

Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovakismus, and German National Minorities between the World Wars: Emanuel Rádl's Theory of a Nation and a State

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Introduction

In the late 1930s the history of Czechoslovakia and all of Central Europe was marked by the growth of antidemocratic German national agitation that eventually led to World War II; no one is in doubt that this development in the region was a result of Hitler's expansionist politics¹. The Munich Agreement of 1938, which stripped Czechoslovakia of its border areas (of which more than 80% were inhabited by a German speaking population), was justified by the right of self-determination for 'oppressed' Czechoslovak Germans who were deprived of this with the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918.² This was certainly an exaggerated and manipulated national socialist rhetoric. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the final break-up of Czechoslovakia happened only due to external forces. No less significant a factor was the tense internal relationship between the Czechoslovak nation and national minorities – mainly German and Hungarian – since the country's beginnings.

Emanuel Rádl was one of the rare Czech political thinkers who saw the fragility and potential instability of Czechoslovakia because of its inconsistent founding conception and subsequent national rivalries. Rádl's critique of the confused idea of the Czechoslovak state is the focus of this article. Rádl tried to find a pragmatic solution to the troubling national problem, however, his concept of a contractual state based on an ideological patchwork was incongruous as well. Nevertheless, his predictions that the solution for Czech-German relations would affect the development of the entire region, and his fears that Czechs would eventually aim to suppress Germans as the second nationality in the Czech lands, proved to be right. For these reasons, it is definitely useful to become acquainted with his theories and closely examine whether, had they been more appreciated, they could have

¹ In writing this article, I am mainly indebted to Igor Lukes for his immense support, to Nikolas Prevelakis for helping me to structure the article, and to Liah Greenfeld whose work and personality has been my greatest inspiration.

² It is also true that at the very beginning of the Czechoslovak state, four predominantly German regions declared their autonomy on the basis of the right of self-determination and denied allegiance to the new state. The response of Czechoslovak officials was somewhat cynical (even though probably the only one possible, if Czechoslovakia was to be maintained in the given borders): if Germans want to leave, they are free to do so: they can give up their Czechoslovak citizenship and move to Weimar Germany or Austria.

somewhat altered the situation between the World Wars in Czechoslovakia and perhaps in Central Europe.

Biographical Background

Emanuel Rádl (1873-1942) was born in a small village west of Prague into the family of a shopkeeper. Academically gifted but poor, he found his way to study and later, at the age of thirty, to teach at Prague's Charles University. In his early years, when the Czech lands were still a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he focused on a theory of evolution in natural sciences for which he received some acclaim. Rádl later moved from the natural sciences into the field of philosophy and social commentary. His writings on the issues of the day, such as democracy and cultural identity, increased with the foundation of the independent First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-38). Even though Rádl was a loyal Czechoslovak citizen and his motivation was to improve his country's political system, he extensively criticized Czechoslovak nationalist ideology as well as political practice. Rádl's endeavour to demythologize Czechoslovak nationalist ideology was out of step with the mainstream of contemporary political thinking. His attacks on the principles of the Czechoslovak state impressed neither Czechs, who after centuries of suppression under the Habsburgs were not willing to make concessions towards the German minority, nor Germans, who saw in his endeavour an objective to legalize an unjust Versailles system. Thus Rádl earned not only the reputation of a radical, but also received such a lambasting from both sides that it eventually led to his nervous breakdown. Afterwards, he continued writing on philosophy and nationalism, but kept himself out of the public eye as much as possible. His health deteriorated and he died at home three years after Nazi Germany occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia (of which he was unaware), at the height of World War II. Today, Emanuel Rádl is seen as a controversial figure and, for the most part, has been underappreciated or forgotten.

Two Concepts of Nationality: The Dilemma of Czechoslovak Theory and Practice

When Emanuel Rádl explained why he was interested in nationalism, in the Introduction to his key book on nationalism: *War Between Czechs and Germans*, published in 1928, he wrote: 'The national question is a modern world question; it is for contemporary Europe such a question of questions like the Reformation was a

matter of life or death for Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries' (Rádl, 1993, p.7). Clearly, the right of self-determination was a driving force of the new world order established after the World War I, and Czechoslovakia, one of the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was founded on the right of self-determination for Czechs and Slovaks. Therefore, when Rádl continued explaining his motives on this subject, he emphasized that he was not studying the national problem 'in abstracto' but as a particular contest between Czechs and Germans within the new state. The comparison between the Reformation and current nationalism goes even further when, in Rádl's point of view, the Versailles and Saint-Germain Treaties were a similar kind of a winner's dictate as the Edict of Nantes, which, while uncommon in the 1920s, is a perspective plausible in retrospect. The peace treaties thus guaranteed insufficient rights to national minorities since they defined them as individual rights, even though 'a nationality, race, and church are collective phenomena' (Rádl, 1993, p.8).

Czechoslovak politicians adopted this individualistic approach when they drafted the first permanent Czechoslovak constitution in 1920. In Section VI: Protection of National, Religious, and Racial Minorities, Art. 128 (1) it is stated: 'All citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic shall be in all respects equal before the law and shall enjoy equal civic and political rights whatever be their race, their language, or their religion.' Article 128 (2) continues: 'Difference in religion, belief, confession, or language shall... constitute no obstacle to any citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic particularly in regard of entry into the public services and offices... or in regard to the exercise of any trade or calling.' Although the title of the section names, among others, the protection of national minorities, in any of the detailed clauses the word 'national' is not mentioned a single time. This would suggest that either Czechoslovakia was a one-nation state and so there was no need for according special rights to national minorities, which poses a question as to why it was necessary to mention them in the title. Another interpretation would be that, as in the case of a multinational state such as the United States or in the case of a civic-national state such as France, everyone was considered 'Czechoslovak' and therefore it was important to talk about individual rights but redundant to mention national rights.

The civic conception might have been declared in the basic documents; however, it was incongruous with political practice. Rádl noticed these contradictions and his conclusions for the future were very sceptical: 'Even if the current co-governance of Czechs and Germans sets up a more peaceful ground for their mutual

understanding [...] it is only an armistice during which both parties insist on their postulates in order to attack each other as soon as the next occasion offers itself' (Rádl, 1993, p.9). Rádl devoted all his effort to seeking why this was going to happen if nothing changed. He found roots in the ideological foundations of the Czechoslovak state that was based on, in his words, 'the organic conception of a Czechoslovak nation' (Rádl, 1993, p. 119).

Two Concepts of Nation: Point of Departure for Rádl's Criticism

According to Rádl, a nation could be either organic or political. The organic concept was typical for 'regions eastwards from the Rhine' and hence also for Czechoslovakia. German philosophers such as Herder, Fichte, or Hegel first spelled out this theory. Herder formulated a naturalist concept of a nation and state as an extended family, since a tribe is the culmination of a family, a nation is the culmination of a tribe, and finally a state is the culmination of a nation. Fichte substituted Herder's consanguinity with a language kinship. Therefore, the organic concept requires a nation defined both by ethnicity and a mother tongue. The problem with such nations emerges when there are two organically defined nations making their claims to one territory. The inevitable result is that one, most likely a stronger or more populated nation, 'either expels the other one from its residence or enslaves it' (Rádl, 1993, p.175). In Czechoslovak practice, the power of the organic concept manifested itself in an antipathy toward foreigners – mostly Germans, because any differently speaking immigrant dilutes the family character of an organic nation.

Hegel added to the organic concept a 'historical aspect' when he asserted: 'the concrete Ideas, the minds of nations, have their truth and their destiny in the concrete Idea which is absolute universality, i.e. in the world mind. Around its throne they stand as executors of its realization and as signs and ornaments of its grandeur' (Hegel, 1965, p.352). Rádl explains Hegel's contribution to the organic theory with the example of a plant in which seeds already contain the future blossoms and fruits. If we apply the organic premise to the Czechoslovak nation, then the Czechoslovak nation does not mean current inhabitants of Czechoslovakia but Czechs and Slovaks descending from their forefathers and including future generations. The most disturbing conclusion which Rádl derives from this is that the key elements of a society are then not sovereign individuals but forces controlling whole groups, expressed by feelings of consanguinity, tradition, and patriotism. So conceived 'minds

of nations' place a nation and state above the free and responsible will of individuals. Therefore, a nation is a product of history, a suprahuman creation, and 'a mythical power ruling for a long time to which everything else must be subjugated' (Rádl, 1993, p.129). In this respect, Rádl was also aware of the fascist affinity for seeing a nation as a mythical force and was wary of fascistic tendencies throughout Europe, including those in Czechoslovakia, even though they were not yet, according to Rádl, sufficiently organized. Nevertheless, for Rádl both organic nationalists and fascists were equal adversaries of moral individualism and liberalism.

The opposing concept is identified with the political nation that had been formed in Western Europe. The political concept of nation entails a group of people organized under one constitution. Neither tribal attachments nor ethnic or racial origins define the political nation: the most significant factor is the will to create a state community. The political nation thus presupposes a will to organize itself, laws, constitution and compliance with them. Rádl referred to Belgium, Canada, and mainly to the United States. Their origins and mother tongue notwithstanding, American citizens are members of an American nation. Rádl admitted that he was in favour of this political concept. Along these lines, a member of the Czechoslovak nation would be anyone who came to the Czechoslovak territory in the past without reference to whether he or she felt a 'tribal unity' with Czechs or Slovaks. However, this was not the case in the Czechoslovak reality, as is apparent already from the fact that the constitution enumerated rights of national minorities. Rádl also pointed out that the terms 'national' and 'state' had, and still have, in the Czech language contrary connotations to those in the Anglo-Saxon world. For instance, in the U.S. the word 'national' pertains to the whole United States, while 'state' refers to one state, e.g. Massachusetts. In Czech, implications are otherwise: a 'national' question was a Czech question, while a 'state' question meant both a Czech and German one. In Rádl's opinion, it would have been very desirable if the Czechoslovak nation was understood in the political sense. He even proclaimed that it should be the task for the future to overcome tribal sentiments with the idea of a political nation whose members will be Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, and Hungarians.

Two Concepts of Nationality: Rádl's Criticism of Czechoslovak National Theory Applied in Practice

In *War Between Czechs and Germans*, Rádl (1993) used terms such as 'nation', 'tribe', or 'national minority' but did not make a clear distinction between them. To see the difference, we have to look to his shorter essay *Nationality as a Scientific Problem* published in 1929. 'The scientific problem' from the essay's title refers to a census from 1921 and difficulties for census officials connected with question number 10 in the census questionnaire, 'Nationality (Mother Tongue)'. The rationale for having a census was obvious: the recently established state needed to know the composition of its population for fiscal and administrative purposes. The 'covert' motivation was to confirm that a majority of Czechs and Slovaks lived within the territory and that, therefore, their right to self-determination was 'empirically and scientifically' proved. According to the census results, the distribution of the 13,346,000 inhabitants rounded to thousands was the following:

Czechs	6570000	66%
Slovaks	2190000	
Germans	3124000	23%
Hungarians	745,000	5.6%
Ruthenians	462,000	3%
Jews	180,000	1%
Poles	75,000	0.6%

Table 1: Czechoslovak census results from 1921

The census results show that Czechoslovaks formed a majority of more than three-fifths of inhabitants, while the German population made up slightly more than one-fifth and were overwhelmingly the largest national minority. If we consider Czechs and Slovaks separately, there were more Germans living in Czechoslovakia at that time than Slovaks.

	1921	1930
Czechoslovaks	68.54%	68.85%
Germans	30.30%	29.51%
Poles	0.74%	0.83%

Table 2: Czechoslovak census results from 1930

However, the underlying aim of the census, to empirically demonstrate the need for an independent Czechoslovak nation state, was accomplished.

Nevertheless, there remains the question of how nationality was instituted. In contrast to the former Austro-Hungarian method that assessed nationality in terms of 'dealing language' which had always been favourable to German language, the Czechoslovak government defined nationality as 'a tribal affiliation whose external sign is typically a mother tongue' (*Basic Information*, 2005).³ However, the mother tongue did not determine nationality explicitly, since nationality must be found out by 'direct free acknowledgement of every present inhabitant who is older than 14 years and sane' (*Basic Information*, 2005). Classification of nationality as a 'tribal affiliation', moreover, enabled Jews or Gypsies to apply for their nationalities even if they did not speak Hebrew or Romany.

Rádl (1929) was aware of all these contradictions when he wrote *Nationality as a Scientific Problem*. The difficulty stemmed from the ambiguous definition of nationality, given by the mother tongue but registered according to one's own choice. In Rádl's view, there are two concepts of nationality – tribal (racial-cultural) and ideological (political) – that cannot be mixed. The more direct method requires nationality to be given by 'objective facts' such as mother tongue. In that case, it is excessive to ask about one's nationality; the question posed should look for only that objective fact – the mother tongue. The other concept, ideological or political, is based on individual free will. In the 1921 census, the 'objective clause' seeking the mother tongue in an otherwise political concept of nationality caused uncertainty among the public about what was asked in the census and how. The problem was also a matter of public discourse, since Czechs were encouraged by political agitation to declare their mother tongue, while Germans were inclined to register their freely chosen nationality.

As a result, census commissioners were deciding according to their personal judgments. In a few examples, Rádl revealed how this technique was arbitrary and sometimes led to quite dubious consequences. A widow of a soldier, Ms. K., was registered under the Czech nationality because her name was Czech. When Ms. K. said that she was a German and her children could not even speak Czech, a census

³ In 1930 the definition of nationality was connected with the mother tongue even more closely. A nationality different from the mother tongue was allowed to be registered only in cases when the respondent could not speak the mother tongue either in a family or in a household and could unquestionably speak the other language that he or she declared in the census questionnaire (the so-called re-nationalization norm).

commissioner rejected her claim and instructed her to send the children to a Czech school (Rádl, 1929, p.47). Similarly, an apprentice had a Czech name, but declared himself to be German (his mother was German and he lived in a German village), however, a census commissioner proclaimed: ‘Your name is Czech and your face looks Czech; you are Czech’ (Rádl, 1929, p. 48).

Rádl, on the other hand, preferred the ideological concept of nationality. Just as in political elections, an individual’s free will decides. It implies, for example, a distinction between being a member of an agrarian class, an ‘objective fact’, and being a member of an agrarian party, depending on one’s own will. In Rádl’s words: ‘during the census, people should not have been classified by nationality, but *they should sign up to a certain national program*. They do not state their past, but they want to define the future; in other words, *they choose their nationality*’ (Rádl, 1929, p.62). A given past is an argument when people decide for their future. As the last point of his criticism towards the tribal concept of nationality, Rádl emphasizes that under certain international circumstances people have personal interests involved in census results. For that reason, a choice of nationality is not a momentary idea. Nationality is a product of social conditions, particularly when nationality has an influence on political, economic, or legal status. Therefore, any nationality must be ‘based only on a free choice, since we in reality proclaim our nationality as a program under a personal responsibility’ (Rádl, 1929, p.64).

Three Concepts of State: Rádl’s Proposal of Contractual State

Emanuel Rádl divides democratic states into three types: organic or German, majoritarian or liberal democratic in our time, and contractual. An organic type of state assumes that the state and the people represent an organism and that individuals are its organs. The state is a culmination of a national idea in an organic sense; an organic state is born out of an inevitable historical and natural process. Democracy is then understood not as the rule of equal individuals, but as the rule of people belonging to one nation. This type of democracy, which developed first in Germany and spread around all of Central Europe, is different from democracy in Western Europe.

For Rádl, the organic concept is too collectivist and is conducive to the overestimation of a society. In contrast, majoritarian democracy, which has evolved in the West since the French Revolution, is more or less atomistic. ‘The people’ means a

sum of individuals who each have the same say, and a majority of voices decides. By the general secret voting procedure, majoritarian democracy enables each individual to come to a decision of his own will. Nevertheless, Rádl points out, because the ruling majority is not responsible to anyone, how is it possible to distinguish between the will and the tyranny of a majority? Under such a tyranny, the majority decides and all minorities have to follow.⁴ Therefore, Rádl insists, majoritarian democracy is too mechanistic. It is ‘not built on the idea of justice, but only on the idea of power: “majoritas vincit” is its final word, while it ought to be “veritas vincit”’ (Rádl, 1993, p.129).

Rádl’s definitions of organic and political nations and the derived classification of organic and majoritarian states can be likened to other categorizations of nationalism and state, namely civic and ethnic (Greenfeld, 1993). The contractual concept of state, on the other hand, is Rádl’s most original and therefore most noteworthy contribution to the theories of nationalism and state. Classic theories of social contract talk about a contract among individuals whose rights are the boundaries of the state. In modern societies, however, these *individual* human rights are, according to Rádl, insufficient. In each society there are groups that deserve special considerations and we have to protect these groups with special *collective* human rights. For instance, it is impossible to subject men, women and children automatically to identical rules of equality. If we consider women equal to men in every respect, they would have not only the same rights but also the same duties. This, in reality, is not the case. While women have equal suffrage, they are typically exempt from conscription; the exemption of a woman from conscription is not her individual right, but the right of all women.

In the course of history, special human rights grew from the notion of privileges. Collective rights, therefore, can be split into three categories: natural (women, children), economic (working class), and cultural (churches, nations/national minorities). The contractual state is established by a contract not only among individuals but also between these collectives. These collectives have deeper rights than a state and thus these collectives form a contractual state. Because a nation is one

⁴ When considering the majoritarian state, Radl certainly exaggerates the arbitrary will of majority. In democratic liberal states, individual human rights in particular assure that one group of individuals cannot murder another group just because the former has more members than the latter. Nevertheless, a problem may arise when the first group forming the majority is in power for an extremely long time and does not allow an alternation with the opposition, or even denies the minority group access to power. Such a case can further worsen when the minority group is distinguishable by some ‘visible’ factor – color of skin, language, or by concentration in one region.

of these collectives, and hence is prior to the state, it is a legal subject that can enter with other subjects into a contract and constitute the state. In the contractual state, similar to the separation of church from state, the state should be elevated above nations so that they do not conflict with each other. Due to this ‘separation of nation from state’, the right of the nation becomes a collective right to its own language, national customs, culture, et cetera. The ‘separated’ state must be organized in a way that does not harm the collective right of the nation. Put differently, the collective national right belongs to the unalienable rights. Therefore, it is necessary to protect the entire nation, not only the individuals within a nation. On the other hand, despite its priority over the state, nation must not pronounce unilaterally its ‘self-determination’ and secede from the state. The contract between state and nations is binding and can be broken only under certain ‘morally justified’ circumstances, though these were not specified by Rádl. Rádl was convinced that the state is not the single mediator between an individual and society. Between these two, there exist lower social units, such as nations or classes, whose power is more inherent than that of the state. These units should be bestowed with autonomy within the state and, as a result, ‘the more autonomy they have within the state, the more contractual is the state’ (Rádl, 1993, p.158).

Two Concepts of the Czechoslovak State and Czechoslovakism: Rádl’s Theory Applied

When drafting the permanent constitution, Czechoslovak politicians drew their inspiration from the French and American traditions. Section I: General Provisions, Art. 1 (1) states: ‘The people are the sole source of all state power in the Czechoslovak Republic.’ Further, in Art. 1 (2): ‘This constitutional charter determines through what organs the sovereign people shall express its will in laws...’ The term ‘the people’ is not specified, which might lead to an expectation that there is no need for any clarification because ‘the people’ comprises all citizens with no reference to their nationality or ethnic origin. This impression is extended by the use of the introductory clause from the Constitution of the United States of America. In the Czechoslovak case, however, instead of ‘We, the People’ the Preamble of the constitution says ‘We, the Czechoslovak nation.’ Now we must ask the basic question: does the ‘Czechoslovak nation’ mean ‘the people’ in a political (American) sense? Or is the ‘Czechoslovak nation’ defined in an organic sense, including Czechs and

Slovaks and thus excluding a large German population and other national minorities? For the answer let us cite a few lines of one of the ‘Founding Fathers’ of Czechoslovakia and a creator of the theory of Czechoslovakism. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, in *New Europe* written in 1917-18, a book advocating the post-war establishment of Czechoslovakia, explains:

The Czechs have a historical right to the independence of the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) [...] In addition to that, they have a historical and natural right to the addition of Slovakia [...] Culturally the Slovaks remained constantly in close relation with the Czechs [...] if culture is a necessary condition of political independence, then the Czechs and Slovaks deserve independence fully. (Masaryk, 1972, pp.138-9)

The country’s first president spelt out his perspective clearly: the future independent state would be an organization of a nation consisting of two culturally related ‘branches’– Czech and Slovak. The theory of the Czechoslovak nation was born.⁵ The organic concept was also projected onto the Law Establishing the Principles of Language Rights Within the Czechoslovak Republic of 1920 which stipulated that ‘the Czechoslovak language shall be the state, official language of the Republic’, consisting of Czech and Slovak, and only where ‘a considerable fraction’⁶ of citizens speaking other languages lives can a language other than Czechoslovak be used for official purposes.

Rádl argued that Czechoslovak cultural concept was flawed because it would inevitably lead to abuse of nations. Czechoslovakia is for Rádl an organic state, since it consisted of one Czechoslovak tribe based on a cultural and language kinship and not on free will. The tribe became a ‘state-making’ nation; the new state was, therefore, organized by ‘a national unity of Czechs and Slovaks’ and not by particular leaders such as Masaryk. Rádl assumed: ‘according to this concept, it is apparent to any Czech and Slovak, and even German, that a German is obviously neither

⁵ The theory of Czechoslovakism was a rather realist political product. At the end of the World War I, Czech politicians needed to convince the Allies that another Slavic state should be founded. The closest possible nationality which could form a new state with Czechs is the Slovaks, if the influence of the German population were to be reduced. The argument was also led along historical and economic lines; the rationale for the addition of Slovak lands was the need for economic viability. The cultural and ethnic proximity was emphasized by the language kinship, since even today both languages are mutually understandable. Eventually, Ruthenia was appended to Czechoslovakia (and later became part of the Soviet Union and now Ukraine).

⁶ The formulation of a ‘considerable fraction’, as stated in the constitution, became a matter of heated debate; eventually, a national minority of at least 20 per cent of inhabitants was established.

“Czechoslovak,” nor a member of the “Czechoslovak nation” but that he is a member of a national minority inhabiting this republic’ (1993, p.179). Under the organic theory, Czechs and Slovaks are the only ruling nation in the country, fulfilling its historical mission. Under the majoritarian concept, however, there are a larger number of Czechoslovaks, if we add both Czechs and Slovaks, and, therefore, they can as a majority vote over Germans who form only a minority. From this point of view, the Czechoslovak state is a peculiar combination of organic and majoritarian type of democracy.

Due to all these ‘inner contradictions’, the Czechoslovak constitution recognized the individual rights of Czechoslovak citizens, except for, of course, the national rights of Czechs and Slovaks that were ‘taken over from the German ideology and cannot be in fact considered human rights’ (Rádl, 1993, p.149). Rádl illustrated how the situation was absurd by the example of exchanging national minorities with the working class. Within such rules, a worker would be equal before the law with anyone else; that would not even have to be declared in the constitution. He could become an official if he was skilful enough, and he could publish magazines and newspapers, et cetera. The working class and its collective rights, however, would not be recognized; there would be no right to strike, no eight-hour workday, no social security.

As a solution to such a complicated problem, Rádl went back to his contractual concept of the state. The Czechoslovak state emerged neither organically by a tribal realization of its unity, nor by a natural process. The First Republic originated partly owing to international diplomatic negotiations, partly to a conscious alliance of two neighbouring cultures that were, however, separated from each other for hundreds of years. The association did not just happen but was executed on account of a political programme. Czechs and Slovaks do not hold together by instinct, but because of the constitution, laws, government, and administration. Their state was elevated above nations of Czechs and Slovaks and separated from them like churches. The idea of Czechoslovakism was actually a very progressive concept, since its principle was voluntarism; nevertheless, it should have been expanded so that it also included Germans, Hungarians, and other national minorities. Rádl posed a question: ‘If it is acceptable to join Czechs and Slovaks in one nation, why not be consequential and unite in one political nation the entire population of Czechoslovakia?’(1993, p.181) The equality of all individuals could have been

extended to all national groups. Similarly, Rádl claimed that there does not exist any Czechoslovak language, only Czech and Slovak languages. If, then, it was possible for the Czechoslovak nation to recognize two different state languages, why could it not have recognized three or four? The initial meaning of the word ‘Czechoslovak’ was altered through practice; its content designated a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic – only his state nationality, without reference to his ethnic affiliation.

Conclusion

Although Rádl denounced the Czechoslovak, and particularly Czech, nationalism based on the organic concept of nation with majoritarian elements, he was a patriot who wished the new state to endure. He considered the First Republic as ‘his’ state and, simply said, he liked it. Rádl recognized that its stability would last only if others besides Czechs, and perhaps Slovaks, liked it as well. Therefore, he criticized the Czechoslovak government’s politics towards the national minorities; he found it suicidal and desperate, and tried to find a solution to the unsafe situation. Because he condemned the persecution of Germans as degrading for a democratic regime, he was committed to the issue of how to achieve an agreement with the German minority in a common state. In this perspective, Rádl endowed the nation with a political will and programme.

Thanks to the intricate political system in Czechoslovakia, he formulated a complicated theory of a contractual state and a volitional theory of nationality. His ideas, however, could be implemented only for two or more nations allocated within one state’s territory and for people living at the boundaries of two nationalities. Moreover, he was very imprecise in defining what kinds of collectives can claim their collective rights and thus be formative members of a state. Applied to the Czechoslovak case, Rádl’s thoughts would have offered German and other national minorities the opportunity to become constituent parts of Czechoslovakia and take an equal share in state politics. He wanted to create an artificial, contractual state in a political sense that absorbed all ethnic groups and ‘organic’ nations; this was definitely a contradictory ‘utopia’ and the largest weakness of his theory. Rádl, moreover, exaggerated the volitional character of the nationality, since it is impractical to choose any nationality at any time and any place.

The last difficulty of his theory is that he recognized rights of nationalities as rights to a language, culture, customs et cetera. Nevertheless, he did not speak about

collective political rights for the national minorities that could evolve into a political autonomy or federalism and merely substituted them with cultural collective rights. Nevertheless, Rádl's vision that the solution to the relation between Czechs and Germans would 'determine the future of not only the Czechoslovak Republic, but also Central and Eastern Europe in general' (1993, p.273) seems prescient. When the German nationalist party gained about 1,250,000 votes (75 per cent of all German voters in the popular elections of 1935), under the influence of Nazi propaganda, which made it the strongest political party in Czechoslovakia, it was already too late to re-think the Czech-German relationship. After World War II, the tensions did not calm down but, in fact, deteriorated into the expulsion of 2.5 million German-speaking inhabitants from Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, if we consider the split of Czechoslovakia into two separate countries, we may say that the dream of 'organic nationalists' finally materialized: the Czech Republic is nowadays a state consisting of one single nation that has realized its tribal unity and achieved political independence.

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