



# The Czech/Czechoslovak National Council and the Censuses in the Period 1910–1930

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Cisleithania — Czechoslovakia — Nationality — Population Census

In their studies on the statistical aspects of the determination of nationality in censuses<sup>1</sup>, Jaroslav Bubeník and Jiří Křesťan note that although experts played a constructive role in discussions regarding the criterion of nationality, “the behaviour of some political or politicized subjects (primarily associations with a national focus) showed a clear lack of willingness to compromise”.<sup>2</sup> The authors demonstrate how the Czech (later Czechoslovak) National Council (Národní rada česká / Národní rada československá, both known by the initials NRČ) played a major coordinating role, acting as a channel for the uncompromising attitudes taken by Czech nationalist groups; the NRČ not only monitored the censuses and influenced their planning and implementation, it also became involved in the legislative process that created the legal framework for the censuses conducted by the First Czechoslovak Republic. Analysis of the activities of Czech “national defence” associations in many respects confirms the crucial role played by the NRČ — not only in the post-1918 censuses, but also in the last pre-war Cisleithanian census, conducted in 1910. This study provides an account of the activities undertaken by the NRČ in connection with the censuses of 1910, 1921 and 1930.

The impetus to create an organization which would promote the Czechoslovak national cause while transcending party political boundaries came in 1900, from a narrow group of national activists. Until 1903, the organization — known as the Czech National Council (Národní rada česká, NRČ) — was beset by internal political disputes; these ended with the election of the lawyer Dr. J. Herold<sup>3</sup> as the Chairman. After Herold’s death (1908) the Chairmanship of the NRČ’s Central Committee was

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2 Jaroslav Bubeník — Jiří Křesťan, *Zjišťování národnosti jako problém statistický a politický: zkušenosti ze sčítání lidu za první republiky*, *Paginae historiae: sborník Státního ústředního archivu v Praze* 3, 1995, p. 121; Jaroslav Bubeník — Jiří Křesťan, *Národnost a sčítání lidu: k historickým souvislostem polemiky mezi Antonínem Boháčem a Emanuelem Rádlem*. *Historická demografie* 19, 1995, p. 129.

3 Josef Herold, *Über die böhmische Amtssprache: Eine Entgegnung auf die Kundgebungen des Abg. Hofrates Dr. A. Bachmann*, Prag 1909.



held by two more lawyers — first Prof. Jaromír Čelakovský, and then (from 1909) Dr. Jan Podlipný. The Czech National Council's core mission was to gain complete political and linguistic equality for the Czech nation. To implement this goal it made use of its close contacts on the political scene, primarily with parliamentary deputies. The Council expanded its spheres of influence via its advisory bodies and departments as well as via networks of Czech National Unions (*Národní jednoty*), Matic organizations (focusing on education, culture and publishing), Sokol organizations (focusing on gymnastics and physical education), student associations, and a range of other individual activists who were not directly affiliated with these associations.

Before turning to an interpretation of the NRC's public and media discourse in connection with the 1910, 1921 and 1930 censuses, I will first characterize the semi-public discourse on key census-related topics within the organization itself — both its Central Committee and the NRC's various departments. Drawing on scant available sources, I will outline which Czech politicians became involved in census-related activities via the NRC, and I will then discuss the relations among the leading national activists. In the 1900 census the National Unions (*Národní jednoty*) took up the role of proactively defending Czech minority communities in ethnically mixed territories. These organizations published educational materials, conducted agitation campaigns, carried out unofficial private censuses, and were involved in the auditing process of the official census. They devised the construct of a “reduced census” as a tool for determining the numerical strength of national communities in the multi-ethnic society of Cisleithania. In their media discourse they rejected the statistical depiction of the ethnic composition of society based on the criterion of “*Umgangssprache*” (language of daily use). The formation of the NRC did not mark an end to the National Unions' activities in the censuses; leading officials from the National Unions were also represented in the NRC's central bodies. The NRC was able to coordinate the activities of the National Unions because its organizational structure was integrated with theirs. One and the same person — for example Josef Škába — was simultaneously the Chairman of the North Bohemian National Union and a member of the NRC's Central Committee. Working through Dr. Jan Podlipný, the NRC maintained close contacts with the Sokol movement. It also cultivated political contacts on an individual personal level, centred on a relatively narrow group of national activists linked by their involvement in politics, their membership of numerous associations, and in many cases also by their legal education. Lawyers ranked among the most prominent national activists; being conversant with legislation, they were able to draft proposals for legislative changes and demands for national political representation.

The circle of activists centred around Josef Škába (a prominent politician, journalist and Chairman of the North Bohemian National Union) began their preparations for the 1910 census towards the end of 1907, working under the umbrella of the NRC.<sup>4</sup> They intended to use the 1910 census to demonstrate that the Germans' “closed territories” were, in the context of the historical Bohemian Crown Lands, a mere artificial con-

4 National Archives (hereinafter as NA) Prague, fond Národní rada Česká (fond Czech National Council, hereinafter as f. NRČ), carton (hereinafter as cart.) 37, volume (hereinafter as vol.) 77, Bělehrádek, Dvořák, Škába a F. Jamník Czech National Council 20. 11. 1907.



struct which was entirely at variance with reality. During the first phase of the preparations, the activists compiled information to support the Czech parliamentary deputies' attempts to bring legislative changes which would replace the flexible category of "language of daily use" with a new criterion based on mother tongue or nationality. The Minorities Department<sup>5</sup> of the NRČ met in January 1910, responding to the fact that German census committees had already been set up.<sup>6</sup> The Department established a new body, the NRČ Census Commission (Sčítací komise), chaired by the lawyer Dr. František Scheichl.<sup>7</sup> The Commission was divided into a South Bohemian section, headed by the parliamentary deputy Antonín Hubka, and a North Bohemian section, headed by his colleague Karel Stanislav Sokol. In Moravia and Silesia the preparations for the census were organized by the NRČ's Moravian Department and Silesian Department. On 15 February 1910 the NRČ Census Commission sent internal instructions to the Council's network of regional and local activists. When drafting these instructions, NRČ officials took account of the fact that the parliamentary deputies' attempt to push through legislation replacing the overly flexible category "language of daily use" with a different criterion had ended in failure. In view of this development, they asked the activists to conduct "private censuses" in municipalities with ethnically mixed populations in order to determine the "real" ethnic composition of the population. From today's perspective this act appears to draw on the NRČ's notion of itself as wielding a degree of de facto power; the activists, in an effort to support a purposely created national construct, intruded on individuals' privacy and asked them to provide personal information which was subsequently used in media discourse and by deputies in parliamentary proceedings. The activists were warned not to conduct the private censuses via the National Unions, which were at risk of being officially disbanded. Instead they were urged to organize their own networks of data collectors within the local community of Czech national activists. These instructions were subject to the strictest secrecy. They were worded in such a way as to suggest to the national activists that they ranked among "the chosen ones" of the national community; using highly emotional rhetoric, the NRČ officials assured the activists that all their efforts were directed towards the benefit of the nation. It is likely that the private censuses were intended to be conducted immediately on receipt of the instructions; within a month of sending the instructions, the parliamentary deputy Dr. Metelka requested the data (already processed) for use in a parliamentary debate.<sup>8</sup>

5 The Committee of the NRČ Census Commission consisted of the following members: the Chairman Dr. Baxa, the South Bohemian representative A. Bašta, the North Bohemian representative J. Škába, the university professors Dr. Dobroslav Krejčí and Dr. F. Weyr, parliamentary deputies — for North Bohemia K. S. Sokol, for South Bohemia A. Hubka, plus Dr. A. Hajn, Dr. R. Horský, V. Klofáč, Dr. Metelka and Prof. Dr. A. Velich. NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 20, vol. 72, Minutes of the meeting Committee of the NRČ Census Commission 11. 11. 1910.

6 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 36, vol. 77, The Chairman NRČ to the Deputy Metelka 4. 1. 1910.

7 He concurrently held the post of Chairman in the National Union for the Šumava region. [http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1/oeb1\\_S/Scheichl\\_František-Ladislav\\_1848\\_1938.xml](http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1/oeb1_S/Scheichl_František-Ladislav_1848_1938.xml)

8 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 52, vol. 81, Letter from the Deputy Metelka to the NRČ 15. 3. 1910.

Similar rhetorical means were used in a circular sent by the NRČ's Central Committee to activists during December.<sup>9</sup> The opening part of the text attempts to reinforce the activists' sense that they were playing an exceptional role in their community: "You have been chosen as the representative of the Czech inhabitants of your municipality." The circular condemned the activities of the German organizations in connection with the census, without ever acknowledging that the Czech activists were in many respects behaving in a very similar manner. After defining the "enemy" and evoking a fear of these opponents, the circular moved on to present a list of practical instructions on how to conduct the census among Czech minority communities in order to obtain the required results. The text interpreted the category "language of daily use" as being tantamount to a declaration of nationality. If this interpretation were to meet with any objections from the official census officers, activists were instructed to cite a Supreme Court decision which stated that an individual's language of daily use represented one of the fundamental elements of that individual's nationality. It was recommended that activists communicate with census officers exclusively in the Czech language, never in German. Any breaches of the law during the census were to be reported in the form of official complaints addressed to the relevant District Governor's Office, and the NRČ was to be informed of any such cases. Soon after the circular was issued, pre-printed forms for these complaints were sent to activists by the NRČ Central Committee.<sup>10</sup> The final report of the North Bohemian Census Commission stated that some of the census instructions had been considered so strictly confidential that they had only been communicated orally at meetings with activists.<sup>11</sup> There were seven such meetings within the territory covered by the North Bohemian National Union. After the census there were regional meetings at which activists were given instructions on how to file complaints. The NRČ's Census Commission coordinated the work of the regional activists throughout the first half of 1911.<sup>12</sup> It met to discuss complaints and other census-related matters on 21 March, 12 April and 10 May.<sup>13</sup> The complaints formed the basis of dossiers sent to the parliamentary deputies K. S. Sokol, Dr. J. Metelka and K. Kramář. The draft of the letter to K. S. Sokol clearly indicates that although the media published information on

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9 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 66, vol. 84, Propaganda prints NRČ 1910.

10 NA Prague, NRČ, f. cart. 66, vol. 84, Propaganda prints NRČ 1910.

11 NA Prague, NRČ, f. cart. 38/1, vol. 77, The final report of the North Bohemian Census Commission 1911.

12 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 52, vol. 81, The report of the Minority Department of the NRČ 15. 3. - 15. 5. 1911.

13 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 499, vol. 281, The report of the Minority Department of the NRČ 10. 5. 1911. The meeting was opened by Dr. Baxa, who voiced a complaint regarding the audits, stating that all the good efforts of the Provincial Governor (Statthalter) were being thwarted by the North Bohemian District Governors' Offices (Bezirkshauptmannschaften), which, he alleged, had acted improperly during the audits; however, this behaviour had come to their attention when it was already too late for it to be rectified. Dr. Baxa, in his capacity as a parliamentary deputy and a leading functionary of the NRČ, presented the Czech position on these issues to the Provincial Governor's Office on several occasions.



numerous breaches of the law during the census, there had been relatively few verifiable complaints which were suitable as evidence in parliamentary debates. The media discourse was in fact distorting the reality.<sup>14</sup> The Census Commission proposed organizing demonstrations in Prague and the regions to protest against the recently held census, but it eventually abandoned the idea of national protests when parliamentary elections were announced.<sup>15</sup> In 1911 the NRČ spent 7,768. 22 K on the censuses; this expenditure was covered mainly by the yields from a public donation scheme.<sup>16</sup>

On the eve of the First World War, a number of officials from the NRČ were hard at work processing the data from the official and private censuses. Besides preparing for the publication of the data, they also used the information in the NRČ's own internal investigations of the ethnic composition of mixed municipalities. In the spring of 1913 the NRČ sent strictly confidential letters to selected Czech municipal assemblies asking them to provide information on the German population of the given municipality; this was to assist the NRČ in mapping the penetration of German elements into Czech areas. The municipal representatives were asked to complete a form, giving answers the following questions: 1) What are the occupations of the persons in your municipality who stated German as their language of daily use? 2) What is the religion of the persons in your municipality who stated German as their language of daily use? 3) Where are the birthplaces of the persons in your municipality who stated German as their language of daily use? 4) According to the census data collection forms, in which municipalities are the official domiciles of the persons in your municipality who stated German as their language of daily use? 5) Did the authorities or employers exercise any influence over dependent persons in your municipality who stated German as their language of daily use?<sup>17</sup> Some municipal representatives treated the NRČ as if it were an official political authority and provided the requested information on the German population; in most cases the information provided was general in nature, without detailed personal information on individuals, though in some cases

14 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 36, vol. 77, Letters NRČ to the Deputy K. S. Sokol 15. 3. 1911 and 13. 3. 1911.

15 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 499, vol. 281, The Moravian Department NRČ to the NRČ 28. 4. 1911. The Moravian Department did not recommend holding demonstrations against the census during the run-up to the election; NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 499, vol. 281, Minutes of the Minority Department of the NRČ. On 21 March 1911 the Minorities Commission decided that it would be desirable to join forces with representatives of all political parties to arrange demonstrations protesting against the census and calling for reforms to the census legislation. In Prague there would be numerous meetings followed by a procession through the city's streets; participants would converge outside the Old Town Hall, where there would be a brief public speech and then the demonstration would be dissolved.

16 Milan Hlavačka, *Der Nationalstempel: Die Selbstfinanzierung der Nation am Rande der Gesetzlichkeit*. In: Milan Hlavačka — Magdaléna Pokorná — Tomáš Pavlíček, *Collective and individual patronage and the culture of public donation in civil society in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Central Europe*, Prague 2010. *Práce Historického ústavu AV ČR = Opera Instituti historici Pragae. Řada A — Monographia*; vol. 31, pp. 248–257.

17 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

even personal data was given.<sup>18</sup> The NRČ used the information to map the terrain for the next planned census — which, if it had not been for the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, would have taken place in 1920.

At the outbreak of the First World War the NRČ officials suspended their activities. However, when they received news from Vienna that the Central Statistical Commission had begun preparing for a census to be held in 1920, they convened an extraordinary meeting on 22 October 1917. Present at the meeting were the Vice-Chairman of the NRČ Adolf Prokůpek, Dr. Karel Baxa, Dr. Jindřich Metelka, Antonín Bašta, Bělehrádek, Dvořák, Dr. Dobroslav Krejčí, Prof. Vilibald Mildschuh, Náchenský, K. S. Sokol, Dr. Přemysl Šámal, Josef Škába, František Titěra, Dr. J. Urban, Prof. V. Veit, Dr. Scheichl, and Prof. František Weyr. Dr. Metelka was appointed Chairman of the newly elected Census Commission, with Dr. Krejčí the Vice-Chairman. Škába was elected as the correspondent for North Bohemia, and Titěra for South Bohemia. With the exception of Titěra, all the appointees had been involved in the 1910 census. The delegates at the meeting discussed a document with the working title of “Main Principles”; this document contained proposals for changes to legislation on the census, including the replacement of the category “language of daily use” with nationality or mother tongue, the collection of census data solely by census officers (as opposed to by landlords), the stipulation of a fixed period during which complaints could be filed, audits of compliance with legislation to be conducted by District Governors’ Offices, and the processing of the data (including data summaries) by provincial statistical offices (in Bohemia, by officials with a knowledge of the Czech language). They discussed the possibility of conducting a census among citizens living abroad and keeping a register of these citizens.<sup>19</sup> The delegates were generally opposed to emigration by Czechs,<sup>20</sup> seeing it as one of the reasons for the decline in the nation’s position. In conclusion they accepted a resolution stating that they would not organize any further meetings, but from that point onwards they would observe strict confidentiality when discussing matters. It is not possible to determine what steps they took to achieve the goals they had set, but at the end of August 1918 the NRČ’s Moravian Department informed the Prague Central Committee that the Statistical Commission in Vienna was launching its preparations for the census, and that it was proceeding according to the provisions of a law dating from 1869.<sup>21</sup> In October the Central Committee received a letter from the National Union for the Šumava region announcing that the Ministry of the Interior had conducted consultations on potential changes to the census legislation, and that the National Union had proposed numerous amendments to the 1869 law.<sup>22</sup> However, at this point discussions of the census were sidelined for a brief period by unfolding political events.

18 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77, Letter from City council Bělá pod Bezdězem to the NRČ 22. 4. 1913.

19 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 40, vol. 77, Letter from South Bohemian Census Commission to the NRČ 9. 8. 1917.

20 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 40, vol. 77, Minutes of the meeting NRČ Census Commission 22. 10. 1917.

21 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 183, vol. 110.

22 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 183, vol. 110.





On 28 October 1918 Czechoslovakia was established as an independent state; one of the NRČ's core goals had thus become a reality, so theoretically there was no more need for the organization in the new political landscape. However, NRČ officials were determined to continue in their proactive defence of the interests of Czech minority communities in the ethnically mixed border areas of the new state. The Czechoslovak Republic was not a genuine nation state, and the NRČ's attitude to questions of coexistence with the German population remained rooted in intolerance. Practical political considerations created a need for information on the current ethnic composition of the population — especially given the fact that the data collected in ethnically mixed regions during the last pre-war census was considered to lack objectivity. For this reason, in the early days of 1919 the NRČ helped to organize private censuses in these mixed regions. It had the necessary forms printed. It contacted its network of activists and instructed them to conduct these private censuses. Whereas the previous private census had been conducted clandestinely, this time the data collection was done publicly, with the open support of national and local government authorities.<sup>23</sup> In its public discourse, the NRČ presented the construct of a nationally aware Czechoslovak society; it is clear from the private, internal discourse among the NRČ's members that its original concept of the Czech nation had remained predominant. The NRČ rejected cultural assimilation by members of the Czech nation into other ethnic groups. It viewed membership of the nation in terms of belonging to a people defined by its mother tongue, and rejected the notion that an individual's subjective perception could represent a valid basis for their membership of one or another nation.

Only fragmentary information exists on the role played by the NRČ in the legislative process which preceded the 1921 census. However, it is possible to discern the attitudes of some NRČ officials to the criterion of nationality, as in their eyes the most crucial goal of the census was to determine the ethnic composition of the population. The new Census Act was passed on 8 April 1920, and the implementing regulations were published several months later, at the end of October. The NRČ's Central Committee met to discuss the census on 14 June 1920. The main report was presented by the statistician Antonín Boháč, who mentioned that the experts in the Census Committee (Výbor pro sčítání lidu) had not yet decided whether to determine respondents' language or their nationality. Boháč personally favoured the criterion of mother tongue as an indicator of nationality. A somewhat different position was taken by the statisticians Prof. Vilibald Mildschuh and Dr. Jan Auerhan, who were in favour of determining respondents' nationality explicitly. The dispute divided not only statisticians, but also representatives of the National Unions. Titěra, representing the National Union for the Šumava region, was in favour of determining nationality, while Josef Škába from the North Bohemian National Union preferred the criterion of mother tongue.<sup>24</sup> The Slovak parliamentary deputy Neumann was likewise in favour of determining respondents' mother tongue. The meeting concluded without reaching any consensus among the delegates as to whether the census should determine nationality, mother tongue, or both.

<sup>23</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 183, vol. 110.

<sup>24</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 183, vol. 110, Minutes of the meeting NRČ 14. 6. 1920.

The NŘČ's official position on which criterion should be used was first voiced four days later at a meeting of a subgroup of the Census Commission.<sup>25</sup> The eight-member subgroup was chaired by Dr. Metelka, and it included all the above-mentioned statisticians. A resolution was approved by five votes to two (with one abstention) stating that the criterion should be nationality. This resolution was then forwarded to the members of the Statistical Council.<sup>26</sup> The delegates decided that the NŘČ would instruct its network of activists, in preparation for the census, to draw up lists of Czechs living in areas with a German majority population. These lists would then be given to inspectors who would verify whether all the individuals on the lists had indeed declared Czech nationality, and only after this verification would the census data be passed to the State Statistical Office (Státní úřad statistický). The documents do not state whether the activists were to compile the lists on the basis of door-to-door inquiries or were merely to draw on their own personal knowledge of the area and its inhabitants. Either alternative (or a combination of the two methods) would nowadays be perceived as an intrusion on personal rights and freedoms, with a group of national activists — viewing themselves as key actors in public affairs — collecting citizens' personal data and intending to interfere with the work of the state authorities. This approach concerned not only the above-described inspection process, but also appointments to census authorities. In correspondence with the Ministry of the Interior, the NŘČ expressed its recommendations for appointments of census officers and inspectors in strongly directive terms, stating that an essential prerequisite for such an individual was their complete loyalty to the Czechoslovak nation. During the census itself, the NŘČ sent a letter to the Ministry of the Interior rebuking the Ministry for failing to follow its instructions.<sup>27</sup> This clearly indicates the difference between the NŘČ's self-presentation and the actual reality on the ground.

The most recent study of institutional approaches to the criterion of nationality in censuses during the inter-war period is by Pavel Kladiwa<sup>28</sup>, who conducted a detailed analysis of the attitudes of Czech and German statisticians and drew on this analysis to interpret the implementing regulations for the 1921 and 1930 censuses.

25 The NŘČ's Census Commission was chaired by the lawyer Dr. Karel Baxa. The Vice-Chairmen were the senator Emanuel Hrubý, the parliamentary deputy Igor Hrušovský and the councillor Jan Máša.

26 NA Prague, f. NŘČ, cart. 183, vol. 110, Minutes of the meeting NŘČ 18. 6. 1920.

27 NA Prague, f. Ministerstvo vnitra — stará registratura (Fonds "Ministry of the Interior — Old Archive"), cart. 246, inv. no. 1913, Letters NŘČ to Ministry of the Interior 15. 12. 1920 and 12. 2. 1921; Fond Ministerstvo vnitra — stará registratura (Fonds "Ministry of the Interior — Old Archive"), sg. 11-56/1 (21), Letter NŘČ to Ministry of the Interior 28. 2. 1921. During the course of the census the NŘČ also forwarded to the Ministry numerous complaints about the behaviour of the census officers.

28 Pavel Kladiwa, National Classification in the Politics of the State Census. The Bohemian Lands 1880–1930, Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder 2015, vol. 55, pp. 67–95; Pavel Kladiwa, Etnická klasifikace a institucionální zakotvení národnosti v českých zemích 1880–1914, Část I. Předlitavské období, Moderní dějiny 2014, vol. 22, pp. 7–33, Pavel Kladiwa, Etnická klasifikace a institucionální zakotvení národnosti v Československu 1918–1938, Moderní dějiny 2014, vol. 22, pp. 89–116.





In the summer of 1928 the State Statistical Office asked the NRČ's Central Committee whether it had any recommendations for the upcoming census.<sup>29</sup> The NRČ's officials evidently failed to respond, as in February 1929 the SÚS sent another letter repeating its question. The draft of the reply indicates that the NRČ did not recommend any fundamental changes to the implementing regulations that had been used in the previous census. The NRČ emphasized its insistence that municipal government authorities should not have access to the census forms. The first meeting of the NRČ's Commission for Activities Related to the 1930 Census took place on 22 January 1930.<sup>30</sup> The discussions of the criterion of nationality were based on the assumption that the 1921 definition of nationality would remain in force. The delegates also discussed the definition of Jewish nationality; on this question there was not unanimous agreement with the 1921 definition. The Commission approved a resolution on a new definition of Jewish nationality. It also took into account experiences from the previous census in regions where the population had a specific ethnic composition, i. e. the Hlučín<sup>31</sup> and Těšín regions. During the meeting Dr. Robosil made the surpris-

<sup>29</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 183, vol. 110, The State Statistical Office referred to its communication of 12. 6. 1928, ref. no. 2392 II., in which it had asked for recommendations on the census. It stated that it would not take into account any proposals received after 28. 2. 1929; NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110, The NRČ to Ministry of the Interior 28. 2. 1929 ad 699/6. The NRČ met on 21. 2. 1929; NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110, The President of the State Statistical Office to the NRČ 23. 10. 1929. The President of the State Statistical Office sent a requested summary of how language or nationality were recorded in other countries.

<sup>30</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110, The Commission was chaired by E. Hrubý. The Vice-Chairmen were Dr. K. Baxa, Dr. Vincent Dewetter, Jan Máša and the senator Jan Pocisk. The NRČ Executive Committee was represented by the lawyer Dr. Josef Pilař and Josef Škába, the Chairman of the regional branches. The correspondents of the Commission were A. Sojka-Sokolovič, the senator Josef Hubka, Dr. L. Pallier, A. Kubis, Václav Sladký, the parliamentary deputies J. Rýpar, Tomáš Stypa, Prof. A. Kolísek, A. Granatier, the senator I. Curkanovič, the parliamentary deputy Jan Pekárek, and E. Myslík from the Minorities Department of the Bohemian Sokol Association.

<sup>31</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110, Letter from Vice-Chairmen NRČ to Škába 26. 11. 1929 ad 699/10. The Silesian Matic organization sent us the following statement. Under German rule, people in the Hlučín region were recorded as deutsch, mährisch, deutschmährisch and mährischdeutsch. It would be good to reintroduce a similar classification in the region. The main issue would be to ensure that the Germans do not reach 20 %; Letter from NRČ Silesian Department to the NRČ 20. 1. 1930. It is essential that whoever was recorded as having Czechoslovak nationality in 1921 must retain the same nationality now. NRČ Silesian Department to the NRČ 10. 4. 1930. The state authorities must ensure that the census results are not worse than in 1921, i. e. no more than 19.2 %. The Matic organizations will submit certain requirements, and it would be good to grant them. We all want nothing more than the good of the nation and our state. Requirements: 1) mother tongue to be the criterion of nationality, 2) census officers must know the state language and be politically reliable, 3) necessity for audit commissions, people here are still economically dependent on Germany.



ing declaration that determining nationality was an obsolete tradition. The delegates then discussed organizational matters related to the census. Some suggestions were on the very boundary of legality — e. g. giving the census officers information on respondents from the 1921 census.<sup>32</sup> The Commission approved the preparatory plans for the census, and instructions were sent to the NRČ's network of activists. The activists were to compile lists of candidates for appointment as census officers and inspectors, to map the ethnic composition of the population in mixed municipalities, to agitate among the sections of the population that were nationally indifferent [in its activist work the NRČ acknowledged that such individuals existed — author's note], and to monitor attitudes to the census among the Jewish population. The instructions have an almost Orwellian flavour, with networks of activists operating almost on the level of secret police units to map and report on attitudes among large groups of the population.<sup>33</sup>

At the beginning of February the NRČ received confidential information from the Ministry of the Interior to the effect that the Statistical Council had approved a resolution which would now enable Jews to declare Jewish nationality regardless of which language they spoke. Those in favour of the proposal included Boháč and Auerhan, while Krejčí and Mildschuh opposed it.<sup>34</sup> This information marked the beginning of an extensive exchange of views between the NRČ and the State Statistical Office in Prague. The Chairman of the NRČ Adolf Prokůpek (who was also a parliamentary deputy for the Agrarian Party) sent a strongly worded letter to the President of the State Statistical Office Dr. Auerhan, urging him to rescind the resolution on the definition of Jewish nationality. A meeting of the NRČ's Executive Committee held on 6 February 1930 also issued a rejection of the State Statistical Office's resolution which changed the definition of the criterion of nationality to stipulate that nationality be determined "according to the language which the respondent knows best and is most competent in".<sup>35</sup> The NRČ drew up a letter of protest against the resolution and sent copies to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, the Presidium of the Ministry of the Interior, and the State Statistical Office.<sup>36</sup>

The polemic exchange of views between the NRČ and the State Statistical Office became increasingly vehement with each letter, and it is evident from these texts that the stronger arguments were on the side of the statisticians, who cited the relevant legislation and pointed out that it was not the purpose of a census to determine the nationality of the population.<sup>37</sup> The NRČ, on the other hand, did present the census as essentially a tool for this purpose — though this interpretation was a construct which they were unable to back up with satisfactory arguments. Writing on behalf of the State Statistical Office, Antonín Boháč urged the NRČ not to drag

32 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, volume 110, Minutes of the meeting 22. 1. 1930.

33 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, volume 110, Inside information, Population census, A 699/21 31. 1. 1930.

34 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, volume 110.

35 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, volume 110.

36 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, volume 110.

37 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, volume 110, The State Statistical Office to the NRČ 16. 4. 1930.



national conflicts into the census. Jaroslav Bubeník and Jiří Křestan have written of the NRČ's bold interference in the legislative process, and the polemic between the NRČ and the State Statistical Office represents a clear example of such interference. Responding to the statisticians' objections, the NRČ presented a new explanation of its position. It used a similar argument to that which had already been used by the Cisleithanian government, claiming that if nationality were to be defined as the State Statistical Office proposed, the data from the 1921 and 1930 censuses would not be comparable. The NRČ resorted to emotive rhetoric in place of factual arguments: "Although it is the primary interest of the state authorities for the results of the census to provide an indication of the language in which the state's citizens should communicate with the state authorities, government bodies and courts, it can be stated that the interests of the general public and social scientists are more focused on the nation and nationality than on language: after all, the idea of the nation has been one of our driving forces since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century." The NRČ restated its position that changes of mother tongue could only occur across generational boundaries, even though this claim was at variance with the normal practice of assimilation.<sup>38</sup> It is not possible to determine what effect the NRČ's letters of protest to the Ministry of the Interior had on the final wording of the implementing regulations, which ultimately did not incorporate the State Statistical Office's recommendations. In the end, the definition of nationality was in many ways close to the position taken by the NRČ's activists. The notion that an individual's nationality could change during the course of their life was vehemently rejected by Josef Škába, whose internal correspondence openly criticized the Supreme Court rulings which allowed for such a possibility. In his view, nationality was to be determined exclusively on the basis of an individual's mother tongue; the only exception to this principle was to be for individuals of Jewish ethnicity.<sup>39</sup>

There were several meetings of the NRČ's Census Commission before the census took place; it is clear from the content of these meetings that the census continued to be viewed by activists of the NRČ and the National Unions as one of the key battlegrounds in the national struggle.<sup>40</sup> The practices used in the 1921 census were not abandoned. Activists in ethnically mixed regions compiled lists of people so that inspectors could verify whether they had "correctly" declared Czech nationality. They drew up lists of candidates to be appointed as census officers and inspectors, using various methods in an attempt to influence the appointment process [sending letters to political district authorities or visiting these authorities personally to plead their case — author's note]. They used all known means of agitation, viewing themselves as influential coordinators of national life — though most people, facing an economic crisis which affected all sections of society, took a view of the census that was closer to that of the statisticians than to the activists from the NRČ. This time, the NRČ — though it styled itself as an influential actor in the census — did not receive public funding for its agitation. There is a clear discrepancy between the way

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38 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 183, vol. 110.

39 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110, Minutes of the meeting 13. 5. 1930.

40 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110, Minutes of the meetings 3. 7. 1930 and 19. 11. 1930.

in which the NŘČ's members perceived the organization and the way in which it was viewed by the general public — and by the political class. Reading between the lines of the NŘČ's internal reports and correspondence, it is evident that its links to the political scene began to weaken in the late 1920s, and it eventually came to view itself as the last bastion of loyal patriots fighting for the national cause.

The NŘČ thus did not conduct its agitation in the public domain. Working via the National Unions and its own network of activists, it coordinated information meetings but did not itself convene these meetings. It did not participate in national festivals and other public events. NŘČ members were present at these occasions, but only in the capacity of officials from the National Unions, associations or political movements. The NŘČ's communication with the general public took place primarily through the press, as well as via extensive correspondence. The NŘČ used the press in two ways: to support its current agitation activities, and also as a medium of memory — a witness to events.<sup>41</sup>

The following discussion of the NŘČ's media discourse takes as its starting point an event that is not widely known — the publication of a text entitled *Nationalitäten-erhebungsfrage und die Volkszählung* by Dr. Karol Artur de Englisch — also known by the Czech form of his name, Karel Engliš — who was an official at the Provincial Statistical Commission until 1908. The Czech parliamentary deputies requested that the text be published in the newspaper *Union*. The publisher of this newspaper wrote to the NŘČ and suggested that the text should not only be printed in instalments on the pages of *Union*,<sup>42</sup> but should also be published in book form. NŘČ officials discussed the conditions for publication with the author himself. The discussions did not concern the author's fee or other similar questions; rather they focused on who should be listed as the publisher, because Engliš was a state employee and his career could have suffered if his text were published by the NŘČ. Engliš suggested a form of self-publication, but in the end the parties agreed to publish the text under the banner of *Union*. There were also discussions on whether to add a foreword explaining the NŘČ's position on census methodology; this idea was roundly rejected by the parliamentary deputy Josef Čipera, who feared that such a political foreword would turn a scholarly study into a propaganda brochure. Although the text was to be used for purposes of agitation, Čipera felt that this purpose should not be allowed to undermine the scholarly qualities of the text. The NŘČ's Central Committee accepted this argument, and after completing the negotiations on the conditions for publication it instructed the publisher to print a thousand copies of the text.

The publication of a genuine agitation brochure was approved by the NŘČ's Central Committee at its meeting on 18 July 1910. Immediately afterwards Dr. Jan Podlipný urged Antonín Bašta (who had been chosen as the author) to complete the text in the shortest possible time.<sup>43</sup> Given the importance that the NŘČ attached to the census, the decision to publish the brochure was taken rather late — with less than six

41 Antonín Hubka, *Soukromé sčítání lidu 1900 a Gautschovy volební předlohy*, Prague 1906.

42 *Union* 19. 3. 1909, 26. 3., 27. 3., 28. 3. 8. 4., 20. 4. Dr. K. Englisch *Die Nationalitäten-erhebungsfragen und die Volkszählung*.

43 NA Prague, f. NŘČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.





months left until the scheduled census date. Throughout the autumn the National Unions urged the NRČ to send them the promised brochure,<sup>44</sup> but the manuscript was still undergoing an extensive review process. Two experts, Dr. Karel Engliš and Dr. František Weyr, reviewed the content of the brochure; both of them considered it to be well-written. The foreword was written by Professor Albín Bráf. The brochure — which eventually bore the title *Pokyny pro sčítání lidu po stránce národnostní ve smyslu porad menšinového odboru Národní rady české* [“Instructions for the census with regard to nationality as devised in the meetings of the Minorities Department of the Czech National Council”] — was printed in November. The publisher was the NRČ itself, and the print run was 20 000 copies.

The brochure was distributed at the end of November — a month before the census. It was sent to various organizations and authorities: the members of the Czech Political Commission at the Bohemian Provincial Diet (15 copies); the Presidium of the Council of the Royal City of Prague (250); the Municipal Statistical Commission of the Royal City of Prague (50); Bohemian District Committees (Bezirksausschüsse — 248, i.e. 2 copies each); Bohemian municipal authorities (480, i. e. 2 copies to each town hall); the Pilsen (Plzeň) District Committee (Bezirksausschuss — 250); Czech savings banks and financial institutions (776, i. e. 2 copies per institution); the central Matic educational organization (Ústřední matice školská — 510; the North Bohemian National Union (4 200); the National Union for the Šumava region (2 250); the Presidium of the Provincial Governors’ Offices (Statthaltereien — 15); the District Governors’ Offices (Bezirkshauptmannschaften — 100); the editorial offices of Prague newspapers (50); eight executive committees of Czech political parties (80); the Bohemian Sokol Association (50); the Czechoslovak Students’ Association (30); the Provincial Union of Czech Railway Workers (50); the Association of Czech Railway Clerks (20); the Czechoslovak Association of Traders (20); the Lower Austrian Department of the NRČ (50); the Comenius Association in Vienna (100); Dr. Metelka for distribution to government and state officials (50); Imperial Councillor Penížek for distribution to parliamentary journalists (15); Bohemian parliamentary deputies (15); the Moravian Department of the NRČ (4 450); the National Union for East Moravia (1 900); Czech municipal authorities in Moravia (60, i. e. 2 copies to each town hall); and the Silesian Department of the NRČ in Opava (1 080).<sup>45</sup> This distribution list indicates that besides its primary function of agitation, the brochure was also used to communicate the NRČ’s position on the upcoming census to the state authorities and the government. The NRČ departments and the Czech National Unions sent copies of the publication to the committees of various associations as well as to their networks of activists, who would use the text when meeting and persuading members of the public.

The publication reflected the NRČ’s position on the census; its aggressive policy did not acknowledge the notion that an individual could culturally assimilate into a different nation, a process which was known as “odnárodnění” (literally meaning “de-nationing”). It sharply criticized the government’s decision to retain the criterion

44 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

45 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 20, vol. 72.





of “language of daily use” rather than adopting the criterion of nationality. It suggested to readers that the criterion “language of daily use” was in fact tantamount to a declaration of nationality; this interpretation was tailored to suit the political demands of the NŘČ’s Central Committee. The brochure is written in the language of propaganda. Cases in which an individual’s nationality is recorded against his/her will are equated with “rape”, an act worthy of the utmost moral condemnation. The census is equated with a battleground on which the Czechs and the Germans will struggle for each individual. The German population is portrayed as a historic enemy, and its behaviour with regard to the census is condemned as immoral. This claim is supported by translated extracts from German agitation brochures printed in Trebnitz (Třebenice) by the German umbrella organization the Deutscher Volksrat in Böhmen; these brochures had been distributed confidentially among German national activists, and Škába had managed to obtain them in return for payment. As part of its proactive strategy the NŘČ used these confidential German materials to its own benefit, as it distributed its own brochure to state political authorities and the government. Like its German rival, the NŘČ also operated under conditions of strict confidentiality: before publishing its own brochure, it sent copies of the Deutscher Volksrat’s materials to selected parliamentary deputies so that they could make use of the information in parliament if necessary.<sup>46</sup>

Before the brochure reached the Czech national activists, the NŘČ Central Committee recommended that they obtain and disseminate information from other publications and materials. One such publication was the text by Karel Engliš, mentioned above. Activists were also urged to base their presentations on Srb’s text entitled *Obcovací řeč jako prostředek, zesilující národní državu německou v zemích koruny české zvláště a v Rakousku: odpověď prof. Dr. J. Rauchbergovi* [“Language of daily use as a means of reinforcing the German national dominance especially in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown, and in Austria: A reply to Prof. Dr. J. Rauchberg”]<sup>47</sup> They were also asked to make use of older agitation brochures by Klecanda, Hubka’s texts on the private censuses, and Vrba’s text *Der Nationalitäten- und Verfassungsconflict in Oesterreich*.<sup>48</sup>

Once the census had been completed, the NŘČ gathered extensive information on how it had been conducted. This primarily involved gathering evidence of misconduct during the data collection, though not all of the incidents were actually violations of relevant legislation. The NŘČ’s Census Commission compiled the information in alphabetical order according to the municipality where the incident had

<sup>46</sup> NA Prague, f. NŘČ, cart. 37, vol. 77, The NŘČ to the Deputy R. Fischer 12. 10. 1910.

<sup>47</sup> NA Prague, f. NŘČ, cart. 37, vol. 77. Srb’s text was published by the Royal City of Prague, but at the request of the NŘČ and for its purposes. The text was published as separate chapters from Srb’s text *Sčítání lidu v král. hlav. městě Praze a obcích sousedních provedené 31. prosince 1900. Díl 3. Poměry populační*, pp. 261–319 and appended tables. Srb’s text was the subject of several objections by the Association of Progressive Jews in Prague, which had begun cooperating with the NŘČ before the 1910 census. The discussions culminated in the printing of a statement explaining the Association’s position, which was inserted into the brochure. NA Prague, f. NŘČ, cart. 36, inv. no. 77.

<sup>48</sup> NA Prague, f. NŘČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.



occurred; its sources were the NŘ's own activists, plus complaints sent to the NŘ and newspaper reports. Based on extensive research of news reports, the NŘ compiled a 100-page document entitled *Přehled stížností ze sčítání lidu dne 31. prosince 1910* ["Summary of complaints regarding the census, 31 December 1910"]. Although it has a Czech title, the actual text of the document is in German, and extracts from Czech newspaper articles were translated into German. The document is divided into sections each dealing with a different type of complaint, e. g. "Wegen Nichtannahme einer deutschen Zählkarte u. ähnlich oder wegen Anmeldung zur böhmischen Umgangssprache gekündigte Böhmen"; in each section the incidents are listed in chronological order. The document was used not only as a basis for parliamentary questions by Czech deputies, but also when compiling texts to inform readers in other countries about the NŘ's position on the recent census.

One of the key priorities of the NŘ's Foreign Department was to provide information to an international forum of statisticians, politicians and journalists on the (as the NŘ viewed it) questionable category of "language of daily use" and the various injustices which took place during the census.<sup>49</sup> This type of communication formed part of the broader context of the NŘ's attempts to garner international support for its aim of establishing an autonomous nation state. The international information campaign was run with a high standard of professionalism. The NŘ made use of its contacts with Prof. Ernst Kraus, the editor of the periodical *Čechische Revue* (published in German). It managed to arrange for this periodical to print studies written by renowned experts who were either NŘ members or sympathizers. A number of NŘ members were appointed to the editorial board: Dr. Metelka, Prof. Kraus, Dr. Krejčí, Dr. Weyr, Škába and Břeska. The editorial team worked quickly and efficiently. The texts underwent internal review procedures and were published in the May issue of the periodical, grouped together under the title *Die Volkszählung von 1910*. The May issue contained studies by Dr. D. Krejčí, A. Hubka, J. Kálal, Dr. A. Boháč, and Dr. F. Weyr.<sup>50</sup> The next issue of the periodical included studies by Prof. A. Bráf and Dr. A. Boháč.<sup>51</sup> A separate volume entitled *Die österreichische Umgangsspracheer-*

<sup>49</sup> NA Prague, f. NŘ, cart. 37, vol. 77, Minutes of the meeting 6. 5. 1911. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Kramář. The delegates approved the plans to inform foreign readers about the census, the issue of a memorandum stating that the Austrian census was worthless, the plans to inform European demographic and statistical institutions on the census data collection methods, participation in the next international statistical congress, the publication of a special issue of the periodical *Čechische Revue* focusing on the census results, and the drafting of a detailed version of a proposed new census law. The first discussions by members of the Foreign Department regarding the provision of information to foreign readers via scholarly studies published in *Čechische Revue* took place at a departmental meeting held on 18 February 1911; the proposal was raised by Prof. Kraus. Minutes of the meeting 16. 5. 1911.

<sup>50</sup> Dobroslav Krejčí, Über die Unbrauchbarkeit der österreichischen Umgangssprachenstatistik, *Čechische Revue* 1911, Heft 3, pp. 193–203; A. Hubka, Unsere Arbeit, pp. 204–209; J. Kálal, Wie gezählt wurde, pp. 209–217; F. Weyr, Positive Reformvorschläge, pp. 224–236;

<sup>51</sup> Albin Bráf, Noch ein Wort zur Erhebung der Umgangssprache, *Čechische Revue* 1911, Heft 4, pp. 294–303; A. Boháč, Nochmals die Volkszählung von 1910, pp. 304–307.

*hebung im Lichte der Wahrheit* was compiled from the studies printed in the May issue, introduced by a foreword written by Dr. F. Weyr. The NRČ had a thousand copies printed, which it sent to its contacts abroad. However, the representatives of the Foreign Department were aware that distributing texts in German alone was not enough to reach a wide foreign readership. It produced an English-language version entitled *The Truth about the Umgangssprache General Census in Austria* [sic], as well as a translation into Esperanto entitled *La Popolsumigo en Aŭstrio en 1910*.<sup>52</sup> In these texts the NRČ presented its position that the criterion of “Umgangssprache” (language of daily use) had been introduced by the government in order to benefit the economically dominant German population in Cisleithania, that in practice this criterion had become tantamount to a declaration of nationality, and that the Germans had committed various breaches of applicable laws during the census, especially in ethnically mixed areas. The text mentioned North Bohemia, the Moravian cities of Brno (Brünn) and Olomouc (Olmütz), Vienna itself, and the Silesian city of Opava (Troppau).<sup>53</sup> Research to date indicates that the violations in North Bohemia were in many ways more significant than those in Opava.

As has been mentioned above, the NRČ’s activism continued in the censuses conducted by the newly independent Czechoslovak Republic (with the organization now operating under a new name, as the Czechoslovak National Council). For the 1921 census the NRČ’s Central Committee decided not to publish any agitation brochures. In the run-up to the 1930 census, however, this position was revised, and such publications were considered not only useful, but — given ongoing political developments in the border regions — essential. The NRČ therefore published a brochure entitled *K soupisu lidu 1. prosince 1930 se zřetelem k rubrice: Národnost* [“On the census of 1 December 1930 with regard to the criterion ‘Nationality’”].<sup>54</sup> The text is written in the typical rhetorical style used by the Czech activists. Alongside emotive declarations of love for the homeland and the legacy of the Czech ancestors, reading between the lines one can also discern an uncompromising attitude towards not only the “other” (i. e. the Germans), but also towards those Czech individuals who became assimilated into the German national community (the above-mentioned “odnárodnění”, or “de-nationaling”). The brochure was issued shortly before the census, and it combined a text entitled *Osvědčení z manifestace všenárodní v Praze dne 28. října 1930* [“Report on the all-national demonstration in Prague, 28 October 1930”] and the text *Národnost podle soupisu lidu* [“Nationality according to the census”], which had been published in the periodical *Čechoslovák*. When the post-war Czechoslovak censuses were conducted, the NRČ (unlike the situation in pre-war Cisleithania) published its own monthly periodical *Čechoslovák* and the journal *Naše zahraničí* [“Our abroad”]. It used these publications to present its opinions and articulate its positions on current political developments — including the census. The periodical *Čechoslovák* car-

52 Jindřich Hantich, *La Popolsumigo en Aŭstrio en 1910*. La traduko de l’artikolo en la franca gazeto “Courrier Européen” n-o 11, de la j. 1911 (VIII), Prague 1911. NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 319, vol. 151.

53 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 319, vol. 151.

54 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 184, vol. 110.



ried articles written in a highly authoritarian and assertive tone, with no space for a pluralist exchange of different opinions on the topic. The opinions of NRČ activists are clearly evident from correspondence with Prof. A. Boháč dating from the early part of 1930. Boháč sent the Secretary of the NRČ's Central Committee Augustin Seifert an offprint of his article *Národnost a sčítání lidu se zřetelem k tendenčnímu rozboru Rádlova národnostní statistiky československé* ["Nationality and the census with regard to Rádl's tendentious analysis of statistics on Czechoslovak nationality"], which had been published in the Czechoslovak statistical bulletin *Československý věstník statistický*; Boháč asked Seifert to inform readers of the periodical *Čechoslovák* about his article. Seifert replied immediately that he would of course ask Hejret, the editor of *Čechoslovák*, to reprint the text in the next issue; he referred to Boháč's text as "a cogent response to a Germanophile agitator". Seifert was himself involved in publishing. He issued a number of commemorative brochures to mark important anniversaries of the NRČ's activity,<sup>55</sup> as well as publishing his own texts in *Čechoslovák*. He was an uncompromising national agitator whose texts criticizing the Cisleithanian government and the German population in general<sup>56</sup> resorted to aggressively derogatory language reminiscent of the practices used by the gutter press.

At the time of the last Cisleithanian census, the NRČ did not have its own press organ. However, it did work closely with the editors of the newspaper *Národní listy*, where it publicized its opinions on current political events and, during the census itself, published reports from its regional correspondents. The drafts of correspondence indicate that the NRČ's Central Committee gave confidential instructions to Czech newspapers regarding how they should report on the census. In February 1910 the NRČ sent a strongly worded letter to a number of Czech newspapers urging them — for tactical reasons — to refrain from reporting on the Czech preparations for the census (the private censuses, the activities of the National Unions, etc.).<sup>57</sup> When the Council of the Royal City of Prague, at the behest of the NRČ, published Srb's above-mentioned text on the criterion "language of daily use", Secretary Seifert informed unspecified newspapers that the text was a document of key importance, which, as he put it, aimed to cast light on "the unscholarly and tendentious distortion of the truth by the renowned German statistic Rauchberg".<sup>58</sup> In mid-December the newspapers received an exhortation that when reporting on the census they should only print information that had been pre-approved by the NRČ.<sup>59</sup> A search of Czech newspapers from the time of the census reveals that not all newspapers

55 Augustin Seifert, *Národní rada československá v Praze*, Prague 1930; Augustin Seifert, *Národní rada česká a naše obranné organizace*. Otisk z národní čítanky, Prague 1918.

56 Augustin Seifert, *Vzpomínky na Liberec z doby německého útlaku: přednáška pro sjezd Sdružení spisovatelů českých krajů a jejich přátel, konaný v Liberci 18. 11. 1945 s podobiznou bojovníka za práva čes. lidu MUDr. Václava Šamánka*, Liberec 1946; Augustin Seifert, *Sebeobrana Čechoslováků a Národní rada Československá*, Prague 1925; Augustin Seifert, *Padesát let národní práce a bojů: (k 50-letí Národní jednoty severočeské)*, Prague 1935.

57 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

58 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

59 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

were willing to let the NRČ dictate to them what they could and could not print. Likewise, only a few newspapers (such as *Národní politika*) complied with the demand to print the NRČ's proclamation on their front pages.<sup>60</sup> When corresponding with the newspapers, the NRČ presented itself as a coordinating body which transcended political boundaries — a status which (in its view) gave it a high degree of authority and meant that its instructions should be fulfilled unconditionally. However, the newspapers viewed the situation differently — as is evident from a letter sent by the NRČ to the editors of *České slovo*, rebuking the newspaper for having printed a report on the personal intervention of parliamentary deputies in the auditing process conducted by the Provincial Governors' Offices. Written in highly assertive language, the letter strongly recommends that in future cases of this type the newspaper should always ascertain the NRČ's position on the matter before printing any information. The letter concludes by stating that the parliamentary deputy Hubka would visit the newspaper offices to explain the situation in person — as, apparently, other deputies had already done at different newspapers.<sup>61</sup> The NRČ's attempts to influence the what newspapers did and did not publish was essentially a form of censorship.

A major part of the NRČ's publishing activities involved the publication of educational leaflets, with print runs in the tens of thousands. For the 1910 census it published 80 000 copies of leaflets, which were sent to the National Unions, the NRČ's own departments, and other Czech institutions.<sup>62</sup> One of these leaflets was entitled *K nastávajícímu sčítání lidu* ["On the upcoming census"], and featured the motto *Kdo se za svůj český jazyk stydí, hoden potupy jest u všech lidí* ["Anybody who is ashamed of their Czech language deserves condemnation by all."]. In the leaflet, using the uncompromising language of agitation, the NRČ urges the members of the Czech nation — as a matter of moral duty — to declare Czech as their language of daily use. In bold type, it condemns those Czechs who declare German as their language. When creating the leaflet, the NRČ activists drew on the construct of a nationally aware community. Their agitation rejects both national indifference and cultural assimilation — though these were two very common phenomena in the everyday reality of the Bohemian Crown Lands in the run-up to the First World War. The rear side of the leaflet lists eight points<sup>63</sup> in the form of instructions on how to behave at the census. As with

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<sup>60</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

<sup>61</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 499, vol. 281.

<sup>62</sup> NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 20, vol. 72.

<sup>63</sup> 1) Everybody should declare Czech as their language of daily use; 2) Nobody should, in addition to Czech, state German as a language of daily use; 3) The head of the family should state the Czech language for each family member, explicitly using the word "Czech"; 4) Those of adult age and sound mind living with a different family in a single household should decide for themselves which language of daily use to state; 4) Any threats made regarding the recording of language of daily use should be reported to the relevant authorities; 6) Census officers must not attempt to persuade respondents or make inappropriate remarks; 7) Everybody should verify the correctness of the recorded data by checking the census data recording forms; 8) All nationally conscious Czechs should agitate among those Czechs who are still undecided.





the 1910 brochure discussed above, the text was reviewed by leading members of the NRČ — Dr. Metelka, Dr. Krejčí, Dr. Weyr, two members of the NRČ's Census Commission (Škába and Šámal), and the parliamentary deputy Udržal. After the review process, the final text was approved by the NRČ's Chairman Podlipný.<sup>64</sup> The leaflet was distributed at the end of November, and the text was also published in selected Czech newspapers<sup>65</sup> including *Opavský Týdenník* (a weekly published in the Silesian city of Opava), *Hlas národa*, and *Národní politika*.<sup>66</sup>

It is not possible to arrive at a fair assessment of an authoritative national institution based solely on the analysis of one sphere of its activities — in this case, its role in the 1910, 1921 and 1930 censuses. Even for this sphere of activity, available source material is far from complete. More extensive sources have survived from the 1910 census, but sources on the post-war censuses are fragmentary. It is also impossible to interpret the NRČ's activities fairly without comparing them with the activities of analogous German authoritative national institutions; however, source material from these institutions has either not survived, or (at the time of writing) is still being processed. As Milan Hlavačka notes in his study of a public donation scheme which was used to fund the NRČ's activities, interpreting the NRČ's position in relation to the state is a complex endeavour. It was not an association in the strict sense of the word (as were the Czech National Unions which came under its supervision), nor was it a political party; it operated above party political divisions, and the individual political parties delegated representatives to it.

The analysis presented in this study has built on Bubeník and Křestán's findings regarding the NRČ's activities in the last Cisleithanian census, when it played the role of an authoritative national institution, organizing private censuses among Czech minority communities, publishing educational materials and using print media in a modern way to promote its interests and communicate its position on the census to readers abroad. The internal discourse among members of the NRČ reveals that they perceived themselves as authoritative and powerful functionaries; however, this self-perception diverged from the social reality. The same observations also apply to the NRČ's role between the two world wars. In its media discourse, it continued to use modern tools and methods, and it employed the language of propaganda. In order to achieve its aims it was willing to violate the principle that the apparatus of the state authorities should remain apolitical; this raises a range of questions, as

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64 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 36, vol. 77. The parliamentary deputy Dr. Metelka stated that the text lacked a rule stipulating that the respondent should not reply to the census officer if the latter spoke German to him, as in this case there was the risk that the officer may record the respondent's language of daily use as German. Dr. Weyr and Dr. Krejčí disagreed; they expressed the opinion that this would be needlessly antagonistic behaviour in cases when the census officer, although he could not speak Czech, would nevertheless conduct his duties in an impartial manner.

65 NA Prague, f. NRČ, cart. 37, vol. 77.

66 K nastávajícímu sčítání lidu, *Opavský Týdenník*, 24. 12. 1910, no. 101, vol. XLI, p. 1.; K nastávajícímu sčítání lidu, *Hlas národa*, 13. 12. 1910, no. 343, unpaginated; K nastávajícímu sčítání lidu, *Národní politika*, 11. 12. 1910, vol. XXVIII, no. 341, p. 1.

does the NRČ's use of an extensive network of activists, who — besides their role as agitators — were also tasked with monitoring developments within Czech minority communities. It therefore formed a pyramid-like power structure: the Prague-based NRČ in Bohemia, with Moravian and Silesian Departments covering the other two Bohemian Crown Lands, coordinating the activities of the Czech National Unions while also maintaining a network of sympathizers and activists.

