrior, whose descendants were to rule Hungary (including what is today Slovak territory) for three centuries.

The first Arpad to be crowned king (in 1000), after accepting Christianity, was Gejza's son István I (997–1038), known in Slovak history as Štefan. Although he was not a martyr he was canonized after his death, and is also known as István the Saint. The crown of St. István became a symbol of Hungarian statehood, much as the crown of St. Václav was a symbol of Czech statehood. István/Štefan allowed Christianity to spread throughout his kingdom; he had churches built, and under his reign an archdiocese was erected in Ostrihom (Esztergom). Later, around 1085 a bishopric was re-established in Nitra, almost 200 years after the Great Moravian bishopric (founded in 879) had been discarded. This was to remain the only bishopric exclusively on Slovak soil until 1776, when Maria Theresia founded two more – in Banská Bystrica and in Spiš.

After the arrival of the Magyars towards the end of the 9th century, the original Slav population on the Hungarian plain was gradually assimilated or driven into the mountains. From the many Slavic loan words in Hungarian, especially concerning crafts and agriculture, it has been suggested that the forefathers of the Slovaks and the Magyars had developed a symbiotic relationship. It has also been suggested that the Slovaks Christianized the Magyars. But while some of the missionaries may have come from Nitra, they were not necessarily of Slavic origin. It more likely that a majority were Franks, preaching in Latin. On the other hand, the Czech missionary Vojtěch (St. Adalbert) baptized István I, and is ascribed a role in converting the Magyars. Politically there was no symbiosis: the Magyars were in control.

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8 It was wrongly attributed to a Dalimil Meziříčský, a canon of Boleslav, who is mentioned as a source for the chronicle.


Present-day Slovak territory came under Arpad rule already under István I, after being partly under Czech (Boleslav I, II), and partly under Polish rule. The county (župa) system gradually developed from the 10th century on. By the 14th century, it was fully in place, not to be altered until the 20th century. In retrospect and from a national point of view, the most important effect of this county system was to split the Slavic (Slovak) population of what came to be known as "Upper Hungary" (Hungarian: *Felvidék*) into eleven administrative units. Until the 12th century, Slovak territory (or the part of it that had been under Great Moravian rule) had been regarded as an indivisible principality and had its own coat-of-arms. On the other hand, unlike Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia was not an administrative unit until well after Czechoslovakia was established, and the name *Slovensko* (Slovakia) was first used by Slovak intellectuals in the course of the national revival in the 19th century.

The Arpads consolidated their power under László I (Ladislav, 1077–95) and Kálmán (Koloman, 1095–1114), as well as extending their territory southwards to Croatia, which became part of the Hungarian state through a personal union in 1102. Royal power was at its height under Béla III (1173–96), during whose time Hungary was among the most powerful states in Europe. Later, the balance of power shifted in favor of the nobility, partly because of the unclear succession rules in the Arpad dynasty. After a long struggle, András II (Andrew, Ondrej, 1205–35) was forced to issue the Golden Bull of 1222, which among other things gave the nobility *ius resistendi* – the right to resist Royal power, as well as inalienability and exemption from taxes on property. Through a separate deal in 1234, the Church achieved various economic and judiciary privileges, strengthening its independent position.

The Tartar onslaught of 1240–42 did not affect Slovak territory as much as the central parts of Hungary. Yet, the Tartars did trash the wooden defenses where they came, and as a result the first stone fortresses on Slovak territory were built after they left. Rebuilding the centralized royal power and economic reconstruction of devastated land was a time- and resource-consuming process. King Béla IV (1235–70) thus had to give the nobility free hands in their areas, which strengthened the power of the nobility even more. Moreover, when Béla IV lost Styria to the Czech king Přemysl Otakar II in 1260, a quarrel between Béla and his son István V ensued, resulting in the sharing of power between them in 1264. At this time powerful members of the nobility were able to form states within the state. One of them was Matthias Csák (Matúš Čák, c. 1260–1321), a Hungarian nobleman who ruled the western part of present-day Slovakia, centered on Trenčín. In Slovak legends he is portrayed as a national hero.

As early as in the 12th century, the Arpad rulers of Hungary were among the richest in Europe. The fertility of the Hungarian plain contributed to this in part, but more important was the mining and processing of precious metals that started in the 12th century. In the 11th century the southwestern part of present-day Slovakia had been among the most developed in Hungary. After a temporary eclipse following the Croatian acquisition, Slovak territory again increased in economic importance of in the 13th century as a result of mining activities in places like Banská Štiavnica (silver) and Banská Bystrica (copper). In junction with the gold mine in Kremnica the first mint on Slovak territory was established.
During this period the first Slovak towns were founded (around 30 by the turn of the century), making Slovak territory the most urbanized in Hungary. German colonization played an important part in the development of towns, as privileges were granted to German mining communities. The Arpads also encouraged German settlement in order to defend the frontier against invasions from nomadic tribes. One of the privileges of the German towns was that only Germans could own property, restricting the number of Magyars and Slavs.

The Vlach colonization that took place in several waves between the 14th and the 17th centuries also left an imprint. The Vlachs were a pastoral people who originally came from the eastern parts of the Carpathians. Culturally and linguistically they gradually merged with the Slavic population, but they left a legacy in names of villages and parishes and certain expressions.

When did the Slovaks start to think of themselves as a separate group? According to a strongly nationalist contemporary short history of Slovakia, such awareness formed already under Great Moravia: We are Slovaks, they are Moravians. Stanislav Kirschbaum also suggests that Great Moravia was important: "Great Moravia was, for a millennium, the only state to which the Slovaks could point. Its legacy [...] could not therefore be anything but fundamental for the Slovak nation." This is of course true, but only in the sense that the national awakensers of the 18th and 19th centuries, presenting it as the first Slovak state, could use it to argue the Slovak case against the Magyars. There is no evidence whatsoever to corroborate that the Slovaks had an awareness of being a separate group as early as in the 9th century.

It is even doubtful that such awareness existed in the Middle Ages. Kirschbaum argues that "the Magyar system, because it was more open and more adaptable to local needs than in many areas of Europe, had allowed for the growth of a Slovak national consciousness, in particular in towns and cities. It was the presence of German colonists, their economic activities and the rights that they were granted by the king, [...] that reinforced and helped it to develop." It is of course conceivable that a Slovak consciousness was beginning to form among certain elites, but it is not likely that it was very strong or widespread. For one thing, even though Slovak territory was the most urbanized part of Hungary, the town population was more often than not non-Slavic, and, perhaps more important, the nobility was for the most part Magyar. The dependent, illiterate and non-mobile peasant population was hardly in a position to develop such an identity. Second, although the name Slovák appeared for the first time in 1485, its precise meaning remained vague until the 18th century. This suggest that whatever identity may have existed, was rather diffuse and ill defined. Texts in the vernacular prior to the 14th and 15th centuries are lacking; the lingua franca was Latin.

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Czechs under Luxembourg rule

After the last male Přemysl was murdered, several contenders appeared on the scene. In the end Jan (John) of Luxembourg became Czech king in 1310, after marrying Eliška of Přemysl, daughter of Václav II. This "foreign king" never played any important role in Czech internal affairs. He spent most of his time at the French court, where he had been raised. Meanwhile, the nobility increased their power in collusion with his wife Eliška and with Alžběta, the Polish widow of Václav II. Under Jan's reign, Cheb was definitely added to Czech territory, along with new territories in Silesia. His son Václav (who ruled under the name of Karel) became Margrave of Moravia already in 1334 and co-regent of the Czech lands in 1337.

Karel (Karl IV, 1346–78) has been regarded as one of the greatest Czech kings. He enlarged the territory, chiefly to the north (Lower Lusatia 1368, Brandenburg 1373) and west (Upper Palatinate, 1353). He was elected king of the Holy Roman Empire in July 1346 and became Czech king after his father's death in August that year. In 1355 he was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Through the Golden Bull of 1356, he turned the Czech king into the first among the lay electors of the Holy Roman Empire, while ensuring for Bohemia a status completely independent from the Empire.\(^{15}\) He was married four times, first to a French princess of Valois stock, whom his father chose, then to the daughter of Rudolf II of Palatinate, one of his major opponents, then to the heiress of the last Silesian principality not under Czech rule, and finally to the granddaughter of the Polish king. All were politically advantageous matches.

The reign of Karel was a Golden Age for the Czech lands, economically, culturally and politically. Prague became the center, not only of the Czech kingdom, but also of the Holy Roman Empire. Karel was raised partly at the French court (1323–33) and was fluent in five languages (Czech, French, Italian, German and Latin). Yet, he was well aware of his Přemyslid inheritance, and in his biography *Vita Caroli*, he wrote about the legend of St. Václav. He launched the building of the monumental St. Vitus Cathedral already in 1344, including a chapel around the tomb of St. Václav, and initiated several other impressive projects, including a stone bridge over the Vltava (Moldau) River and the rebuilding of the castle. His former friend and teacher, Pope Clement VI, turned the Prague bishopric into an archdiocese, also in 1344.

Karel was a patron of the arts, literature, the Church, and architecture. Under his reign, Czech developed into a literary language with fixed rules for spelling and grammar, and the first complete Old Czech translation of the Bible was finished with Royal support. In 1348 he founded Prague's New Town and established the first university of Central Europe in Prague (which still carries his name, Charles University). It became the center for higher learning in Central Europe, renown for its high academic level. The students and teachers at the university were originally divided into four "nations" – the Bavarian, the Saxon, the Polish

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\(^{15}\) The Holy Roman Empire (of the German nation) was added under Friedrich III, 1440–93) was a loose confederation of German principalities. The king was elected by a fixed number of electors, among whom was the Bohemian king, but crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire by the Pope. This gave the Papacy a power it did not hesitate to use.
and the Czech. The "foreign nations" thus had predominance over the Czech in controversies. Václav IV (1378–1419) was crowned Czech king already as a two-year-old in 1363 and king of the Holy Roman Empire in 1376, two years before his father's death. He has (perhaps somewhat unfairly) been described as a weak, disinterested or outright lazy king, addicted to alcohol, hunting and magic, and disposed to choleric fits. (According to legend, he died of rage upon receiving the news of the defenestration of the city councilors on July 30th, 1419). He also allegedly kept bad company – mingling with members of the lower nobility.

Circumstances were not exactly favorable for him either. Already in 1380 the nineteen-year-old Václav was faced with the schism between the Pope of Rome and the Pope of Avignon. Unable to take a decisive stand, he lost prestige abroad. The Archbishop of Prague came out strongly in favor of Rome, causing a rift between the Church and Václav that was exploited by the Czech nobility in collusion with Sigismund, his half brother, to take back some of the power that had been lost under Karel. Because of his trouble at home and abroad, Václav IV was deprived of his title as Holy Roman Emperor in 1400. Sigismund, by then king of Hungary, became king of the Holy Roman Empire in 1411, and was crowned emperor in 1433.

On top of all Václav's other troubles, the plague known as the Black Death hit the Czech lands with full impact in 1380, causing the economic conditions to worsen drastically. Having been left almost untouched by the particularly fierce epidemic that had killed half of Europe's population in the years between 1348 and 1352, the Czech lands now had their turn, and between 10 and 15 percent of the population was wiped out. Many of the larger German-speaking towns were especially hard hit, and when dead Germans were replaced by Czechs from smaller towns and villages, these towns became more Czech in composition, especially in Bohemia. This migration also meant that a Czech patrician class developed. It was during this period that Prague's Old Town finally became a Czech town.

**Czechs under Hussism**

The interpretation of "Hussism" was a central point of disagreement in the debate over the meaning of Czech history before and after the First World War. Probably no other period in Czech history has been more important for Czech self-understanding. And yet, the Hussites did not even call themselves by that name – they referred to themselves as believers, Czechs, brothers and sisters or God's crusaders. It was their opponents, seeing heretics in them, who labeled them Hussites (Husité) after Jan Hus, the martyr who died at the stake in 1415.16

Little is known about Hus's background, except that he was born in Husinec around 1371. He came to Prague as a student at the University in the 1390s, where he finished his Master of Arts degree in 1396. Hus was ordained priest a few years later, and began studying theology. In 1402 he started preaching in the vernacular in the Bethlehem Chapel, where he soon got a large following because of his criticisms of the wrongdoings and abuses of the Church.

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His teachings were highly influenced by John Wyclif (1320–84), an English thinker, priest and translator of the Bible into the vernacular, whose writings had reached Bohemia by the early 1390s. Wyclif defended the doctrine of predestination, stating that only the "community of the just" – those believers predestined to salvation – were the sole true Church with any legitimate claim to spiritual authority. Since nobody except God could know who these people were, they could not be recognized. The clergy, bishops and popacy were thus man-made institutions with no divine sanction. Salvation was available to all true believers quite independently of the clergy, through faith, reading of the Scripture and personal sanctity. 17

Wyclif, Hus and their followers saw all believers as equal before God and the Bible as God's law and the highest authority – in contrast to the contemporary conception of the Pope as God's representative on earth and master of the means of salvation. They held that the clergy should live modestly, like the apostles, concentrating on spiritual matters and leaving worldly affairs to the state. The Church hierarchy could not fail to see the ramifications.

When the Archbishop of Prague in 1408 ordered the followers of Wyclif to disassociate themselves from his writings, they refused. Václav IV, who had not forgotten his earlier conflicts with the prelates, at first sympathized with Hus and his followers. He thus changed the distribution of votes between the four "nations" at the University through the Kutná Hora decree of 1409, giving the Czechs three votes and the foreigners only one, a reversal of the original ratio. In 1410 the Archbishop of Prague had Wyclif's writings burned and Hus excommunicated. Then Hus was excommunicated by the Papal Curia. Finally, when he in 1412 spoke up against the sale of indulgences, he lost the support of Václav IV, who had considerable revenues from this activity. Hus fled Prague and sought refuge in the castles of two sympathetic noblemen in southern Bohemia, where he wrote his most important texts, some in Latin, some in Czech. The reform of Czech spelling at this time has been attributed to Hus.

Under a pledge of safe-conduct from the Holy Roman king, Sigismund of Hungary, Hus went to the Church Council of Constance (convened to solve the three-papal situation) in 1414 to defend himself against the heresy charges. Despite of the safe-conduct he was jailed and commanded to forswear his teachings, which he refused. He was then sentenced to death and burned at the stake in Constance on July 6th, 1415. His close friend Jeroným (Jerome) of Prague followed him in 1416. Their deaths only served to ignite the fervor of their followers.

After 1416, the Hussites were able to continue their activities only in areas controlled by the Hussite nobility. In 1419, a crowd led by Jan of Želivský, a former monk, marched into the New Town of Prague, demanding the release of Hussite captives. When the town councilors refused, they were thrown out of the window of the town hall by the enraged mob. This was the first famous defenestration in Czech history, which also marked the start of the Hussite revolution. Václav IV died childless only a few days later, and the Hussite nobility refused to acknowledge his brother Sigismund as legitimate heir to the Bohemian crown.

With the help of the Catholic nobility of Bohemia and Moravia, Sigismund was crowned king in St. Vitus Cathedral in the summer of 1420, but this coronation was proclaimed invalid at the Diet of Čáslav one year later. The Diet elected a twenty-member collective organ, composed of burghers, lower nobility and upper nobility, to rule the country. The Diet also turned the Four Articles of Prague into law. These articles called for communion under both kinds for the laity, the banning and punishment of all mortal sins (also among the clergy), freedom to preach the gospel, and required the clergy to abandon all worldly goods and power.

Already around 1414 communion under both kinds for the laity (both bread and wine; Latin: *sub utraque specie*), had become a central issue for the Hussites and the chalice their symbol. Because of this they have often been referred to as Utraquists or Calixitins. After the death of Hus, the movement soon split into several factions. The most radical faction was the Táborites (after Tábor in south Bohemia); ascetic iconoclasts who were opposed to sacraments that were not in the original Church. They established their own community (Tábor), where God's law only was to be valid. The university intelligentsia and part of the nobility were more moderate, advocating the Four Articles, while not wanting to change the basic structure of society.

Sometime before 1460, the Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren) appeared — a sect based on the ideas of Petr Chelčický. He had much in common with the Táborites in his radicalism, but differed from them on one central point: He believed that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" should be taken literally. Apart from his pacifism, he taught that all are equal before God; he saw the Church as one body with many equal parts and Christ as the head.

The Hussites were convinced that they were chosen by God to rid the Church of all evil, and wanted to spread the Four Articles of Prague to all Christendom. Christian Europe, however, saw them as heretics. In the years 1420 to 1431 five crusades were organized against Hussite Bohemia. The Czechs, under the leadership of the legendary one-eyed hero Jan Žižka (c. 1360–1424), and later Prokop the Bald (dead 1434), fought well, extending far into present-day Slovakia, but the costs were enormous in material damage and loss of human life. It has been estimated that the population was reduced by forty percent during the Hussite wars.

Negotiations between the Hussite moderates and the Church started at the Council of Basel in 1433. The moderate Hussites and the Catholic nobility joined forces and defeated the radicals in the Battle of Lipany in 1434. The Compacts of 1436 settled the issue, allowing people in Bohemia to choose between the Utraquist and the Roman Catholic confession. Little more than communion under both kinds was achieved, and Pope Eugenius IV never even sanctioned the Compacts. After the Hussite wars, around 70 percent of the population were Hussites.

Accepting the Compacts, the aging Sigismund of Hungary finally acquired the Czech throne. He died only a year after, in 1437, without a male heir, and Albrecht (Albert) V of Habsburg, married to Sigismund's daughter Alžběta (Elizabeth), became Czech king. He died after only two years. Ladislav Posthumous (born five months after his father's death), was acknowledged as legitimate heir in 1444 and crowned in 1453, but only ruled for four years. The real power was in the hands of the nobility at this time.
Jiří of Poděbrady, a Hussite nobleman, gradually rose to power in the Czech lands, serving as administrator of the Bohemian kingdom from around 1448. His power did not change appreciably when Ladislav Posthumous was crowned king. After the young king died, Jiří was elected king in 1458; the first Czech king to be elected. He was also to be the last Czech to ascend the Bohemian throne. Unfortunately, he was regarded as a heretic by practically all of Europe.

Jiří of Poděbrady soon reinstated royal authority. As a Hussite, however, he ran into trouble with the Papacy. Pope Pius II denied the validity of the Basel Compacts already in 1462. Refusing to give in, Jiří was excommunicated by Pope Paul II in 1466. In 1468 his own son-in-law, the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (Matyás Korvín) declared war and prepared for a crusade. When Jiří of Poděbrady died in 1471, the eldest son of the Polish ruler Kazimír IV, Vladislaw (Władysław) II of Jagellon (1471–1516) was elected king, as Jiří wanted. In Bohemia, the real power remained in the hands of the nobility, while Matthias Corvinus kept control of Moravia, Silesia and Lusatia until his death in 1490, when the lands of the Czech crown were again united. Religious peace was finally achieved between the Hussites and the Catholics at the Diet of Kutná Hora (1485) where the Compacts were recognized as crown law (valid until 1567), and religious tolerance was thereby established.

Vladislaw was followed by his under-age son Louis (Ludvík, 1516–26), who died without an heir in the fateful battle against the Turks at Mohács, leaving the Czech as well as the Hungarian throne vacant. Through a pact of 1515 between Vladislaw and Maximilian I of Habsburg, establishing mutual inheritance in case of extinction of the male line, Ferdinand I of Habsburg (married to Princess Anna of Jagellon) was able to make legitimate claim to the Czech crown. He was elected king by the Bohemian estates in 1526 and crowned in 1527.

**A national or a religious movement?**

A major point of dispute well into this century was whether Hussism was a religious or a national movement. It was certainly not "national" in any modern sense of the word. The religious contents are fairly obvious – even the names the believer went by, like Utraquists or Calixitins (not to mention "God's warriors"!) testify to that, as do their demands expressed by the Four Articles of Prague. The only demand that can be seen as remotely "national" is the one concerning the right to preach the Gospel freely, i.e. also in the Czech language.

On the other hand, the struggle did take on a certain ethnic or "national" dimension. First, the Hussite emphasis on the Bible as the law of God and on preaching in the vernacular naturally gave priority to the Czech language. (A major effect of Hussism was indeed to bolster Czech linguistic development.) This is probably also part of the reason why Hussism spread unevenly in the Czech- and German-speaking communities. Second, the fact that the Germans only to a very limited extent embraced Hussism, and on the contrary appeared among its foremost opponents (for instance at Charles University of Prague), created a front between a German-Catholic party and a Czech-Hussite party. This was strengthened during the Hussite wars, when the Hussite Czechs had to fight the Catholic foreigners.
The ethnic dimension should, however, not be overemphasized. A major part of the Czech population never converted to Hussism, even in Bohemia, where the movement was strongest. There were quite a few Czechs also on the Catholic side, especially in Moravia and among the nobility. Also, even though the movement was almost exclusively Czech, some notable exceptions are known, like the Englishman Peter Payne, and the German Nikolas of Dresden.\(^{18}\)

Various factors contributed to the strength of the Hussite movement. Charles University strengthened the contact with the rest of Europe, made possible free exchange of opinions on church-related problems and produced a native educated elite, part of which was not able to get employment. This disaffected elite worked together with rich, influential, self-aware burghers, who also played an important role in the Hussite movement, claiming rights against the upper nobility. Second, the plague and the deep social and economic crisis that ensued provided fertile ground for Hussite ideas among the people. The plague was interpreted as a punishment from God, and associated with the morally decaying state of the Church.

The Church of the Middle Ages was very rich and powerful, and the clergy did not always lead a life proper for men of God. The moral state of the Church was no better in Bohemia than elsewhere. Apart from owning estates (30 percent of all land was in Church hands), the Church also sold indulgences, literally making money on people's sins. Moreover, at the time of Hus, there were three competing Popes – the Pope of Avignon, the Pope of Rome and the Pope of Pisa – a circumstance which did not exactly enhance the prestige of the Church.

Finally, the nobility had strengthened its position during the reign of Václav IV, and it was at first sympathetic to the Hussite cause, as was indeed Václav himself until 1412. As the Hussites advocated that the Church should not own property, this is not surprising: after all, who would be the obvious candidate to take over Church land, if not the nobility? Yet, material interests alone cannot explain the Hussite sympathies of all individual noblemen, although the Hussite proportion was largest in the bishoprics where the Church controlled most of the parishes (Litomyšl).\(^{19}\)

**Slovaks between Arpad and Habsburg rule**

Already in 1300, almost a year before the death of the last male Arpad, the twelve-year-old Charles Robert of Anjou appeared in Hungary. He was the grandson of King Charles II of Naples and Maria, the daughter of the Hungarian king István V. His candidature was supported by the Papal Curia, and he was soon after crowned by the archbishop of Ostrihom. But when András (Andrew) III of Arpad died, the Hungarian nobility refused to acknowledge the coronation. Instead, the nobility offered the Hungarian throne to the Czech king Václav II, who declined in favor of his twelve-year-old son Václav.

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\(^{19}\) This is discussed by John Martin Klassen in *The nobility and the making of the Hussite revolution* (1978:40 pp.).
This Václav, ruling under the name Ladislav V (1301–05) soon lost the support of the nobility, and abdicated in 1305. At the same time he became Czech king under the name of Václav III. Charles Robert of Anjou was finally acknowledged king of Hungary in 1307, after Matúš Čák (Matthias Csák) threw in his lot with him. Čák continued to rule his territory right up to his death in 1321, yet he was hardly the national hero that Slovak mythology would have it, but a nobleman acting in his own interest. After Čák's death, Charles Robert was able to consolidate power and confiscate the territory. He was succeeded by his son Louis I (the Great, 1342–82), who also became king of Poland in 1370. During their reigns, French cultural influence became stronger at the Hungarian court, and economically it was a Golden Age. At the same time, the German privileges were dwindling. The Privilegium pro Slavis, granted to the town of Žilina by Louis I in 1381, gave the Slavic population equal rights with the Germans.

A new succession struggle erupted when Louis I died without a male heir. His daughter Maria was engaged to Sigismund, who was able to take office in 1387. He had to give up Brandenburg for the Hungarian throne, and he gave the Polish king 12 towns in the Spiš area around 1412–16 in return for a loan. As we have already noted, Sigismund did not have much military luck against the Czech Hussites, against whom he led several crusades against as king of the Holy Roman Empire. The Hussites advanced into Hungarian (mainly Slovak) territory on several occasions in the years 1428–33, and Hussite groups remained there off and on for almost four decades. The last remnants were driven out by Matthias Corvinus in 1467.

A Czech Catholic nobleman by the name of Jan Jiskra of Brandýs played an important role in the succession struggle after the death of Albrecht of Habsburg (1437–39), who succeeded Sigismund in Hungary as well as the Czech lands. The nobility elected Władysław III of Poland as their new king, bypassing the legitimate heir Ladislav Posthumous. His mother Alžběta (Elizabeth) of Luxembourg contested this, and Jiskra sided with her. Leading an army of around 5000 former Hussites, he was able to control the Zvolen-Spiš area until around 1453. After the Polish king died in the Battle of Varna (1444), Jiskra held his position in opposition to Jan Hunyady, the most powerful Hungarian nobleman, who acquired a position in Hungary after 1444 similar to that which Jiří of Poděbrady had in the Czech lands.

The extent of Hussite influence among the Slovaks has been a matter of dispute. A common view has been that it paved the way for Protestantism among the Slovaks and the Czechs. In Czechoslovak works of history in the inter-war period, Hussite influence was evaluated positively, and the fellowship between Czechs and Slovaks was emphasized. Yet, according to some contemporary Slovak historians, Hussism was "limited to a few individuals in church chapters." The Hussites found support mainly among the lesser nobility, especially in areas where they established garrisons. In the nationalist version, Hussite advances were "nothing but plundering raids, hurting a majority of the inhabitants of the territory under attack."

While it is probably true that Hussism never was a strong force among ordinary people, a legacy of the Czech presence in Slovakia during the Hussite wars was a gradual diffusion (starting in 1422) of literary Czech as the current language of administration and private correspondence in Slovakia. With the Reformation, it also became the language of religion.

After the premature death of Ladislav Posthumous, Matthias Corvinus (Matyás Korvín, 1458–90), the son of Hunyady, was elected king. The fact that noblemen were elected kings in Hungary and in the Czech lands is evidence of the strong position of the nobility in both countries at the time. During his reign, Renaissance influences began to penetrate Hungary. The first university on Slovak territory, Academia Istrapolitania, was established in Bratislava in 1465. It was only to last until 1490. Students of Slovak origin thus continued to study at universities abroad, in Prague, in Vienna, and Kraków. After the death of Corvinus, the Czech and the Hungarian crown were again united, this time under Vladislav of Jagellon.

From the south a new threat was appearing. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Empire had begun gradually to push north. In the Battle of Mohács in 1526, Louis II was killed, setting the stage for the Ottoman occupation and partition of Hungary. A majority of the nobility elected János Zápolyai (Jan Zápolský, 1526–40), the vojvoda of Transylvania and the biggest landowner in Hungary, as new king of Hungary. Another group of Hungarian nobles, including the nobility of Croatia-Slavonia, soon after elected Ferdinand I of Habsburg (1526–64). According to the Jagellon-Habsburg arrangement of 1515, Ferdinand was the legitimate heir. In the civil war that ensued, Zápolyai obtained the support of the Ottomans. As a result, Hungary was divided into three spheres, controlled by the Habsburgs (the northwestern rim—or Royal Hungary), the Ottomans (the central part) and Zápolyai (Transylvania).

In the truce of 1547 Ferdinand I was acknowledged as de facto king of Hungary, including Slovak territory. Yet, the heir of János Zápolyai, János Zsigmond Zápolyai (protégé of the Sultan) did not give up the title of king of Hungary until 1570, when he settled for the title prince of Transylvania and ruler of a part of Hungary. He was followed by other Transylvanian magnates – first, members of the Báthory family (1571–1613), then Gábor Bethlen (1613–29) and finally György Rákóczi I (Juraj Rákoci, 1630–48) and György Rákóczi II (1648–60).

In the meantime, Protestantism had begun to spread in Hungary. It first made inroads in the German-speaking mining towns, and from there spread to the landed gentry and eventually to the population at large.

**Slovaks during the Ottoman wars**

The succession struggle facilitated the Ottoman advance. Buda fell in 1529, and later the same year the Turks besieged Vienna for the first time. By the time of the five-year truce that started in 1547, the Turks controlled the area between the Tisza and the Danube well beyond Buda to the north, as well as a strip of land to the west of Danube. A new war in 1551–68 extended Ottoman control further into Slovak territory, where the river Ipeľ meets the Danube. The peace of Adrianople in 1568, twice renewed, lasted until new hostilities broke out in 1593.
During the war of 1593–1606, the Ottoman Empire conquered areas west and east of this strip, leaving roughly present-day Slovak territory and a small strip of east Hungary and Croatia. Following the last Ottoman offensive in 1682, a strip of land in the southern part of present-day Slovakia was under Ottoman rule for a year. The unsuccessful second siege of Vienna in 1683 signaled the end of Ottoman influence on the Hungarian plain. Already in 1686 the Habsburgs took Buda back, and by 1688 they had reached Belgrade. In 1689 they pushed deep into Serbia, but were driven back. The peace treaty of Sremski Karlovci (Karlowitz) in 1699 left the Banat under Ottoman control, otherwise it followed the Sava-Danube line. For the Slovaks this meant that the Ottoman wars were over.

Slovak territory was affected in several ways by the wars. First, as the frontier between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires, the southern part of Slovak territory was a major war zone. The territory was devastated, people fled into the mountains and the social structure was left in general disarray. Several towns were turned into ashes, and the areas that came under direct Ottoman rule were taxed heavily. In addition, Slovak territory was affected by the general economic decline in East Central Europe that followed the "discovery" of the New World. The Slovak mining towns began to feel the competition from overseas gold and silver.

More important, though, was the fact that Slovak territory for more than 150 years became the center of Royal Hungary. Ecclesiastical organs were moved during the 1540s (the Archbishop of Ostrihom moved to Trnava), and Bratislava became de facto the Hungarian capital, where coronations and Diets were held until 1848, even though the administration was moved to Buda and Pest during the reign of Josef II (1780–90). An estimated two-thirds of the Hungarian nobility sought refuge on Slovak territory, especially in the towns. In addition, Magyar townspeople came. After the liberation, the movement went the other way.

Another side effect of the wars was that an increasing number of Slovaks were co-opted into the lower nobility because of their contribution to the defense against the Turks. Slovak and Magyar settlements thus became more interwoven, and the numerical balance between them changed: It has been estimated that Hungary lost between 500,000 and one million inhabitants in the course of the 16th century, and the Magyars bore the blunt of this.

The Ottoman wars also gave the Reformation more leeway. By 1550, the Roman Catholic Church had practically ceased to exist as an institution in Hungary. It is estimated that, by around 1580, 80–85 percent of the population (apart from Croatia, which remained a Catholic stronghold) were Protestant. Lutheranism started to spread already before 1521, but was after 1540 challenged by Calvinism. Twenty years later Calvinism was the religion of most of the Magyars, while a majority of the Germans and Slovaks remained Lutheran.

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22 See Paul Robert Magocsi: Historical atlas of East Central Europe, Map 14, 18, 19b and 20a (also the text) for details.
One of the reasons why the Counter-Reformation was so slow in asserting itself in Hungary, was that Protestant magnates used the commotion caused by the Ottoman wars (and the Thirty Years' War) to advance their own interests and ensure religious freedom for the population. Magnates of semi-independent Transylvania (largely Protestant by the end of the 16th century) played an important part in the rebellions against the Habsburgs in 1604, in 1619 and in 1644.

The first rebellion in 1604 was led by the Transylvanian magnate István (Stephen) Bocskay, and was initiated by the Catholic take-over of the Lutheran church of Košice. Rudolf II of Habsburg refused to listen to the complaints of the Protestant nobility, and by 1605 an open rebellion developed. The Habsburgs were still at war with the Ottoman Turks, and Rudolf realized he could not fight both. In the ensuing peace of Vienna in 1606, the Hungarian nobility retained all their privileges, and their religious freedom was granted. This was also the result of the second rebellion in 1619, when Gábor Bethlen, the prince of Transylvania, used the opportunity presented by the start of the Thirty Years' War to seize Slovak territory. Religious freedom was affirmed in 1645, after the third rebellion led by the Transylvanian prince György Rákóczi in 1644. This time the Košice area was retained by Rákóczi.

On Slovak territory, the first modest beginnings of the Counter-Reformation came around 1560, when some Jesuits were sent to Trnava to establish a seminary. They left in 1567, after the buildings were burnt down, but returned in 1586, this time to stay. A turning point for the Counter-Reformation in Hungary was the appointment of Peter Pázmány as Archbishop of Ostrihom in 1616. In 1635 he established the first Jesuit university in Trnava (to be moved to Buda in 1777), where teachers as well as students were predominantly of Slovak origin. The second Jesuit university was established in Košice in 1660. The really severe Counter-Reformation did not set in until the 1670s, when Protestant clergy were threatened with the gallows.

The new harsh policy of re-catholization triggered a fourth rebellion, led by a nobleman from the Slovak part of Royal Hungary, Imre Thököli (Imrich Tököli), who controlled Slovak territory by the end of 1680. Leopold I realized that he risked losing most of Royal Hungary if he did not compromise with the rebels. Religious freedom was reinstated by the Diet of Sopron in 1681, but the Protestant churches confiscated after 1671 were not returned. The rebels were not satisfied, and in 1682 the Ottoman Turks came to their aid. After the Ottomans were driven out of the Hungarian plain, the Habsburgs won Slovak territory back in 1685.

In the Diet of Bratislava in 1687, the power of the nobility was limited by the abolition of the *ius resistendi* (instituted by the Golden Bull of 1222), and by the provision that gave the male line of the Habsburgs hereditary rights to the Hungarian crown. Yet, while confirming the dominant position of the Catholic Church, this Diet also reaffirmed the rights of the Protestants laid down by the Diet of 1681. Leopold I's attempts at uniting the Habsburg lands through a common religion had failed. A majority of the noble families of Hungary had converted to Catholicism by 1660, and the Counter-Reformation made great progress among the common people by the end of the century, but conversion was not complete and was never to be. Protestant minorities survived among the Slovaks and Germans as well as the Magyars.
The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation also affected future Slovak identity. Among Slovak Protestants, Czech became the liturgical language. The Kralice bible of the Unitas Fratrum (the Brethren) from the latter half of the 16th century was used by Slovak Protestants until the 19th century. The use of vernaculars in services reinforced the division of the Protestants into Calvinists (Magyars) and Lutherans (Slovaks, Germans). The Lutherans in Slovakia formed de facto bishoprics, whose representatives were elected. As the Slovaks formed a majority in most of the Lutheran Church bodies, most of the leaders were of Slovak origin.

The Catholic Church, still using Latin, remained one church organization – and was closely linked to the house of Habsburg. Yet, in the course of the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits developed what has later been termed "Jesuit Slovak." This language closely resembled Cultured West Slovak, a regional administrative code spontaneously developed in the 16th and 17th centuries through the use of Czech with local Slovak features in the administration of West Slovak towns. The Counter-Reformation thus laid the foundations for a Slovak literary language. Equally important, institutions of learning (Protestant and Catholic) were subsequently established all over Slovak territory, which meant that the Slovak literate elite grew. The Jesuits were especially active in establishing institutions of learning, including two universities. Many Slovak Protestants attended German universities, Wittenberg in particular.

This is also the period when the first works with specific reference to the Slovaks (or "Slavs of Hungary") started to appear. At the University of Strasbourg, Peter Révay published De monarchia et sacra corona regni Hungariae centeniae septem ("Seven centuries of the Hungarian kingdom and holy crown") in 1656. Jakob Jakobeus, a Czech exile arriving after the Battle of the White Mountain (see below), published in Slovakized Czech Viva gentis Slavonicae delineatio ("An outline of the Slav nation") and Gentis Slavonicae lacrumae, suspiria et vota ("The tears, sighs and demands of the Slav nation"). A defense of the Slovaks (Slavs) was given by Daniel Sinapius Horčička in Neo-forum Latino-Slavonicum ("A new Latin-Slav market") from 1678.

Although no distinction was made between "Slav" and "Slovak", it seems that a certain Slovak identity had developed by the middle of the 17th century. The higher level of education among the Slovaks was probably important here, but the Ottoman wars can also be assumed to have had an effect. On the one hand, with the Hungarian plain gone, Slovakia was finally a unit. It seems likely that Slovak groups who defended their land against the enemy developed a sense of mutual solidarity. Moreover, the population movements associated with the wars had brought the Slovaks into contact with people that were culturally very different, whether they were fleeing Magyars or Turkish janissaries. To the extent that identities develop in opposition to the "others", this may have enhanced a Slovak feeling of belonging together.

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26 Ďurovič (1980:212).

27 All titles quoted by Kirschbaum (1995:71). He translates "Slavonicae" and "Slavonicum" with Slovak, which may be admissible considering the referred contents of the works, but literally the meaning is Slav.

28 Wars have been instrumental in forging identities. See e.g. Anthony D. Smith: The ethnic origins of nations (1986).
On the other hand, this unit was not "Slovakia", but Royal Hungary, and people of Slovak, German and Magyar origin had fought the Ottomans together. The wars may thus also have contributed to a Hungarian Landespatriotismus. That such a Hungarian patriotism existed is beyond doubt. In fact, the early Slovak awakeners worked within the framework of Hungarian patriotism, as we shall see in Chapter Six. Finally, it has been suggested that the Ottoman wars helped unite the Habsburg subjects. Robert A. Kann argues that the wars "undoubtedly at least led to a limited feeling of solidarity between the Habsburg domains." The recurring conflicts between the Catholic Habsburgs and the Protestant nobility (who did not hesitate to seek the support of the Porte) suggest, however, that this is a rather dubious conclusion.

The Ottoman wars and the religious struggle thus conceivably contributed to the development of a Slovak (pre-national) identity in two ways: First, the wars united the Slovaks against a common enemy that was different from them in culture and in religion, while at the same time elevating some Slovaks to the ranks of the lower nobility (the gentry). Second, the increased level of education was important for the formation of a Slovak identity; the Slovak literate elite was enlarged, two vernacular-based literary languages (Czech and Jesuit Slovak) were established, and the Slovaks were brought into contact with European currents.

Czechs under Habsburg rule to the Battle of the White Mountain

When the Bohemian Diet in 1526 elected Ferdinand I of Habsburg as king, it was on the explicit condition that he would acknowledge the liberties of the Estates – which is a reflection of the strong position of the Estates at the time. The Estates of Moravia (still a margravate), Silesia and Lusatia followed suit. Ferdinand's wife Anna, daughter of Vladislav II of Jagellon, represented the link to the Czech ruling house. This was the start of 400 years of Habsburg rule in the Czech lands.

Ferdinand soon set out to curb the power of the Estates. The power struggle came to a head during the war between the Holy Roman Emperor Karl V and the league of Protestant princes in 1546–47. In the fall of 1546 and again in 1547, Ferdinand placed the military forces of the Czech lands on alert without conferring with the Estates, to whom this right belonged.

The Bohemian Diet accused the king of infringing on their rights and sent forces against him. The Estates of the other Czech lands kept aloof. After the Catholic victory in the Battle of Mühlberg, the Bohemian Estates got cold feet. Ferdinand did not fail to punish his disobedient subjects, by limiting the autonomy of Prague and other Royal towns. In addition, he confiscated the property of quite a few nobles, many of them members of the Brethren. Finally, two burghers and two nobles were executed in the Old Town square in Prague.

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The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 settled the score between Protestants and Catholics according to the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, which divided the Holy Roman Empire into Catholic and Protestant territories. It gave the ruler of a territory the right to require that all his subjects, including the nobility, adhere to his religion. This signaled the end of religious freedom, although it was not at first enforced in the Czech lands.

Lutheranism had started to spread in Bohemia after 1519. Utraquism was by then dwindling, and while some of the Utraquists (so-called Old Utraquists) held on to the old faith, after 1540 a majority (the Neo-Utraquists) gravitated towards Lutheranism. Calvinism made limited inroads in the Czech lands; more important were the *Unitas Fratrum* (the Brethren), even though they were still persecuted, especially by Ferdinand I. The religious situation remained complicated throughout the 16th century. It has been estimated that those faithful to Rome still did not exceed 10 percent of the population in 1600.  

Ferdinand was more of a pragmatic than an ardent Catholic, but he did invite the Jesuit order to the Czech lands in 1556. Under the reign of Maximilian II (I on the Czech throne, 1564–76), re-catholization was not actively promoted. In 1567 he invalidated the Basel Compacts after Protestant pressure, but declined to establish a new religious order. The *Czech Confession* (*Confessio bohemica*), a compromise elaborated by the non-Catholic majority (Utraquists, Lutherans and Brethren) of the Diet of 1575 was accepted by the king only orally.

Rudolf II (1576–1611), the last Habsburg to reside in Prague, was unlike his father Maximilian undoubtedly a Catholic, but not a religious zealot. In 1583 he moved the Court from Vienna to Prague, turning it into the cultural center of Europe and adding renaissance-style buildings to its rich mosaic. His court became the center of a re-catholization drive, hosting representatives of the Papacy and the Spanish envoy. With the active support of the royal court and the Papal nuncio, the Catholics were able to acquire the highest offices in the Czech lands in 1598–99, despite being a small minority. This alienated the Estates.

When Rudolf's brother Matthias turned against him in 1607, Matthias got the support of the Moravian nobility, while the Bohemian Diet declined after receiving promises from Rudolf that he would meet their demands. Rudolf had to cede the control of Moravia, Hungary and the Austrian lands to his brother, but was allowed to keep Bohemia, Silesia and Upper and Lower Lusatia. He paid for the support of the Bohemian Estates by issuing an imperial charter in 1609, the so-called *Letter of Majesty*, which gave his subjects freedom of religion, essentially putting the Czech Confession of 1575 into effect. After an unsuccessful attempt at getting the Estates to yield through military force in 1611, Rudolf had to abdicate in favor of Matthias. Matthias moved the court back to Vienna already the year after, leaving the rule of the Czech lands to his representatives, among whom the Spanish and Catholic party dominated. This the Czechs resented.

None of the four sons of the late Maximilian II had legitimate heirs, and it was thus decided in 1617 that their cousin Ferdinand of Styria would inherit the Eastern Habsburg lands. He was by then already known for his uncompromising stand towards the "heretics" of his own lands. When his candidature was presented to the Czech Diet of 1617, the non-Catholic opposition demanded that he acknowledge the Letter of Majesty of 1609, which he reluctantly did. The few who still resisted his candidature were jailed or deprived of their positions.

In the spring of 1618, the non-Catholic burghers and nobility convened a meeting to discuss the violation of their rights. Matthias' ban of the meeting ignited the opposition, and on May 23rd a delegation arrived at Prague Castle. In an improvised court meeting the king's officials were found guilty of violating the rights of the Estates, and defenestrated. (All three survived.) One day later, the king was dethroned, and a government of the Estates was elected. Upper and Lower Lusatia and Silesia expressed support, while Moravia remained neutral until the death of Matthias in 1619. A general Diet of all the Czech lands in the summer of 1619 elected the Calvinist Friedrich of Palatine king. The turning point of the inevitable war came when Maximilian of Bavaria, the leader of the Catholic league of the Holy Roman Empire, sided with Ferdinand in 1620. The legendary Battle of the White Mountain in November 1620 only lasted for a few hours, yet the outcome proved disastrous for Czech Protestant opposition.

Culturally, the period up to the Battle of the White Mountain has been portrayed as a Golden Age. Humanist influences started to make themselves felt after the turn of the 16th century. The Catholics wrote in Latin and Czech, while the Utraquists ventured to spread humanist ideas outside narrow, educated circles by writing their texts exclusively in Czech. *Kronika česká* ("The Czech Chronicle"), written by Václav Hájek of Libočan (c. 1500–53) is probably the most read work of the Czech renaissance. Hájek was originally an Utraquist, but converted to Catholicism in the early 1520s, and his chronicle was thus found acceptable also after the Battle of the White Mountain. However, the most famous renaissance text is the *Kralice Bible* (named after the Moravian town where the Brethren had their press), a translation renown for its beautiful and elevated language. The New Testament was translated by Jan Blahoslav (1523–71), bishop of the Brethren, who perfected the Czech grammar and spelling. His students and followers completed the work, and the Bible was published in six volumes in the years 1579–94. It had great influence on the development of Czech as a literary language.

Parallel to this linguistic elevation, however, Czech gradually lost ground politically. The prestige of the German language grew in the Czech lands after the ascension of the Habsburgs to the throne, also because of the diffusion of Protestantism. At the same time, Czech and German Protestants united against the Catholics, and this helped to soften the conflict between the two peoples. Also in the Czech lands the religious struggle contributed to the establishment of new institutions of learning. The Clementinum in Prague, formerly a Dominican monastery, was turned into a Jesuit College in 1562. Charles University was controlled by the Utraquists, while the college of Olomouc became a Jesuit university in 1567.

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32 *Bílá hora* (the White Mountain) is not actually a mountain, but an elevation a little outside the center of Prague.
The Czech age of darkness (temno)

The period following the Battle of the White Mountain has been presented by Czech national historiography as temno (darkness). The penalty for the disloyalty of the Protestant nobility was indeed harsh. Those leaders of the rebellion who had not managed to escape were jailed, and 27 of them (three lords, seven knights and seventeen burghers) were executed in the Old Town square of Prague. Many also had their property completely or partially confiscated.

A far more ardent Catholic than any of his Habsburg predecessors, Ferdinand II started a strong Counter-Reformation drive after the Battle of the White Mountain. Charles University was entrusted to the Jesuits in 1622, who merged it with the Clementinum (permanently after 1654). Protestant preachers were banished and non-Catholics ousted from their positions. In 1627 Protestant nobles and burghers who had not yet fled or converted were presented with the choice between submission and exile, which involved selling their property to Catholics. The peasants were forbidden to leave (some of them did anyway, especially in the border areas), and were brought back to Catholicism the hard way in the 17th century.

Ferdinand II used the opportunity to reward loyal Catholic nobility, many of them non-Czech. By the end of the Thirty Years' War, almost half of the free estates of Bohemia were in foreign hands. Many thousands of Czech Protestant families left the country. It has been estimated that the Czech lands lost around a third of their population as a result of war, emigration, famine and epidemics. Neither the transfer of land nor the population losses were quite as marked in Moravia and Silesia as in Bohemia.

The renewed constitution of 1627 (1628 in Moravia) made the Czech crown hereditary according to the male and the female line of the Habsburgs. (By contrast, in 1687 the Hungarian crown was made hereditary according to the male line only.) The Estates thus lost the right to elect their king, and the power it implied. The renewed constitution also made Catholicism the only permitted confession, put the German language on equal terms with Czech in state affairs and transferred legislative authority to the ruler. In essence, the Diet retained only the right to vote over taxes, which was by no means unimportant. The king also got the right to appoint all major officers of the crown. In practice these dignitaries were always chosen among the nobility of the Czech lands, but the renewed constitution nevertheless curbed the power of the (Czech) Estates in favor of the ruling house – and worked in favor of the German-speakers.

The other side of the age of darkness (temno) is the linguistic and cultural decline that allegedly set in after the Battle of the White Mountain. To what extent decline is an accurate description of what happened, it still a matter of dispute. On the one hand, the rigid Jesuit censorship that was maintained until 1760 must have impeded intellectual life, and certainly closed off the Habsburg domains to Western influences. It is also a fact that the Jesuits in their eagerness to root out heresy burnt literally thousands of Czech books.

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33 Dějiny zemí koruny české I (1993:276). According to Bérenger (1994:296), however, the war related "losses in the whole of the country [were] less than one-fifth."
Moreover, many Czech men of letters chose exile rather than giving up their faith. Two of the most renown are Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius, 1592–1670), the last bishop of the Brethren, and Pavel Stránský of Zapy (1583–1657). Komenský’s most elevated work in Czech was *Labyrint světa a lusthauz (ráj) srdce* ("Labyrinth of the world and paradise of the heart", 1631). More important from a national point of view, however, was his *Kšaft umírající matky Jednoty bratrské* ("Testament of the dying mother Unitas Fratrum", 1650). This is where the words that Masaryk loved to quote appear: "I too believe in God, that after the passing of the storm’s anger, brought down on us by our sins, the government of your affairs will again be returned to you, oh Czech people." Stránský is known for his Latin history of the Czech lands *Respublica Bojema* ("The Czech state" – 1634), but perhaps more for his defense of the Czech language in *Okřik na nedbalého Čecha* ("Outcry for the hapless Czech), published anonymously during the rebellion of the Estates before the Battle of the White Mountain.

Some present-day Czech scholars argue against the decline thesis of the awakeners, stating that "it would be wrong to say that the exodus of non-Catholic scholars after the Battle of the White Mountain and the dissolution of the Utraquist network of schools led to a marked decline of the level of education in the Czech lands." On the contrary, they argue; the Jesuit school system was one of the best of its time, completely on level with Humanist and Protestant education. And it is true that not all men of letters left the Czech lands after 1620.

One of those who stayed was the Jesuit historian Bohuslav Balbín (1621–1688). He wrote *Epitome historica Rerum Bohemicarum seu Historia Boleslaviensis* (Excerpt of Bohemian history, or the History of Boleslav), an outline of Czech history from the beginning of Christianity to 1526, where he especially glorified the reign of Karel IV. Balbín's most famous work, *Dissertatio apologetica pro lingua Slavonica, praecipue Bohemica* (dissertation to the defense of the Slav language, especially the Czech) finished in 1672, was even more strongly patriotic in tone than the Epitome and never passed any censorship. It thus remained in manuscript until František Martin Pecl (one of the early national awakeners) had it published in 1775. In 1869 it came out in Czech under the title *Obrana jazyka slovanského, zvláště českého*.

Neither, according to the same authors, is it entirely true that the Czech language went into decline. Latin remained the most important language of scholarship, but there were poets and others writing in an elevated Czech, like Bedřich Bredel (1619–1680). Also, even though Latin again became the liturgical language, preaching in Czech was common even among the Jesuits, simply because the common people did not understand Latin. Finally, art, sculpture, music, theater and architecture undoubtedly developed to a very high level in the Czech lands during the Baroque era following the Battle of the White Mountain. The Baroque era also represented an all time high in the building of churches, cathedrals and monasteries.

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**Czechs and Slovaks under Enlightened absolutism**

When the Austrian Habsburgs became involved in the war of the Spanish succession (1700–14) following the death of the last male Habsburg of the western branch, the Hungarian magnates staged a last rebellion, led by Ferenc Rákóczi II, župan of Saris. A Diet in 1707 deposed Josef I, but when he confirmed the nobility's tax exemptions and other privileges, the opposition fell apart and peace was signed in 1711. The rebel stronghold was Slovak territory, and one of the rebels was Juraj Jánošík, an outlaw who was hanged in 1713. Jánošík has been pictured in Slovak legends and folk art as a Robin Hood figure and national hero.

In an effort to keep the remaining eastern Habsburg domains together, Karl VI formulated the Pragmatic Sanction in 1713. According to this document, all Habsburg domains were to be ruled as a unified, indivisible and hereditary totality. The order of succession was also regulated: Male descendants of Karl VI were to inherit first, followed by female descendants of Karl VI and finally the (female) descendants of Josef I. As it turned out, the succession rules came into effect sooner than he had probably hoped for; Karl VI had only one son (in 1716) who died as an infant. The eldest of his three daughters, Maria Theresia, was born in 1717.

The Diets of the Czech lands and Austria accepted the Pragmatic Sanction in 1720 and the Hungarian Diet in 1723. The main problem was to get the assent of the rest of Europe. During the Thirty Years' War Lusatia had been lost to Saxony (1635), although the Habsburgs as kings of Bohemia technically remained feudal masters. During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48) after Karl's death, most of Silesia and Kladsko (Klodzko) went to Prussia (1742). The loss became final in 1763 after Maria Theresia failed to recover these lands.

The era of enlightened absolutism is normally confined to the reign of Maria Theresia (1740–80) and the briefer reigns of her sons Josef II (1780–90) and Leopold II (1790–92). It marked the beginning of a new era, in which feudalism was to yield to a modern society. A crucial aim was to turn the various Habsburg domains into a modern, centralized Empire and to educate and enlighten the people. The most important reforms were unification and bureaucratization of the administration, changes in the relation between lords and serfs, and religious and educational reforms, including religious tolerance. It is on the latter point that Josef II differed most from his mother. Through a series of reforms starting in 1748 the government of the Czech and Austrian lands became centralized, depriving the Estates of power and privileges. In 1748 a deputation system parallel to the Diets of the Czech and Austrian lands was established, and the Diets gave up their right to approve the number of men at arms and the monetary contributions for 10 years. In 1749 the Czech and Austrian Court Chancelleries were abolished, to be gradually replaced by a unitary administration for the Czech and Austrian lands.

The Czechs were punished for electing Karl Albert of Bavaria as king in 1741, while in Hungary, where the nobility had been loyal, the administration system remained unaltered under Maria Theresia. After the Diet refused to raise the war taxes, however, she dissolved that assembly in 1765, never to convoke it again. Josef II abolished the old župy and divided the country into ten units under royal commissaries, restricting the power of the nobility.
In 1750 a common monetary system was established, and the Austrian system of weights and measures was introduced in Moravia (1758) and in Bohemia (1765). Customs barriers were removed between the Czech lands in 1752 and between the Czech and Austrian lands in 1775, whereas the customs wall against Hungary remained. This was partly motivated by the Austrian need for a secure supply of raw materials, partly by the Hungarian Diet's refusal to renounce the tax exemptions, a privilege that was retained until the revolution of 1848.

Leopold I had limited the extent of the robota (serfdom work) of estate peasants to three days a week in 1680. Josef II abolished serfdom (Leibeigenschaft) in the Czech and Austrian lands in 1781 and in Hungary in 1785. In 1789 he tried to change the tax system from robota to payment in money and kind. This was met with opposition from nobility and peasants alike, especially in Hungary; the nobility did not want to lose their tax exemptions, and the peasants – living in a subsistence economy – did not have the money to pay.

In 1773 the Papal Bull dissolving the Jesuit order signaled the end of the Counter-Reformation. Already in 1781 Josef issued the Patent of Tolerance, granting to Lutherans, Calvinists and Greek Orthodox (Uniate) believers the right to voice their allegiance publicly. In a separate decree the Jews received limited rights. At the same time, censorship was abolished. The Patent of Tolerance was only one of many reforms that infringed on the prerogatives of the Catholic Church: general seminaries were established, monasteries were not allowed to send gold abroad the way they used to, etc.

Until their order was dissolved in 1773, the Jesuits ran a large part of the school system. The Allgemeine Schulordnung (universal school decree) of 1774 established compulsory education in Trivialschulen (elementary schools) where the children were to learn the basic skills of reading, writing, counting and religion. In Hungary, a similar reform of the school system (Ratio Educationis) was introduced in 1777, but was made valid only for the Catholic schools. The Protestants had their own schools, authorized by the Diet of 1687.

In all schools above Trivialschulen, middle schools and teachers' academies included, German was made the medium of education (in Hungary only after 1786). By Royal decree of 1784, the official language of education was changed from Latin to German in the universities of all the Habsburg domains apart from Hungary. Already under Maria Theresia German had been made the language of administration in the Austrian and Czech lands, while Latin was used in Hungary until Josef II replaced it with German through the language decree of 1784.

In 1787 Josef II started a new war with the Ottoman Empire that was intensely unpopular, and towards the end of his life he revoked all his reforms, except the Patent of Tolerance and the abolition of serfdom. His brother Leopold II (1790–92) got the job of restoring order in Hungary. In the compromise of 1791, Hungary was again acknowledged as a separate country, although the Pragmatic Sanction was affirmed. Laws were to be approved by the Diet as well as the king – thus putting an end to rule by royal decree. Taxes were to be levied by the Diet, which was to meet at least every three years. The rights of the Protestants were again affirmed, Latin was reinstated, and Magyar was allowed in the middle schools.
It has been suggested that the reforms of the school system and the administration were a part of a deliberate Germanization policy on the part of Josef II. Robert A. Kann argues that Josef II was "at least a moderate nationalist" who believed in the superiority of German culture. Yet, as Josef Kočí remarks, "the choice of German [as the language of administration and education] was probably not motivated by nationalistic or chauvinistic concerns." When a vernacular language was needed to replace Latin as the language of administration and education in a modernized and centralized Habsburg Empire, German was the natural choice. It had long since been codified, it was the language of a large part of the political elite as well as of the capital Vienna – and there were no viable alternatives.

I doubt that Josef was a German chauvinist, and his aim was certainly not assimilation. He continued to have proclamations and rulings printed in Czech, and no attempt was made to force the lower classes to learn German. His Germanization policy was thus scarcely directed at eliminating the multi-national composition of the state. It is in fact dubious whether we can speak of a deliberate nationality policy in the Habsburg Empire before the turn of the 19th century at all. Prior to the French Revolution it never occurred to anyone to question the legitimacy of multi-national states as such, and deliberate nation-building was not yet on the agenda. National demands were likewise modest, cultural and oriented towards scholarship.

Regardless of the aim, however, it may be argued that the Germanization policy of Josef II served to ignite the incipient national revivals of the Czechs and Slovaks (and Magyars). On the one hand, the centralization efforts fueled the Landespatriotismus associated with the Czech lands and with Hungary. On the other hand, movements for national linguistic preservation emerged among most of the subject nations during the final three decades of the 18th century. The start of the Czech and Slovak national revivals was marked by a new interest in the study of their history, followed by a (re-)codification of the language. I return to the national revivals in more detail in the following two chapters. Finally, for the ruling nation of the Habsburg Empire, the "German question" had begun to present itself with increasing urgency, especially after the German Confederation was established in 1815.

From absolutism to revolution

The enlightened absolutism of Maria Theresia, Josef II and Leopold II was followed by the reactionary absolutism of Franz II (1792–1835) and his powerful Kanzler Clemens Wenzel Lothar Metternich (1821–48). After the death of Franz II, a triumvirate consisting of Metternich, Franz's brother Ludwig and the Bohemian nobleman František Antonin Kolovrat (Franz Anton Kolowrat) ruled in the name of the feebleminded Ferdinand V. The power of Metternich increased gradually, first in external affairs, after 1815 in internal affairs as well.

The first part of the reign of Franz II was dominated by the Napoleonic Wars, starting in 1792 and ending at Waterloo in 1815. Frightened by the general anarchy that ensued after the French Revolution and the Jacobin conspiracy in Hungary in 1794–95, Franz was convinced that strict measures were necessary in internal matters. Rigid censorship was reintroduced, and from the very beginning he aimed at strong centralization. The police played an increasingly greater role, earning the Habsburg monarchy the label of police state. The main task of the secret police and the censors was to prevent the diffusion of liberal ideas. The influence of the Church in lower and medium level education increased.

The expenses of the Napoleonic Wars had impeded economic development in the Habsburg domains. After 1815 this situation gradually improved, and industrialization, which had started in the Czech lands around the turn of the century, picked up speed.

In Hungary the Diet was assembled regularly to vote over taxes and troops. As a result of the refusal to pay the Hungarian share of the state bankruptcy caused by the Napoleonic Wars, the Diet was not summoned between 1812 and 1825, when Franz reconvened it order to ensure the succession of his son Ferdinand V. After this it met regularly. The Hungarian nobility managed to uphold a more independent position than, for instance, the nobility of the Czech lands also during absolutism. This made it possible for a liberal circle to form among them, which was to play an important part in the events of 1848–49.

The strong position of the Hungarian (mostly Magyar) nobility also explains the relative success of the Magyar national movement. After the nobility fought back the attempt at introducing German in Hungary under Josef II, the Magyar language gradually acquired a preferred status. Already in 1805 the emperor granted a request that correspondence between the chancellery and the Hungarian Consilium be written in Magyar, and in 1830 the Hungarian Diet made knowledge of Magyar a requirement for employment in the administration and for admission to the judiciary. A law of 1840 expanded the use of Magyar in the state administration and in the Church. It was now required that all clergy know Magyar. In 1844 Magyar was made the official language of all governmental institutions and the medium of instruction of all middle schools. This lenience of the court towards the Magyars of course worked to the direct disadvantage of the non-Magyar national groups in Hungary, and especially the Slovaks.

Yet, the regime was on the whole far more repressive politically than culturally. The Czech and Slovak awakeners were allowed to express Slav reciprocity as long as they stayed within the cultural orbit. During this period the long struggle to introduce Czech (and Slovak) into the schools started. The language decree of 1816 represented a temporary gain (until 1821) for the Czechs, requiring that teachers of gymnasium located in bilingual towns (with mixed Czech-German population) must know Czech in addition to German. At the same time, Czech pupils were allowed to practice their language in school.38 The Slovaks were worse off, yet the local Trivialschulen were taught in Slovak out of necessity.

It has been argued that the Czech and Slovak national movements were mainly cultural movements before the 1840s because they were circumscribed by reactionary absolutism. There may be some truth in this, but only as far as the last two decades before 1848 are concerned; before that time, the contents of national identity were not sufficiently developed.

The spring of the peoples, 1848

After the 1848 February Revolution in France, Metternich's days were numbered. As news of the revolution spread, unrest started in several parts of the Habsburg Empire. In Prague a congregation of people assembled on March 11th by the secret political society Repeal resolved to send a petition to the emperor, and elected a national committee (the St. Václav committee) to carry this out. In Vienna an upheaval forced Metternich to retire. His fall only served to ignite the revolution. In the following days censorship was abolished, and the new Kolowrat government promised a more liberal constitution. In April a temporary constitution was decreed. It was, however, by no means liberal; the income requirements excluded most people from the ballot, and the liberal response was to form their own assembly.

The Prague Petition of 1848 was in effect the first modern Czech political program, yet a few German liberals also supported it. The major demands concerned language (equality between Czech and German), state rights (recognition and promotion of the unity of the Czech lands), and liberal reforms (civil rights, participation of towns and villages in the Diets of the historical lands, local autonomy, public court meetings, improved situation for the serfs etc.). A second petition demanded that the lands of the Czech crown be united, that a modern, freely elected representative organ be established and a minister responsible for the Czech lands be appointed. A cabinet letter of April 8th promised equality of the Czech language with German in public life, and the creation of a Diet and executive organ for Bohemia, but it left the matter of uniting the Czech lands to the imperial Reichstag.

Until 1848, a Bohemian Landespatriotismus based on historical rights united the (Czech and German) nobility and burghers against Vienna. By 1848 the Czechs were monopolizing Bohemian identity, while the Germans (Deutsch-Böhme) were becoming increasingly Great German in orientation. A turning point was František Palacký’s open letter to the German Parliament in Frankfurt in April 1848, where he argued that only a strong Austria, organized as a constitutional federation equally fair to all nations, could save the Czechs and other small nations from annihilation. What these federal units should be, was not clear: The first Czech proposal to the preparatory Constitutional assembly envisaged broad autonomy for all of the Czech lands without joining them; a second proposal in January 1849 foresaw federalization after ethnic lines, excluding the German parts of the Czech lands, but adding Slovak territory.

A Slav congress of all the Slav nations of the Habsburg Empire (and beyond) was convened in Prague in June 1848 in order to support the Austro-Slav program, but was dissolved before it came to any conclusion because of clashes between Czech radicals and the military. A state of emergency was declared and the National Committee was dissolved. After this, the promises of a Diet and executive organ for Bohemia were withdrawn.
The preparatory Constitutional assembly started its work in Vienna in July 1848. In September, serfdom and the robota system were abolished, and after the October rebellion, the Parliament was moved to Kroměříž (Kremsier) in Moravia. Felix Schwarzenberg took over as Prime Minister in November, and Ferdinand V was induced to abdicate in favor of his young nephew Franz (ruled 1848–1916), who added Josef to his name to honor the heritage of Josef II. The army forcibly dissolved the Parliament in March 1849, not allowing it to finish its work.

In Hungary the liberal nobility seized the opportunity to establish an independent government under Lájos Batthyány in March 1848. It was responsible to a Parliament elected on the basis of suffrage for all citizens, but in practice citizenship was restricted. The tax exemptions of the nobility were terminated, freedom of the press introduced and serfdom abolished. In July, the Parliament voted for the establishment of a Hungarian army under government control, a separate national budget, and separate currency. Vienna reacted by sending royal troops led by Josip Jelačić, the ban of Croatia, later joined by voluntaries of the non-Magyar peoples of Hungary, including the Slovaks. The civil war ended in the Battle of Világos in August 1849.

In May 1848, the Slovaks voiced their first political demands in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš, and the first Slovak political organ, the Slovak national council, was established in September. Slovak demands included separate national parliaments for each nation and a common parliament for all the nations of Hungary, introduction of Slovak as the national language in Slovakia, an adequate number of Slovak-medium schools, and the classical liberal rights of freedom of the press, organization and congregation. The Hungarian Parliament refused, introduced marital law, and issued an arrest warrant for the organizers of the meeting, Ľudovít Štúr, Jozef Miloslav Hurban and Michal Miloslav Hodža. Hungary's liberal revolution thus went hand in hand with suppression of the non-Magyars.

**Neo-absolutism and political thaw**

Neo-absolutism was introduced in Austria after the dissolution of the Kremsier Parliament, and in Hungary after the Battle of Világos. It is often termed "Bach absolutism", after Alexander Bach, the new strong man after the death of Schwarzenberg in 1852. Censorship and police control were again tightened, national newspapers were closed down, and the regime interfered increasingly with culture and science. Pressure for Germanization was felt all over the monarchy. German was introduced as the language of administration everywhere, also in Slovakia. The medium of instruction in most middle schools was German or Magyar; for the Slovaks, however, the situation actually improved, since a Slovakized Czech, so-called Old Slovak, was introduced wholly or in part in 11 of the 27 gymnasia in Slovakia in 1851–52. By contrast, the first Czech gymnasium was erected in 1862, in Tábor. Before 1848, only elementary schools in the countryside had Czech as the medium of instruction; the first town school was established in Prague in 1848. In 1854 the instruction in Czech was reduced.39

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The increased influence of the Catholic Church, expressed by the concordat of 1855 between the Papacy and the Austrian government, proved a disadvantage for the Church in the Czech lands in the long run, because of the anti-clericalism it aroused.

Yet, Bach absolutism was not a complete return to the old state of affairs. The peasant reforms and equality before the law remained. In the years 1852–55 the administration was reformed; the historical lands were formally preserved, but now they functioned merely as provinces. In Hungary the župa system was abolished, Croatia-Slavonia, Vojvodina and Transylvania were detached, and the rest of the land was divided into five units, two covering Slovak territory. The Slovaks thus got nothing in return for supporting the court against the Magyar rebels. A new common tax system was established, and the tariff wall between Austria and Hungary was removed in 1850–51. For the first time, the Empire was a single economic entity.

In the western part, neo-absolutism was an economic success. Being more developed, the Austrian part was better able to compete in a common market. Also, the abolishment of serfdom stimulated market-oriented agriculture as well as industry. During this period the Czech lands became one of the most industrialized regions in Central Europe. Combined with rapid population growth, this led to the rise of an urban and rural proletariat, emigration overseas, and urbanization. At the same time, Slovakia experienced economic stagnation. Although serfdom had in principle been abolished in 1848, the Slovaks had to wait five years for practical solutions and another few years for the implementation. This impeded the participation of the Slovaks in market-oriented agriculture. The common market slowed down the industrialization of Slovak territory, also because of the lack of railways to connect it to the rest of Hungary and Austria.

The defeat in the war against the Italian movement in Sardinia in 1859 triggered the fall of absolutism and the gradual transition to constitutional government. Through the October Diploma of 1860, the unique character of the historical lands was confirmed, raising the hopes of the leaders of the subject nations for a federal solution, and the old župa system was reintroduced. In the more liberal atmosphere after 1860, national cultural life again flourished, and national petitions and memoranda were again formulated. As in 1848, national and democratic demands went hand in hand in the Czech and Slovak cases.

A Czech political program published in Národní listy on January 1st 1861 demanded national equality, civil rights and extensive autonomy. This also marked the start of the first Czech political party, the National Party (Národní strana), later known as the Old Czechs. František Palacký and his son-in-law, František Ladislav Rieger, were its front figures. After 1860 the party advocated federalization of the Habsburg monarchy along historical-political lines (not ethnic ones, as Palacký advocated in 1849), a program for which it gained the support of the landed nobility. A part of this scheme was to unite Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Within the Czech lands, the party demanded national equality between Czechs and Germans, which of course implied various cultural rights, especially concerning the position of Czech in the school system and as a language of administration. By then the Moravians had abandoned the idea of separatism, and endorsed association with Bohemia.
The Constitution established by February Patent of 1861 reinstated the Diets of the historical lands, while dividing the Reichsrat into two houses – an upper house of nobles and higher dignitaries appointed by the emperor, and a lower house elected by the Diets of the historical lands and approved by the emperor. Suffrage remained strongly restricted by income requirements, and weighted in favor of great landowners through the curia system. Although it was a reversal of the Habsburg policy of centralization, the new constitution was disappointing from a national point of view. In April 1861, the Hungarian Diet demanded recognition of the Hungarian constitution of 1848, but Franz Josef merely dissolved the Diet. The new Reichsrat was assembled in Vienna for the first time in May 1861, but without the Magyars, Croats and Italians, who boycotted it from the start. In 1863 the Czechs followed suit.

The Slovaks were not represented in the Hungarian Diet, but in July 1861 a meeting was called in Turčiansky Švätý Martin in order to present Slovak national demands. The memorandum of 1861 demanded recognition of the Slovaks as a separate nation; a separate Slovak administrative unit; and the introduction of the Slovak language as the only official language in public life, in the administration, the Church and the schools of Slovakia. The Slovaks also demanded the repeal of laws that were contrary to the equality of all nations of Hungary, Slovak access to schools of all levels, and permission to form educational associations. At the same time a national committee was established. The two first demands were presented to the emperor in December the same year, after getting no response in the Hungarian Parliament. The Slovaks succeeded in getting Slovak introduced as the official language instead of "Old Slovak." Three Slovak gymnasia were established in the 1860s, one in Martin, where also the Matica slovenská was erected in 1863. Vienna acceded to the use of Slovak in lower administration and the schools, but this was implemented only to a limited degree.

**The Ausgleich of 1867**

After the Prussian victory in the war of 1866, the imperial government was forced to accept the demands of the Magyar nobility. The Ausgleich (compromise) of 1867 divided the Habsburg Empire into two parts, the Hungarian crown lands and the rest, and established a form of dual centralism. According to the agreement, Austria and Hungary would have a joint monarch, joint ministries of foreign affairs, war and finance, and delegations from the two parliaments would discuss matters of common interest at annual meetings. The tariff union would continue, and common expenses would be divided according to the ratio 70/30 for Austria/Hungary, respectively. This was a good deal for Hungary, considering its economic potential. All other issues would be handled separately, including the national question.

The Ausgleich solved the Magyar question, but became an obstacle to finding a solution to the other national questions in the Empire. In Hungary, the Magyar-dominated nobility was firmly in charge of a political system that remained repressive throughout the entire period, especially towards the subject nations. In the Austrian part, the political situation was far more fluid, and the evolution of constitutionalism gave the national movements much greater leeway, culturally as well as politically, especially after the turn of the century.
The Habsburg rulers never made any serious attempt at turning the population of their various domains into an "Austrian nation" – before or after 1867. The non-Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy was an agglomeration of historical entities that had been ruled as a unit for barely one hundred years, and it did not even have a name prior to 1867. Besides, the Germans saw themselves as a part of a German nation, and could not be used as a point of departure. Conversely, Hungary was in fact a political unit of some stature. It had been a kingdom since the Middle Ages, interrupted only by the Ottoman yoke, and a certain Hungarian Landespatriotismus did exist. The original idea of a single Hungarian political nation increasingly came to imply a cultural nation – and that required an assimilation of the non-Magyars. This process was initiated before 1867; the difference was that the court was now unable to curtail it.

**Czechs in Austria**

In order to get the Austrian-Hungarian compromise through Parliament, the government had to assent to the demands of the German liberals for constitutional changes. A series of laws were passed in the Reichsrat, ensuring rights of organization and congregation; abolishing censorship; guaranteeing civil rights like freedom of conscience and belief, freedom of worship, freedom of scholarly endeavor and education; and proclaiming national equality. The latter included the right to foster and defend the national language, as well as linguistic equality in the schools, administration and public life. Still, the provision that no one should be forced to learn a second language worked in favor of the Germans.

The Czechs were critical to the February Patent of 1861, and the Ausgleich alienated them even further, by giving the Magyars what the Czechs wanted – recognition of historical rights and political autonomy. They thus extended their boycott of the Reichsrat (initiated in 1863) to the Bohemian and Moravian Diets. The contents of the Czech national program actually changed very little from 1867 to the outbreak of the war. They wanted extensive political autonomy for the Czech lands and national equality – expressed through demands for Czech schools, Czech institutions of higher learning (including universities), and the use of Czech in the administration and courts of the Czech lands, in contacts with the public and internally.

However, varying strategies were adopted by the Czech political leaders – from passive resistance, via trading parliamentary support for national concessions, to obstruction. The gradual change of leadership that took place was partly linked to the extension of individual political rights, favoring parties based on the middle and lower classes. This also made the Austrian political system more competitive, and contributed to a sharpening of the national conflicts between the Czech majority and the German (privileged) minority, especially in Bohemia. Although the Germans never had so dominant a position in Austria as the Magyars had in Hungary, they were still an impediment to concessions to the Czechs.

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40 "Austria" traditionally referred to an even smaller area than the present-day Austrian republic. The wider meaning, covering the entire non-Hungarian part of the dual monarchy, developed during the last fifty years of Habsburg rule. Informally, it was known as Cis-Leithania (i.e. "this side" of Leitha, a small tributary to Danube).
During the initial period of the Dual Monarchy, the Czech focus was on political autonomy for the Czech lands. The national leaders based their claims for autonomy on the historical rights of the Czech crown (státní právo), and enlisted the support of the Bohemian nobility. In the Declaration of 1868, Czech deputies of the Bohemian and Moravian Diets demanded negotiations with the emperor to restore traditional rights, and used outdoor mass rallies, so-called tábory, to get public support. An attempt to reconcile the Czechs was made in 1871, through the eighteen Fundamental Articles (fundamentálky), where the Czech lands were envisaged as a third party in the Austrian-Hungarian partnership. Having achieved a majority in the Bohemian and Moravian Diets in the elections of 1871, the federalists were able to pass the fundamentálky. The opposition was formidable among the German nationalist camp in Vienna, the Magyar nobility and a united Germany, and the Articles were in fact never implemented.

The policy of passive resistance continued, which brought the Czechs nowhere. Disagreement (mainly over strategy) led to a formal split of the original Czech national party in two factions, the conservative Old Czechs and the more liberal Young Czechs, who rejoined the Reichsrat in 1874, shortly after going independent under the official name of the National Liberal Party (Národní strana svobodomyslná). In 1878 the Old Czechs rejoined the Diets and in 1879 also the Reichsrat, where they and the Young Czechs established a common Parliamentary Club. While not giving up their Austro-Slav vision, the Czech political leaders now concentrated on linguistic, cultural and educational demands. Their new approach was to trade parliamentary support for national concessions. This was made possible by the new government of Count Eduard Taaffe (1879–97), who wanted to rule independent of German liberalism.

In four memoranda in November 1879 the Czechs demanded linguistic equality in administration and judiciary, at the university in Prague, in middle schools and in vocational schools. The language decree of 1880 put Czech on level with German as far as public communications were concerned, yet the internal administration language remained German. Charles University was divided in two: one German and one Czech part (effective from 1882), which was to become a major impetus to Czech national life. A host of new Czech gymnasia and vocational schools were also founded in the early 1880s. By 1912 there were 63 Czech gymnasia.

The extension of suffrage benefited the Czechs, since they were underprivileged economically. After the reform of 1885, the Czechs and the federalists achieved a permanent majority in the Bohemian Diet, which led to German boycott in 1887.

Czech opinion was becoming increasingly critical of the Old Czech cooperation with the conservative government, and the so-called punktace (a Czech–German agreement conceived in order to reconcile the Bohemian Germans) of 1890 dealt the final blow to the old national party. The punktace implied a division of the Czech lands along national lines. The school system, agricultural offices and judiciary would be divided into Czech and German sections, and national curia introduced in the Diets. In reality the Czech lands would have been divided into German and bi-lingual areas, blocking federalization. The punktace came to be seen as a victory for the German nationalists in the Czech lands, and aroused bitter opposition from the Czech public with the Young Czechs at the helm. The punktace was never enforced.
In the election in 1891, the Old Czechs lost all seats but two, and the Young Czechs became the leading national party. Three of the Young Czech deputies belonged to the Realist circle: Tomáš G. Masaryk, Josef Kaizl and Karel Kramář. The Young Czechs stayed in opposition for only six years, and then returned to the old strategy of trading support for concessions.

Through the Badeni Ordinances of 1897 the Czechs would have achieved one of their major aims, had they been fully implemented: They stipulated that cases initiated in Czech should be dealt with in Czech in government organs under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of the Interior, Justice, Finance, Commerce and Agriculture. This meant that civil servants would have to be proficient in both Czech and German. Needless to say, the Germans were not happy about this, and after riots in Vienna the demand for bilingualism was abandoned in 1898. The Ordinances were followed in Moravia and the linguistically mixed areas of Bohemia, while the language was, respectively, Czech and German in the Czech and German zones.

Towards the turn of the century the Czech party system gradually became more differentiated, also because of the extension of suffrage to new groups (from 1896 a fifth curia was included, making "ordinary" men eligible to vote). The Czech Social Democrats had organized as a party already in 1878, but joined the Austrian Social Democrats in 1889. Bohemia was the stronghold of socialist currents in the Empire because of its advanced economic position: Two-thirds of the industrial production in Austria was located in the Czech lands, and the growth rate of the last thirty years before the First World War was incredible. By 1910, the percentage of the population living in communities with less than 2000 inhabitants had decreased to 57.5; less than half of the population (42.5 percent in 1910) was employed in agriculture, while industrial employment had risen to 38.4 percent.

In the 1890s two Catholic parties were formed in Moravia, but only the party led by Jan Šrámek survived. An Agrarian Party was formed in 1899, breaking loose from its association with the Young Czechs. As a reaction to the anti-state rights declaration of the Social Democrats upon entering the Reichsrat in 1897, a nationally oriented social reform party was established in 1898, the National Social Party. Three small radical parties established in the 1890s united in the Progressive State Rights Party in 1908.

The representation of the new parties was, however, limited before universal male suffrage and secret ballot were introduced in 1907; besides, the national program still had the support of the entire Czech camp. At the openings of the Reichsrat, the Czech deputies of all parties (save the Social Democrats), repeated their protest against centralism and asserted the historical rights of the Czech crown. Yet, even the Social Democrats supported the cultural and linguistic demands, and during the last years before the war, an autonomist current developed within in this party as well. The most important cultural demands – a second Czech university (in Moravia) and Czechization of the administration in Czech areas – were, however, never fulfilled.41

When universal male suffrage was introduced in 1907, the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Party emerged as the largest Czech parties, the former in terms of votes (38.1 percent to 19.6), the latter in terms of mandates (28 to 24). The Catholic parties got 17.3 percent of the vote and 17 mandates, while the Young Czechs polled 11.1 percent and got 18 mandates. This reflects that the election system was still biased in favor of the Germans and the upper classes.\footnote{For election results (1907), see Kofalka (1996:120); Urban (1991:220).}

**Slovak in Hungary**

While the Austrian part was developing in a more constitutional and democratic direction, the Magyar nobility remained firmly in control of Hungary, and political participation remained socially and nationally restricted. In principle all citizens above the age of 24 were eligible to vote, it was just that "citizenship" was limited by property and income qualifications, or higher education.\footnote{Income and education requirements were lowered in 1874 and 1913, but elections remained public. Under this system, only 6 percent of the population was entitled to vote. For details, see Oskar Krejčí: *Kniha o volbách* (1994:86–87).} This effectively excluded the lower and middle classes from any influence. Combined with election terror, especially after 1895, this ensured that the representation of the non-Magyar groups was kept at a minimum. As late as 1914, the Magyars controlled 405 out of a total of 453 seats in the Lower House of the Hungarian Parliament, the Croats 40 and the other nationalities 8 seats. Of these, one representative was Slovak – Ferdinand Juriga.

As in 1848, the particular Magyar brand of liberalism was anything but liberal in the national question. The Hungarian nationality law of 1868 was hardly liberal even in letter, declaring the equality of all citizens to be based on the existence of a single Hungarian political nation. Magyar became the only official language of the state, in the state administration, the courts, the Parliament and higher education. Only in church, local administration and primary and secondary education were other groups allowed to use their language – for the time being.

The first years after 1867, there were two currents in the Slovak national movement: the Old School, organized in the Slovak National Party (officially founded in 1871), and the New School, linked to the Budapest journal *Slovenské Noviny* ("Slovak news", founded in 1868). The former (originally pro-Vienna) faction remained faithful to the political demands of autonomy as set out in the memorandum of 1861, and increasingly placed its hope in Russia, since Vienna seemed unable or unwilling to help. The latter believed in concessions from the Magyar liberals, if they only would give up the political demands and concentrate on the cultural ones instead. An initial aim of both currents was to make the nationality law as liberal as possible, and, after it was adopted, to have it replaced with more favorable legislation. Their power to work for these aims was, however, very limited, and nothing was achieved. From 1861 to 1884, the Slovaks were represented in the Hungarian Parliament only once, from 1869–72, when the New School got two deputies, and the National Party one. In addition to tactics of intimidation and election terror, the socio-economic position of the Slovaks worked against them; the majority were not able to meet the income and education qualifications.
Magyarization pressure only increased, especially after Kálmán Tisza (1875–90) took over as Prime Minister for the Liberal Party. He firmly believed that a numerical reduction in the non-Magyars was the key to independence from Vienna. Already in 1874 the three Slovak gymnasia were abolished, and in 1875 the *Matica slovenská* was closed down on the charge of being an "unpatriotic and anti-state institution." Its property and funds were confiscated. On this occasion Tisza stated that no such thing as a Slovak nation existed. The strategy of the New School had failed grossly, and it folded, together with its newspaper, that same year.

By government decrees of 1879 and 1883 Magyar was introduced in all schools (including elementary schools in non-Magyar areas), fluency in Magyar became a requirement for being allowed to teach at all, and Slovak associations were forbidden. In 1891 Magyar was even introduced in kindergartens. During the latter part of the 1870s and the first half of the 1880s state agencies and courts on Slovak territory introduced Magyar as the official language, externally as well as internally. Finally, the Education Act of 1907 made Magyar the medium of instruction in national minority schools. The situation was at its worst under Tisza and Dezső Bánffy (1895–99). The latter even Magyarized Slovak geographical names.

During the late 1870s, contacts with the Czechs were renewed. Funds were raised to send Slovaks to Czech gymnasia and to Charles University in Prague, where a Slovak student society (Detvan) was established in 1882. The journal *Hlas* ("Voice"), preaching Czecho-slovak national unity, was established in 1898 by a circle of young Slovak intellectuals who had studied abroad, chiefly under professor Tomáš G. Masaryk in Prague. At the political level, however, the (Old) Czech leaders were reluctant to be associated with the Slovaks, fearing reprisals. In 1884 the Slovak National Party had decided not to take part in the elections, and abstained also from the two following ones, in 1887 and 1892. Meanwhile, unsuccessful attempts were made at petitioning Vienna to restore the *Matica slovenská* and prevent the use of its funds for Magyarization purposes.

The church policy of the Hungarian Liberal Party, still in power, led to the establishment of a Hungarian Catholic People's Party in 1895 (Néppárt), which paid lip service to the interests of the subject nations. Prior to the elections of 1896, the Slovak National Party thus urged people to vote for the candidates of Néppárt. A Slovak clerical current developed, which was the predecessor of the People's Party (Ludová strana) under the leadership of Father Andrej Hlinka. In the following election, the National Party had its own candidates, running on a modest program demanding that the nationality law of 1868 be observed. The Slovaks got four mandates in 1901, two in 1905, seven in 1906, and three in 1910.

Around the turn of the century, three additional currents began emerging among the Slovaks, none of which was formally organized into separate parties before 1914. A Czechoslovak-oriented group developed around the journal *Hlas*, published in Skalica from 1898. The leading figures were Vavro Šrobár and Pavel Blaho. Around the journal *Slovenský týždeník* ("Slovak weekly") from 1903 an agrarian current was forming under the leadership of Milan Hodža. Finally, a Slovak Social Democratic current developed within the Hungarian Social Democratic Party during the 1890s.
Only under István Tisza (1913–17) was conciliation with the Slovak national movement attempted. The Slovaks were offered certain language rights in return for abstaining from political demands. Extended rights to instruction in Slovak were ordered in 1914. When the Magyars finally abandoned their assimilation policy and offered autonomy towards the end of the war, it was too late. A Czecho-Slovak solution was then a more tempting alternative.

It should be noted that Magyarization did not mean oppression on racial grounds. Practically any career was open to a Slovak who was willing to shed his language and culture and become Magyar. Many aspiring Slovaks opted for a career, and thus gradually formed a bilingual elite with Magyar subjective identity – at least outwardly. It was bitterly complained that many of the Slovak Magyarones (assimilated Slovaks) were even more bent on Magyarization than the Magyars by birth, and they were of course seen as traitors. According to presumably official figures, there were 121 Slovak civil servants in Hungary as a whole at the end of the First World War, of these 74 in the Slovak župy. The figures include notaries and court officials.44

The major industrial centers of Hungary were concentrated on the Hungarian plain, especially around Budapest (Buda and Pest had been joined into one city after 1873). Slovakia had only two industrial centers, Bratislava and Košice, both of which had a non-Slovak majority,45 otherwise small scale crafts production dominated. In 1869, 80.9 percent of the working force in Slovakia were employed in agriculture, in 1900 the percentage was still 68.3, and probably even higher among the Slovaks, considering their distribution. Some 80 percent of the population still lived in communities with less than 2,000 people at the start of the war. Apart from the intelligentsia, Slovak workers outside Slovakia and Slovaks living in multi-national towns on Slovak territory were especially affected by Magyarization.

Because of migration and assimilation processes, the ratio between Magyars and Slovaks in Slovak territory was changing to the benefit of the Magyars. In the census of 1880, 63 percent indicated Slovak as their mother tongue and 23.2 percent Magyar; by 1910 the figure had fallen to 57.7 percent for Slovak and increased to 30.5 for Magyar.46 Considering the general Magyarization pressure, however, the census hardly gave an accurate picture. Between 1900 and 1914 alone, 430,000 people moved from Slovakia, to industrial centers or overseas. From 1871 to 1914 half a million Slovaks settled permanently in the United States. Compared to the size of the population, only the Irish had a higher emigration rate.47 In the Slovak colony that was forming there, the diffusion of national consciousness was not impeded, and this articulate community was to play an important part in the time to come.

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44 Figures reported in Konštantín Čulen: Česí a Slováci v štátnych službách ČSR (1994:21). According to Urban (1991:225) there were 24 Slovak of 1,664 civil servants in Slovakia in 1910, while Kann & David (1984:384) report 154, but also a much higher total (6,185 civil servants). There were in any case few.

45 In the census of 1900, only 16.3 percent of the population of Bratislava and 23 percent of the population of Košice declared Slovak to be their mother tongue. See Štatistický lexikon obcí III ČSR (1936:164).

46 Štatistický lexikon obcí III (1936:166–67).

Towards independence

Before the outbreak of the war on June 28th, 1914, neither Czechs nor Slovaks had seriously advocated independence. The Reichsrat had been closed down already in the spring of 1914, to be reconvened only after the death of Franz Josef in 1916, and civil rights were suspended. In Hungary, the government tightened its control of the press and other forms of public expression. The first initiative to form a Czechoslovak state came from the Czech political leaders, while the Slovaks went into passivity after the war started – save a group headed by Milan Hodža, who worked for a federal solution within Hungary. Masaryk left Prague already in December 1914 to work for independence, and set out on a grand diplomatic tour to London, Paris, Moscow and Washington. At home a secret group (known as the Mafie) formed under Edvard Beneš, coordinating the contact with the independence movement abroad.

In May 1915, the Habsburg government interned leading Czech politicians who were in favor of independence (among them Václav Klofáč, Karel Kramář and Alois Rašín). After these arrests an activist, pro-Austrian circle formed under the leadership of Antónín Švehla (Agrarians), Bohumír Šmeral (Social Democrats) and Zdenek Tobolka (Young Czechs), in the conviction that the Habsburg Empire would survive the war. Most Czech parties participated in the Czech Union (Český svaz), formed by the Czech members of the Reichsrat in 1916, and the National Committee (Národní výbor) in Prague. On several occasions the Czech leaders declared their loyalty to the ruling house, even as late as in May 1917, when they presented as their goal a free democratic Czech state (including the Slovaks) under the Habsburg scepter. A decisive change occurred only in January 1918, after the Russian Revolution and the subsequent proclamation of national self-determination. In the meantime the National Committee had been reorganized under the leadership of Kramář, who was set free in July 1917.

Abroad, independence was an explicit aim as early as in 1915. In October that year, Czech and Slovak émigré associations at a meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, advocated a Czechoslovak federation. In November Czech exiles in Paris declared an independent Czechoslovak state as their goal. Later a Czechoslovak National Council was founded there, which coordinated the efforts in Europe. Masaryk, Milan R. Štefánik and Beneš, now in exile, were the leading figures.

That Slovak émigré associations backed a Czechoslovak solution became known in Slovakia, and helped convince the national leaders at home. However, the Slovak National Party had not yet given up hopes of gaining concessions from the Magyars. By May 1918, it was becoming clear that the Slovak leaders opted for a union with the Czechs, which was confirmed at two meetings, one socialist and one national. In September, all Slovak political parties and groups joined to form a Slovak National Council. Ferdinand Juriga, the only serving Slovak deputy in the Hungarian Parliament, declared on behalf of the Council and the Slovaks on October 19th that they no longer recognized the authority of the Hungarian government.

Meanwhile, Masaryk had co-signed an agreement in Pittsburgh, USA, between Czech and Slovak émigré organizations on the future organization of a Czechoslovak state, the notorious Pittsburgh Agreement of May 30th, 1918, which promised the Slovaks autonomy, albeit with some reservations.
On October 18th, 1918, the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris, by then recognized as the legitimate government of the Czechs and Slovaks, declared independence (the Washington declaration). The Czechoslovak National Committee in Prague founded the Czechoslovak republic on October 28th, 1918. Two days later in Turnianský Svätý Martin a meeting of the Slovak political parties gave Slovak support to the establishment of a Czechoslovak state.

Apart from the incident in 1848–49, the Czech leaders had consistently demanded federalization along historical-political lines, while the Slovaks had always argued their case on the basis of natural rights. The "Slovakia" they wanted autonomy for, had clear borders only to the north and west, fading into Magyar territory to the south. At the Paris Peace Conference, the borders of the new state were drawn according to historical lines in the Czech lands and national lines in Slovakia, adding some Magyar territory "for the sake of internal communication." One third of the Czechoslovak "nation-state" state was non-Czechoslovak in population.

**Concluding remarks**

Due to differences in the economic, political and cultural development of Austria and Hungary, the situation of the Czechs and of the Slovaks was very different at the inception of the First Republic. Economically, the Czech lands were the most industrialized part of Austria, whereas 62 percent of the population in Slovakia was still employed in agriculture in 1910. And although the growth rate of Hungary exceeded Austria's after 1867, economic differences between the two parts of the Empire remained considerable. A part of the picture was also the weak infrastructure and the low urbanization in Slovakia compared to the Czech lands.

Politically, the Austrian part of the Empire gradually developed into a constitutional democracy, with the introduction of general male suffrage in 1907. This period witnessed the development of a Czech party system differentiated according to socio-economic and religious cleavages, while the original National Party (the Old Czechs) was reduced to almost nothing. In contrast, the liberalism of the Hungarian regime never applied to non-Magyar groups, and the Slovaks thus remained essentially without representation in the Hungarian political system. In practice, only one Slovak party (with various currents) existed: the Slovak National Party.

Most fateful was perhaps the difference in the level of cultural development. Over the years, the nationality policy of the Austrian regime became more accommodating culturally, allowing Czech cultural and national development. By 1912, there were both a university and 63 gymnasia where Czech was the language of instruction, and Czech had been partially introduced in the administration, while the Slovaks barely had Slovak-medium elementary schools. Instead, the Slovaks were subjected to a harsh Magyarization policy, and the national and cultural progress that was achieved in the 1860s was reversed. In the next chapter, we will look into the consequences which this had for Czech and Slovak national development.

48 According to Urban (1991:223) the national income of the Austrian part increased a little more than 6,5 times, while the national income of the Hungarian part increased more then 8,5 times from 1850 to 1913.