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ARTICLE

Geopolitics and the Rise of German-Czech Antagonism 1839–1848

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Abstract

The rise of antagonism between the German and Czech nationalist activists in the mid-19th century has been neither clearly explained nor convincingly dated. Although this is a topic closely linked to the history of nationalism, the state of research has paradoxically been misguided by the nationalist approach adopted by historians analyzing it. The reason is that nationalism was not the cause but just one response to a greater phenomenon. The aim of the article is therefore to clarify the German-Czech relationship in the broader context of European history and the history of international relations using the perspective of geopolitics and security. As it claims, it was not cultural, linguistic, or constitutional issues but the fear of external threats that caused the mutual distrust of political activists that led to hostility and conflicting policies. Under the impact of international events and within the context of their relations to other international actors this process originated in 1839 by the latest. During subsequent years it developed rapidly and became obvious during the 1848 revolutions. The article thus reveals that this year did not represent the beginning but merely another chapter in a process that had begun nearly a decade earlier.

Keywords: Germans; Czechs; activists; inter-ethnic conflict; nationalism; security; geopolitics; Austrian Empire; German Confederation; 1848

Introduction

Over the last two or three decades, historians have considerably changed the way generations have viewed the coexistence of numerous ethnic groups living in the Habsburg Monarchy and the spread of nationalist ideas among them in the nineteenth century. Among others, Pieter M. Judson, Jeremy King, and Tara Zahra demonstrated that for a long time many people remained indifferent to the nation-centric propaganda of a small number of intellectuals active in the spread of these ideas (henceforth: activists) (Judson 1993; Judson 2008; Judson 2016, 202–214; King 2002; Zahra 2010). Rejecting old nationalist narratives, these historians have enabled the reevaluation of many topics and expanded the number of research questions. One still waiting for a convincing answer is why the activists claiming to represent various ethnic groups were seized with a strong mutual animosity that often grew into irreconcilable enmity. These and other historians dealing with nationalism in the Austrian Empire seek to explain its birth by placing it in the context of the revolutionary events of 1848 (Berger 2006, 46–47; Maritan 2024, 1–17; Reill 2012, 185). Further research has recently been shown to be all the more necessary as since 2021 Rasmus Glenthøj, Morten Nordhagen Ottosen and Miroslav Šedivý have analyzed nationalism in Italian, German, and Scandinavian countries from the perspective of external security of states and nations. They have revealed how

international crises and wars influenced geopolitical debate and with it the conflicting interests of nationalist activists, and they have predated the beginning of this process to the period from 1839 to 1841 (Glenthøj, Ottosen 2024a, 2024b; Šedivý 2021 and 2024).

In this article, this geopolitical framework is used for the Bohemian Lands comprising Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian Silesia, inhabited by Czech, German, and in Silesia also Polish-speaking people. For this area the reasons and origin of a rift between the German and Czech activists still need to be determined. For a long time, historians placed it to 1848 (Burian 1992; Křen 1996, 73; Seibt 1998, 191), while others predated it to the turn of the 1830s when "there was a conspicuous politicization of the public debate" (Bělina, Hlavačka, and Tinková 2013, 305). However, as they have predominantly focused on the cultural and linguistic aspects of the conflict, they have not explained why the relationship deteriorated at that time and how it was able to reach such proportions that some activists feared civil war and slaughter (Bělina, Hlavačka, and Tinková 2013, 304–312). Others have been more explicit in seeing the outbreak of a Turko-Egyptian War in 1839 and the Rhine Crisis in 1840 as critical moments (Klíma 1994, 5–8; Kořalka 1996, 30). The former was about a war between the sultan and his Egyptian pasha in the Ottoman Empire in which all European powers intervened, while the latter originated when the differing attitudes of France and the other four powers to the settlement of this conflict threatened to bring Europe into a new general war, a quarter of century after the end of the previous one (Šedivý 2017). Hans Lades even claimed that these two affairs caused a "radical change in German-Czech relations" (Lades 1938, 78). Nevertheless, no one has ever clarified how this could happen when neither of these affairs had anything to do with the small Slavic nation in Central Europe. The only exception was that if the French invaded the Rhineland belonging to the German Confederation (henceforth also: Germany), then the Viennese government was obliged to defend it because the western provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy were located within this Confederation, which would bring Czech-speaking soldiers into the war.

The goal of the article is to explain the origins of mistrust and animosity between the Czech and German activists. It supports the thesis that these can be traced to the end of the 1830s and that the principal reason lay in the tense international situation when the danger of war provoked fear of it, which further stimulated the perception of external threats. This made some German-speaking journalists apprehensive of the Slavs including the Czech-speaking ones. Historians Brendan Simms and more recently Christopher Clark recognized geopolitics and the threat perception as important factors for the spread of German nationalism in the 1840s, but they neither sufficiently investigated nor linked them with the German-Czech relations of the time (Clark 2023, 143; Simms 1999, 397–403). For the Czech part of story, the geopolitical context is completely missing in historical scholarship. Although as long ago as 1985, Jiří Kořalka, the Czech expert on the two nations' coexistence, pointed out that the necessary condition for correctly analyzing it is "bridging the limited national perspective" (Kořalka 1985, 241), very little has been done to the present time. Despite later works on Czech history in a European context, the sphere of geopolitics has even been neglected by the eminent expert on nationalism, Miroslav Hroch, when he was dealing with *Nationally Relevant Conflicts of Interest* (Hroch 2015, 135–61). Therefore, German-Czech antagonism has continued to be dated to 1848 and explained with fragmentary references to culture and the internal political conditions of the Habsburg Monarchy (Agnew 2003, 56–77; Bělina, Kaše, and Kučera 2006, 156–157; Ort 2009, 8–15).

The main obstacle to finding a convincing answer lies in the fact that nationalism itself was not the cause of the growing hostility between German and Czech activists in the 1840s. Since the whole issue was particularly about security against external threats, it is appropriate to approach the topic through the concept of security (Baldwin 1997; Conze 2018). It gets to the root of the problem for three principal reasons: first, the enmity between the German and Czech activists arose within a broader framework of international politics; second, this process was primarily about securing their communities in certain regions, not only their linguistic rights, but, as these activists sometimes claimed, even their physical existence; third, the activists' security considerations impacted on their

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nationalist aspirations. The concept of security then makes it easier to explain why the deterioration in their relationship started in 1839–1840: the Turko-Egyptian War provoked the German activists' fear of Russia and pan-Slavism, and the Rhine Crisis made them apprehensive of a European war in which they expected to fight against France supported by Russians and other Slavs. In these affairs they saw the Czechs as the promoters of Russian interests at the expense of the Austrian Empire and the German Confederation, which moved some of these German activists to advocate a self-centered and expansionist policy detrimental to the interests of Russia and Slavs including the Czechs. The Czech activists started to perceive the Germans' changing attitude as a threat to their own existence and responded in the same geopolitical way: with the formulation of Austro-Slavism. The geopolitical-security rationale of this Austro-Slavic concept and its origin before 1848 is still undervalued in scholarly texts (Hahn 2008; Hanisch, Urbanitsch 2006, 104–107).

There are several other benefits of the security perspective. First, it enables the topic to be put in context with the most recent literature based on security studies and revealing the identical processes in various parts of Europe since the late 1830s. In their works on northern, central, and southern Europe, Glenthøj, Ottosen, and Šedivý concluded that the worsening situation in European politics became a significant driving force in the formation of political nationalism in the mid-19th century. One of the outcomes was the realist perception of international affairs accompanied by deteriorating relations between countries and nations. While Šedivý emphasized the importance of realism in the title of chapters and a whole book on the subject (Šedivý 2021, 237–304, and 2024), Glenthøj and Ottosen went even further with the formulation of their "realist theory of nationalism" compatible with Eric J. Hobsbawm's "threshold principle" (Glenthøj, Ottosen 2024a, 323; Glenthøj 2025; Ottosen 2025). According to this principle, a nation can survive only when it is materially sufficiently strong, and although Hobsbawm primarily linked it with the mid-19th century, he also referred to the example of the Czechoslovak Republic after 1918 in which the Czechs and Slovaks joined together to be able to resist Germans and Magyars (Hobsbawm 2013, 30–34). As will be seen, in accordance with the same principle and because of the threat perception, Czech activists in Bohemia included not only Moravians but also Slovaks into their "Czech-speaking community" before 1848. And it is this principle and with it also the security perspective that make it even more understandable why the same activists did not demand political independence from the Austrian Empire in 1848 (Körner 2018, 347–67). Such an option would have been geopolitically suicidal, and therefore they did not mention it during the analyzed period.

Furthermore, the emphasis on security means these historians have been able to highlight the topics which are important for the evaluation of the relationship between the Czech and German activists. The danger of a European war in 1840 provoked in both Italian and German countries an interest in the statistics concerning the economic and military strength of European countries revealing the distribution of power (Šedivý, 2021, 119–20; Šedivý, 2024, 90). Statistics also played an important role in the German-Czech story: the activists started to debate the numbers of Czech and German-speaking inhabitants in the Bohemian Lands to support their own position and warn against the danger represented by others (Havránek 2009, 392). In the same debate they used maps showing the language borders: Pavel Josef Šafařík published his map for these lands in 1842, and in the following year librarian Karl Bernhardi created his map for the whole German Confederation (Holubec, Močičková 2023, 51–52). The impact of geography was even more important as the existence of a particular group's own state or community was perceived through not only material resources but also geographic position toward expected enemies. The proximity of the latter, the existence or lack of natural barriers and fortified places, the need of free communications, all that became a part of the security considerations of both German and Czech activists. It is thus possible to reveal the process in the 1840s that Austrian historian Peter Haslinger pointed out for the late nineteenth century when "the need for protection and defense in turn corresponded to ideas of a national territory of a certain size and compactness as well as the need for 'natural' borders" (Haslinger 2010, 33). The term "the geography of threat" (*Bedrohungsgeografie*) used by German historian Alexa Geisthövel for the same decade well describes this interdependence reflecting the

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impact of geopolitical conditions on the perception of external security of states and nations (Geisthövel, 2008, 47). For this reason, it is necessary to accentuate the role of geography in defining the qualities of the relations between the German and Czech activists, and, therefore, the term "geopolitics" is used in the article's title and contents rather than "international politics".

The last advantage of the security concept is its ability to convincingly link not merely various topics but also personal attitudes, which applies to both various activists and other contemporaries. When deliberating their external security, it was easy for German activists to share identical or highly similar opinions regardless of their political views, religion, or place of origin. Therefore, although Franz Schuselka, an Austrian liberal from Bohemian Budweis, became one of the most vociferous anti-Czech publicists due to his personal proximity to the "Czech threat", even in other German states liberal, conservative and democratic, and both protestant and catholic activists easily shared his fears and added this threat to many others surrounding them literally from all sides. This seems to be the principal reason why the anti-Czech propaganda was articulated, as the selected examples will show, throughout the Confederation and even by those from or living in distant federal states.

In their dispute, German and Czech activists participated openly stating their names, while others, particularly those from the Austrian Empire, published their pamphlets and articles anonymously. As for articles published in the press, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* published in Augsburg represented the most important arena between the two groups and for this reason this newspaper is the one most cited in this article; other newspapers and journals prove the prevalence of the "Czech question" across the German Confederation. That the anti-Czech propaganda found an echo among the educated members of middle and upper middle classes is evidenced by Austrian police reporting the rise of anti-Czech sentiment in the Habsburg Empire's western provinces and by the diplomatic reports proving its existence in other federal states.

The narrative is divided into four parts. The first and second deal with two periods crucial for the change in the German activists' attitude toward the Czechs. The first part covers 1839–1841 with the war in the Near East and the Rhine Crisis. The second follows the events of 1846, which saw the Polish insurrection in Cracow and Galicia in February followed by Austria's annexation of Cracow in November. These events moved some of them to regard the Czechs as a threat although the Czechs were in no way involved in either the insurrection or the annexation. The third part contains the reaction of Czech activists to German hostility before 1848. The final one briefly explains the role of geopolitics in the mutual mistrust of the Czech and German activists in 1848 and emphasizes the continuity of this process from previous years.

The Origins of the German Mistrust of the Czechs at the Turn of the 1830s

It may seem strange that the Turko-Egyptian War contributed to the rise of the German activists' mistrust of a small Slavic nation in Central Europe. This situation occurred due to the potentially negative consequences of the Eastern Question on European peace. Given the great powers' competition in the Ottoman Empire, the possibility existed that the war would lead to controversy among them, which happened in 1839, or even to another war that almost broke out during the Rhine Crisis in the following year. Germany, situated in the center of the Continent, was the most likely to be impacted by it. Therefore, the Turko-Egyptian War immediately caught the attention of the German population, and it was not only members of the ruling and diplomatic elite who were alarmed by it (Diziol 2017, 218; Šedivý 2016, 25–26).[1]

Of all the European powers, Russia was most responsible for this fearful estimation of the Eastern Question. Many Germans had welcomed the tsar's diplomatic and military intervention in the Greek uprising against the sultan in the late 1820s, and therefore the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829 did not shock them, but after 1830 their attitude radically changed. If liberals and democrats had long opposed the tsarist autocratic regime, from a geopolitical standpoint even some conservatives began to consider Russia as a predatory power whose desire to conquer knew no bounds.

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They accused the tsar of wanting to dominate Central Europe, destroy or at least control the Ottoman Empire and, due to its wars in the Caucasus, penetrate Central Asia. These fears were mostly baseless, but they were still influential and able to take root in the minds of the public. In 1839 German journalists often wondered how Russia would exploit the conflict in the Near East, how far it would go in its territorial ambitions, and how all this would affect the interests of European nations in general and those of the Germans in particular (Schwarz 2016, 287).

In their mistrust of Russia Germans were influenced not only by their own observance of international events but also from the early 1830s by the transfer of Russophobia from the British Isles (Gleason 1950, 153–178; Lamb 1993, 239–268; Vaerst-Pfarr 1992, 581). What particularly resonated among them was the British allegation that the tsar intended to exploit Russia's possession of the Danube delta to block navigation on this river. This gained such influence because at the same time German activists were beginning to consider the Danube to be the second most important "national" waterway bringing their trade to the Balkans and further to the Black Sea and the Levant. When statesman Hans Christoph Ernst von Gagern claimed in 1835 that "the Eastern Question and involvement in it is essentially a question of the Danube for us Germans" (Schwarz 2016, 284), he expressed an opinion that was quickly spreading among his compatriots (Ardeleanu 2010, 338–345; Groh 1961, 180, 189; Schwarz 2016, 286).

The outbreak of the Turko-Egyptian War intensified concerns for the tsar's ambitions, which also covered those in the Balkans and on the Danube. At the same time the sultan's defeats and his death in the late spring of 1839 made some Germans believe that the fall of the Ottoman Empire was possible if not inevitable. Altogether the tense geopolitical situation gave rise to the idea of an extension of German power down the Danube to its estuary. Exactly when this originated is unknown, but texts published in 1839–1840 reveal how geopolitical considerations and fears paved the way to this project. The continuous conflict in the Ottoman Empire and its spread to Europe in the form of the Rhine Crisis further reinforced it (Menzel 1839, 123–125; Schott 1839, 154–155).[2] When the Turko-Egyptian War ended, the political texts continued to recall it as an important argument on behalf of German south-eastern expansion and repeated Gagern's claim that for Germans the Eastern Question was the "Danube Question" (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, September 11, 1844, 2034). Accomplishment of this plan would establish a barrier cutting Russia off from the Balkans and ensuring free navigation on the Danube and access to the Black Sea. However, it would simultaneously lead to the subjugation of the non-German, mostly Slavic, nations living in the regions along the river (Thörner 2008, 19–47).

For security reasons German activists easily accepted the idea of their own hegemony. They usually justified it in the same way as Prussian conservative reformist Ernst Gottfried von Bülow-Cummerow had in 1845: with the argument that the German protectorate would bring the local people peace and progress (Bülow-Cummerow 1845, 356–361). But in the same year the *Allgemeine Zeitung* had made a much franker statement when it expressed its support for German expansion into the Balkans with the need for the nation's self-preservation.[3] This approach reveals how much the German attitude toward south-eastern Europe had changed since the 1820s: after the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in 1821 German intellectuals and journalists were seized with idealism and a desire for the liberation of the Greeks through Russian arms; at the end of the 1830s they judged this region more pragmatically according to their own economic and geopolitical interests, which moved them to advocate a blatantly anti-Russian policy violating the interests of other nations (Schwarz 2016, 301).

In this way their own insecurity fueled ambitious or even aggressive designs and a fundamental change in their perception of other nations. With the fear of Russia this change concerned above all the Slavic peoples, and with the rise of Russophobia German activists had also assumed a suspicious attitude toward them (Jahn 1980, 109). They suspected the tsar of cooperating with the Slavs to become more powerful and therefore better capable of carrying out his geopolitical aims. According to these activists, the Slavs had become his fifth column in Europe, and the ideology of pan-Slavism served as a banner under which the Russian monarch brought together all the Slavic tribes (Meyer 1996, 36).

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That is not to say that this fear was expressed for the first time in 1839, but it was in that year when the interconnected threat of Russia, Slavs, and pan-Slavism started to be voiced in German political writings. They also reveal how interest in the situation of the Ottoman Empire, inflated by the Turko-Egyptian War, stimulated this process. A literary historian living in Stuttgart, Wolfgang Menzel, referred to this combined danger in his influential *Europa im Jahr 1840* (*Europe in 1840*) written in 1839 (Menzel 1839, 125). The *Allgemeine Zeitung* contributed to the debate in August and September with articles linking the future of Slavs with Russia, which allegedly wanted to unite them in a universal monarchy. They claimed this new eastern empire would be dangerous for all of Europe but there was still time to avert it. The outcome depended on the settlement of the Eastern Question and on preventing the Russians from conquering Constantinople.[4] In February 1840, democratic journalist Johann Georg August Wirth saw in the article *Die Nationalität* (*Nationhood*) the national revival of the Slavs as a threat to Germans. As he wrote the article soon after speeches in the French Parliament demanding the conquest of the left bank of the Rhine, he used the French threat as a cautionary example in explaining the Slavic one:

> The consequences of the internal strengthening of the French nation resulted in our weakening and dismemberment only because we had lagged behind the momentum of this nation: even if the Slavic peoples do not surpass us in both external power and in the internal awakening of the national consciousness and desire for freedom, the political situation of Germany will be extremely unfortunate: for internal strength will soon be followed by external power […] which will result in the most violent upheaval and change. It will always remain significant that the nations next to us, when planning their future greatness, will count on territorial divisions of Germany and will divide our country among themselves in a very fraternal manner: France as far as the Rhine, then later probably as far as the Elbe; Poland, on the other hand, as far as the Oder, and later probably as far as the Elbe. (*Deutsche Volkshalle*, February 18, 1840, 143)

When mentioning the rivers important for the German Confederation, it is necessary to add that it also was in 1840 at the latest when Russian control of the Danube delta was seen as a part of not only German-Russian but also German-Slavic rivalry (Nägler 1990, 303).

In the early 1840s fear of pan-Slavism spread quickly across Germany.[5] It was *de facto* always explicitly linked with Russia and its foreign policy in eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 26, 1845, 1650; Bülow-Cummerow 1845, 178, 184–187). German journalists expected that a Slavic empire under a Russian protectorate would inevitably lead to an armed clash between them and the Slavs as both groups not only lived side by side but sometimes also inhabited the same territories (Anonymous 1848, 5–6). This anxiety caused the perception of Slavs as enemies, or even historical enemies (Hess 1841, 177).[6] This approach became evident in the political-nationalist texts of leading intellectuals. In 1842, influenced by recent international events, Karl Heinrich Wilhelm Hagen, a professor of history in Heidelberg, expressed apprehension of Russia's threat amplified by pan-Slavism in his *Rußland und Slaventhum* (*Russia and Slavism*). As a countermeasure he advocated the conquest of the lower Danube (Lenhard-Schramm 2014, 196–198). Some other compatriots also supported this idea due to their negative appraisal of Russia and pan-Slavism (Wagner 1935, 64–75). In the interest of Germany's security, the creation of their own "eastern empire" (*Ostreich*) became all the more important as a counterbalance to any efforts to establish a Russo-Slavic one (Oelsnitz 1845, 65–67; Pfizer 1845, 296, 302; Sass 1842, 14–15).[7] In the words of the radical deputy of the Baden Parliament, Friedrich Hecker, this eastern empire would become a barrier against "the pan-Slavic desire for world domination" (Fischel 1919, 227).

The idea of their own eastern empire strengthened the geopolitical importance of the Austrian Empire because it represented a buffer zone between the German and Slavic worlds, but for the same reason the Slavic danger was particularly ominous for Austria. Fear of the empire's destruction through pan-Slavism became so pronounced that the dark vision of Vienna as a border town on the

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Russian frontier resonated not only there but also in other federal states (Doubek 2004, 22–25; Fahrmeir 2017, 88–89; Fröbel 1848, 12; Hachtmann 1997, 657; Pfeisinger 1986, 77).[8] In 1843 from Stuttgart, Karl Weil warned against Russia and the Slavs and added that pan-Slavism was "a living, menacing spirit with long arms, in whose embrace Austria could be suffocated if it does not keep a strict watch and whose cordiality has a long reach" (*Konstitutionelle Jahrbücher*, vol. 3, 5). This inevitably turned people's attention particularly to the Slavic nations living in the Austrian Empire as the tsar could exploit them to bring about its disintegration and expansion of his own (Heppner 1975, 130–134).

It was in this way that the Czech-speaking people inhabiting the empire's western provinces became an integral part of German geopolitical discourse. It is hardly coincidental that it also happened at the end of the 1830s. In early August 1839, soon after the Turko-Egyptian War became known in Europe, a Prussian correspondent warned in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* against the pan-Slavists and their emissaries trying to win support in the Bohemian Lands for the creation of a large Slavic empire (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 5, 1839, 1734). Owing to this danger the same newspaper stated that "since the Ottomans conquered the walls of Constantinople, no time has been more significant for the East, and perhaps also for the West, than the present one" because the war in the Ottoman Empire could lead to its downfall and Russia's conquest of its European regions, which would get the tsar "a good step closer to the realization of that dreadful universal empire" (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, August 6, 1839, 1698). In November Gustav Höfken, a liberal journalist from the Rhineland, published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* one of the first articles on the German-Czech relations entitled *Die Czechen und die übrigen Westslaven* (*The Czechs and other Western Slavs*). He pointed out his compatriots' fear of Russia's effort to expand its territory further into Central Europe and did not conceal that some of them perceived the Czechs as part of a pan-Slavic threat. Although he regarded this suspicion of the tsar's territorial designs and the auxiliary role of western Slavs in their execution as exaggerated, he supported Austrian conquest of the lower Danube as a necessary security measure against Russian expansionism.[9]

Like the Prussian correspondent, Höfken also wrote his article in the context of the Turko-Egyptian War. Indirectly, this affair fueled the German activists' distrust of the Czechs during the Rhine Crisis. Although France and Russia were on opposite sides during the crisis, there were Germans who feared the conclusion of a French-Russian alliance. In such a case their fatherland would have to fight against two strong powers on two sides. This apprehension had its origins in the winter of 1839–1840 due to the development of the Near Eastern affair, but with the Rhine Crisis it became a real geopolitical nightmare (Šedivý 2024, 69–70). As the Russian and Slavic threats had already emerged as inseparable, a French-Russian-Slavic cooperation was even expected. The Czechs' eventual hostility would therefore be even more dangerous as it would weaken the Confederation from within. Some German journalists and diplomats were not confident that they could count on the Czechs in the event of the defense of the Confederation. In March 1841, the Hamburg representative in Vienna, Carl von Graffen, doubted Austria's ability to defend Germany against France, and one of the reasons was the multinational character of the empire with the Slavs, whose interests could well differ from those of Germans.[10] Later that year he visited Bohemia, where he witnessed anti-German feelings, which he immediately linked with the pan-Slavic threat represented by the Czech-speaking inhabitants.[11]

During the Rhine Crisis, overlapping with the second half of the Turko-Egyptian War, the German press continued to allege that the Czechs aspired to create an independent kingdom in Bohemia and Moravia and annex it to a new Slavic empire. In this way they were to become a pan-Slavic vanguard, which automatically meant Russia's. In general, these two international affairs of the early 1840s had an identical impact on the increasing number of texts on the Czech question and the spread of the terms "Czech" (*Czeche/czechisch*) in the German press together with texts on the Czechs' alleged inclination to pan-Slavism. Sometimes, their authors saw the principal danger in the "Czech party" in Bohemia with its center in Prague, represented by Czech-speaking intellectuals, but usually the entire Czech-speaking population was perceived as a threat (*Die Grenzboten* 1843, 1483–1489; Kořalka 1996, 53, 57, 71; Lades 1938, 81–83).

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Although the Turko-Egyptian War and the Rhine Crisis were solved peacefully in 1841, the fears that they helped to shape lingered among the German activists. They continued in their negative attitude toward the Czechs within the context of their anti-Russian and anti-Slavic sentiment (Pfitzner 1926, 201–362) and did not publish any books or pamphlets exclusively on the danger represented by the Czechs during the period under study. This was because it was just one of the many threats perceived by these activists, and, in comparison with those represented by France and Russia, the Czech threat was of lesser importance. However, it still existed, and their fear of the Czechs gradually grew with their fears of France and Russia and, as with the other threats, the German activists presented their relations with the Czechs primarily as a geopolitical problem. This was due to the strategic value of the region where the Czechs lived (Bauernfeld 1873, 244–245). According to these activists, this ethnic group drove a wedge into the federal territory from the east and its eventual control by the "enemy" would threaten large areas in the north, east, and south-east of Germany (Kořalka 1996, 33). Therefore, the preservation of the Bohemian Lands in German hands was crucial for the defense capability of the Confederation, the security of the routes between Berlin and Vienna or Munich and Wroclaw, and last but not least the implementation of the desired expansion along the Danube to the Black Sea (Hirschhausen 1996/97, 64; Wagner 1935, 69). That is why in 1845 the Württemberg liberal politician and journalist Paul Achatius Pfizer referred to the geostrategic value of the Bohemian Lands in relation to the Russo-Slavic threat and pointed out the vital importance of Bohemia and Moravia for Germany's security (Pfizer 1845, 199).

As explained in the introduction, in the early 1840s the loudest warnings against the Czechs came from Austrian activists who were the closest to the perceived Slavic threat. Schuselka published several pamphlets in which, explicitly referring to the experience with the Turko-Egyptian War and the Rhine Crisis, he expected that Russia would ally with France with the aim of attacking Germany. His expectation that the Slavs would support the tsar also made him hostile to the Czechs. He accused the Czech patriots of disliking the Germans and desiring to bring Bohemia, Moravia, and Upper Hungary into a Slavic central empire (*Mittelreic*h) (Schuselka 1843a, 39–41; Schuselka 1843b, 28–29; Schuselka 1843c, 38–40, 202–209). In such a case the situation of German-speaking inhabitants would be damaged because the Czech patriots "view with outrage the prevalence of German character (*deutsches Wesen*) in Bohemia, and they not only want to stop its further spread but also reverse the situation and czechify the Germans. They claim the whole of Bohemia with all its inhabitants for Slavism and denounce every German Bohemian either as a predatory intruder or a renegade Slav" (Schuselka 1843b, 29). Another reason why Schuselka opposed this alleged aspiration was the vital role of the Bohemian Lands like all of Austria for the defense of Confederation's eastern border and its extension along the lower Danube (Schuselka 1843b, 46, 65, 67). In brief, Austria had to be German for Germany's "security" (Schuselka 1843b, 5), and Czechs were to unite with Germans because only in such a case would they be able to preserve their nationhood (*Nationalität*) against Russia's yoke (Schuselka 1845, 311). In 1844, Austrian liberal Ferdinand Leopold Schirnding expressed himself in the same way: he warned against Czech pan-Slavism aimed at the creation of the same Slavic empire (Schirnding 1844a, 165–175), an unacceptable ambition for him due to the geographic position of the Bohemian Lands which were crucial for the defense and even the survival of the Austrian Empire (Schirnding 1844b, 52–55).

The Watershed of 1846

The year 1846 brought new impetus for the German activists' mistrust of the Czechs. Even then it was an indirect consequence of international events. In February the Poles revolted in Cracow and Galicia and were quickly defeated, and in November Austria annexed Cracow. Most German diplomats and publicists accepted the annexation because they regarded it as necessary for security reasons. The negative attitude toward Russia played a crucial role again. It was widely believed that the tsar wanted to destroy the Free City of Cracow at any cost and that he had threatened to annex it himself if Austria had not done so. The tsar was said to have told Austria: "Either you or I have to

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take over Cracow!" (*Frankfurter Oberpostamts-Zeitung*, November 21, 1846, 3152) Germans certainly preferred Austria to annex the city because they saw Russian possession of it as a serious threat to the defense and even political survival of the German Confederation (Šedivý 2022, 340–360.).[12]

The debates about the annexation further stimulated the already strong mistrust of Russian ambitions in Europe. The view was strengthened by the rumor of the tsar's hegemonic aspirations both in the Baltic and on the Danube (*Kourier an der Donau*, November 23, 1846, n. pag). Anti-Russian feeling escalated rapidly, particularly in Vienna due to fear of the loss of economic positions in Moldavia and Wallachia, but even the inhabitants of more distant Darmstadt and Hamburg were afraid that Russia would annex them.[13]

Like in the early 1840s, the Russian threat was viewed in a greater geopolitical context. In late 1846, however, the Germans saw their position even more precarious. Their relationship with the Danes deteriorated owing to their conflict over the Schleswig-Holstein Question, and the growing Scandinavian movement was then seen as another threat coming from the North to sustain the Danes' claims. In the south, the Italians' anti-Austrian, which for many meant anti-German, diatribes raised doubts about the security of the Confederation's border in the Adriatic and the Alps. France was suspected of wanting to ally with Russia in the near future. All this amplified the Germans' perception of external threats. It was geopolitics that fostered their fears and expectations of the worst from others (Šedivý 2024, 113–44, 175–220).

Some Germans were also convinced of the hostile designs of the Slavs. Here the year 1846 built on the legacy of the 1839–1841 period. Since the Cracow uprising and its later annexation intensified the activities of Slav intellectuals including the supporters of pan-Slavism, it was not difficult again to connect the pan-Slavic movement with the threat from Russia (Vlček 2002, 51). As the police report on the public opinion in Vienna in October 1846 reveals, this further stimulated the fear of an alleged Slavic conspiracy directed from St. Petersburg and the Slavs' hatred of not only Austria but all of Germany.[14] The number of German written texts discussing all the various Slavic issues increased rapidly, often calling for the preservation of Cracow in Austrian hands and turning it into a fortified town to strengthen the Confederation's eastern border.[15] Austrian military officer Karl Moering was only one among many who viewed Cracow as a "large Germanic parade ground against the Slavic people" (Wandruszka 1939, 114).

From among the Slavs, not only the Russians but also the Poles were gradually seen as the Germans' rivals if not enemies. There were various reasons for this anti-Polish sentiment, including the Polish emigrants' anti-Austrian and anti-Prussian verbal attacks, and the apprehension that an independent Poland would become an ally of France as it had been in previous centuries. Camile de Briey, the Belgian envoy to the German Confederation, fittingly explained this attitude in this way: "To understand the secret of a people's affections and hatred, it is almost always enough to open up their history and look at the map."[16] Consequently, anti-Slavic texts usually reflected a strong mistrust of the Poles. In 1846 Saxon historian Heinrich Wuttke published a pamphlet *Polen und Deutsche* (*Poles and Germans*) in which he warned against pan-Slavism and claimed that the Poles intended to murder Germans in that year. His concern for Germany's security in the east moved him to form the *Verein zur Wahrung der deutschen Sache an den östlichen Gränzen* (*Association for the Preservation of the German Cause on the Eastern Borders*) (Dipper 1985, 104; Lenhard-Schramm 2014, 201–208). In his pamphlet published in 1847 (but based on articles published earlier in the 1840s) *Der Weltkampf der Deutschen und Slaven seit dem Ende des fünften Jahrhunderts nach christlicher Zeitrechnung* (*The World Struggle of the Germans and Slavs since the End of the Fifth Century According to the Christian Calendar*), Moritz Wilhelm Heffter, a gymnasium Professor from Brandenburg, introduced the history of the Germans and the Slavs as a continuous conflict in which he regarded the latter as enemies and the problems of geography and power as crucial aspects of the ongoing animosity. He presented the annexation of Cracow as a new chapter in this struggle, giving the Germans a certain advantage against both Russia and the Slavs, including the Poles (Heffter 1847, iii, 7–9, 455).

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Given the well-known animosity between the Poles and Russians, it may be surprising that the fear of a Russian-Slavic alliance included the former. This situation arose because the German activists who considered pan-Slavism a threat usually ignored or at least trivialized the divergent or even conflicting ambitions within the "Slavic world". Their own fear made them insensitive to details and prone to spreading unsubstantiated rumors, the outcome of which was not only the frequent hostility to both the Russians and Poles but also linking the two groups into one danger. In 1843 *Die Grenzboten*, published in Leipzig by Ignaz Kuranda, a German activist born in Prague, voiced an opinion in an article *Die slavischen Tendenzen in Böhmen* (*The Slavic Tendencies in Bohemia*) about the existence of a "Polish-Russian pan-Slavism" striving for the freedom of Poland and the Slavs under Russia's protectorate. From its Parisian hotbed it was said to direct its propaganda to important "Slavic cities" including Prague. Here the journal linked this Polish-Russian pan-Slavism with Czech nationalist aspirations geopolitically dangerous for both the Austrian Empire and German Confederation (*Die Grenzboten* 1843, 1486–1489).

Considering this example from 1843, it is easier to understand why three years later the increasing lack of sympathy for the Poles was followed at a regional level by a similar attitude toward the Czechs. Although there was no criticism of the annexation of Cracow in the Bohemian Lands nor any reports of pro-Polish sympathy from them, according to the Austrian police some German-speaking inhabitants of Bohemia, Moravia, and Vienna felt threatened by the Czechs and their growing national consciousness (Glossy 1919, 159, 209, 212–213).[17] It was the earlier distrust of this small nation in the heart of the Continent that was also responsible for the doubt about its loyalty to the Austrian Empire and the Confederation during 1846. It was believed that the Czechs' alleged connection with other Slavs including the Russians and Poles would encourage their separatism and inclination to obey the tsar's orders. This opinion became particularly strong among Austrian Germans whose empire was the most directly threatened of all the federal states (Glossy 1919, 109).[18] In January 1847, the police reported that the Viennese were "again a little more concerned about Bohemia. There have been several indications that Czechism (*Tschechentum*) also appears here as a coherent political element, which in a way has aroused a surprising fear of the Slavic colossus in the small hereditary German states" (Glossy 1919, 209). Schuselka now saw in the Czechs an even greater security threat, especially with his negative evaluation of the unsettled state of European politics and Russian-pan-Slavic alliance (Schuselka 1847, 271–293).

Even in other parts of Germany, however, people shared this apprehension and often used terms such as "Czechism," "Bohemian Czechoslavism" or "Russian Party in Bohemia"[19] when they viewed the Czechs' designs as detrimental to the entire Confederation. On December 2, 1846, in Stuttgart the *Schwäbischer Merkur* published an article from Bohemia that warned against Czech nationalism (*Czechenthum*) and linked it with Polish anti-German sentiment (*Schwäbischer Merkur*, December 2, 1846, 1337). Heffter even accused Slavs in general and Czechs in particular of hating Germans (Heffter 1847, 7). In the Baden Parliament Hecker warned against the spread of pro-Russian pan-Slavism in the Bohemian Lands because without them how could Germans be able to defend themselves "against the attacking force of the Slavs? Who can assure us that their devastation will not surpass that of the Mongols?" (Robert 1846, 475) In February 1847 Graffen reacted to the affairs of the previous year with the same warning against the dangers represented by the Poles and other Slavs, particularly the Czechs as he explicitly described Bohemia and Moravia as Germany's strategically vulnerable point in its defense.[20]

The practical response was the German activists' greater readiness to not only defend but also extend Germany's eastern frontier (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, August 26, 1847, 1902). They were even willing, in Heffter's words, to fight the Slavs even though a conflict between them could not be decided "without the most violent shocks to current conditions, without a complete overthrow of the at least partially existing European political balance of power and states system, [and] without the most violent infringement and mockery of historical law" (Heffter 1847, 456). That is how even before 1848 their own geopolitical fears paved the way to confrontation, and it was also long before that year that the perception of Czechs as a threat impacted on the rise of German

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national consciousness: in March 1846 the Viennese wanted to strengthen national solidarity against the pan-Slavism that they linked with the alleged Slavic separatism in Bohemia.[21]

The Czech Reaction

In the case of the Czech activists, their anti-German attitude also originated around 1840, and geopolitics was primarily responsible for it. German demand for political hegemony over Central Europe necessarily threatened their own cultural as well as political aspirations as the Germans' desire for a leading role would turn the Czechs into a national minority, who at best could expect to be tolerated. This explains why they were sensitive to the German activists' aggressive rhetoric. In early 1841, František Palacký, a Czech historian and later an important politician, discussed with the Austrian president of police, Count Josef von Sedlnitzky, the danger of a "national" oppression of the Czechs. In the summer of 1843, František Ladislav Rieger, later Palacký's son-in-law, commented on the unprecedented number of pamphlets on the co-existence of Germans, Slavs and Magyars (Heidler 1924, 7, 13). At the same time, František Girgl, a friend of the most eminent Czech journalist in the following years, Karel Havlíček Borovský, complained about the anti-Czech bias of these pamphlets that, as he emphasized, had emerged just recently.[22]

The impact of geopolitics on the attitude of Czech activists can be proved in three ways. First, in the personal communication and public debates among themselves. In November 1845 Vilém Gabler recommended to Borovský that he read the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* to learn more about European affairs. Then he expressed himself in a similar way as Briey did in February 1847: "Good geography and good maps will not be wasted."[23] In December 1845 Gabler advised Borovský to buy Bülow-Cummerow's *Der gegenwärtige Zustand des europäischen Staatensystems* (*The Current Condition of the European State System*), in fact *Die europäischen Staaten nach ihren innern und äußern politischen Verhältnissen* (*The European Countries according to Their Internal and External Political Conditions*),[24] promoting the German conquest of the Danube down to the Black Sea for security reasons (Bülow-Cummerow 1845, 33–35, 111–124, 372). In April 1846 Jakub Josef Dominik Malý led a controversy with Borovský on Czech-German relations in which he referred to the aggressive pan-Germanism and remarked that "Mr. Borovský would do better to read the Augsburg General Newspaper [*Allgemeine Zeitung*] and other German journals because he would certainly find excellent details on this subject. Not to mention their [the Germans'] intentions to seize the mouth of the Danube, to settle Asia Minor, to Germanize America, [and] to drive us out of Europe" (Tobolka 1900, 75). The significance placed on geography manifested itself further in the approach the Czech activists took to the geopolitical importance of certain locations: If the German activists talked about "their Danube" as a barrier against Russia's expansion, then Borovský saw in the Danube "our Slavic river" free of Russian and German control (Tobolka 1901, 22) and many of his compatriots revered their "Czech mountains" protecting them all around (Klíma 1983, 406).

Second, that geopolitics represented an important backdrop to the Czech-German war of words is easily revealed in the context in which the Czech activists entered this battlefield. Their texts were often written in the same geopolitical spirit with references to recent international affairs, the insecure peace, and the real and imagined ambitions of European countries and other nationalist leaders (Anonymous 1843, 149–173; Anonymous 1844b, 54–55). The Prague newspaper *Pražské Nowiny* referred to the Germans' international fears and aspirations and reacted with obvious disagreement. At that time Borovský was responsible for reporting on foreign affairs in this newspaper. He wrote in detail about the Germans' mistrust and even apprehension of Russia, Britain, the Poles, and the Danes, which he regarded as exaggerated, and he also introduced their intended counter-measures like territorial expansion and naval armament to protect their fatherland (Tobolka 1900, 308–318).[25] From 1846 to 1848 Borovský also debated with the journal *Ost und West* on the topic of Czech-German relations (Hofman 1957, 71–74). Although Rudolf Glaser founded *Ost und West* in 1837 to report on Czech literature, later debates resulted not from the

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sphere of culture but geopolitical allegations (Malý 1876, 461). More conservative than Borovský, Malý also saw the Czech-German relationship within this broader international context, which led to his mistrust of the Germans. Already in 1840, Malý offered long surveys of important European, Near, and Middle Eastern affairs (Malý 1840, 171–176, 210–230). This enabled him to recognize that the Germans' antipathy toward the Czechs resulted from "their being startled out of their sense of long-established peace and security" (Malý 1872, 4). Therefore, in the mid-1840s he responded to the German texts on the external threats represented by France, Denmark, and Russia allegedly supported by the Czechs and other Slavs with the argument that the Czechs demanded only the same national rights as did the Germans in Alsace, Schleswig, and Russia's Baltic provinces (Kořalka 1985, 251; Malý 1872, 4).

Third, the extent to which the Czech activists' anti-German attitude was formed by geopolitics can be seen from their political writings addressed to their German counterparts. It was no coincidence that from 1839 their pamphlets published in German in Augsburg and Leipzig, their German articles printed particularly in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, or Czech texts disseminated in the Austrian Empire contained political rather than cultural demands (Kořalka 1985, 260). In October 1839 Jan Erazim Vocel rejected the accusation of the Czechs' desire to create a "great eastern Slavic empire" (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, October 5, 1839, 2173). In March 1841 he repeated this assurance when he rejected the vision of the Slavs' cultural activities leading to their political unification and "willingness to destroy the existing world order" (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, March 14, 1841, 577). He was correct because all the Czech activists named in this article, and many others like Vojtěch Náprstek and August Smetana, did not desire the creation of a pan-Slavic empire under Russia's protectorate (Stellner and Soběhart 2008, 561–563).

What was common to the Czech political writings was, first, the repeated assurances of their authors' loyalty to the Austrian Empire and the rejection of the tsar's leadership. In 1844 Vocel felt forced to reassure the Germans again owing to what he labelled as growing "Czechophobia" (*Czechophobie*) (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, August 23, 1844, 1881–1883). In the same year an anonymous Czech writer rejected the German fear of the Czechs' desire for independence from Austria and the apprehension that "if the Germans lose control in Bohemia, in twenty years the Russian border guards will be positioned near Dresden and Vienna" (Anonymous 1844a, 184).

Second, the aspiration for German supremacy was regarded by the Czechs as a threat to their own political, economic, and cultural existence as was also the possibility of the accession of the Bohemian Lands to the German Customs Union. When the *Allgemeine Zeitung* informed its readers in September 1844 that Bohemia would soon enter the Union (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 16, 1844, 2077), Jan Hulakovský sharply opposed such a possibility because it would inevitably lead to not only the economic but also the cultural and political subjugation of the Czech-speaking people (Hulakovský 1845, 37–40). His fear of Germans was further motivated by medieval history in which, as he claimed, the Germans "had exterminated" the Slavs in many regions (Hulakovský 1845, 6–12). Recalling the latest international affairs and aware of the German ambition to conquer the lower Danube and anti-Slavic texts, he believed in the possibility of a repetition of this disaster:

> This German spirit of conquest and plunder is already quite evident, and more than one voice has been heard in the German newspapers that the Danube up to its outlet into the Black Sea is a German river and the entire Danube basin is a German estuary, and therefore the whole of it should be occupied by Germans, which they have been demanding. And even further, with appalling audacity and shamelessness, it is demanded and desired that our Emperor should become an instrument of plunder, and that he should conquer all the lands in Turkey on the Black Sea for the Germans, and even drive a German wedge into the Russian lands […] And further still, it is the determined intention of the Germans not only to conquer lands, but also to exterminate peoples, especially the Slavs among them as has been pointed out above. And they are already announcing their diabolical intention to the whole world without any shame

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> and with great audacity, intending to do the same with Bohemia, as they have already done in the Netherlands, in Brandenburg, in Pomerania, and in the greater part of Silesia and Lusatia, as the very report, which confirms the 'rumor' of Bohemia being incorporated into the German Customs Union, makes clear, namely right from the start. And this is supposed to be a friendly alliance! Behold an alliance with Satan […] when they themselves are so openly and shamelessly before the whole world threatening us with German destruction. (Hulakovský 1845, 35–36)

To save not only the cultural but also the physical existence of his nation, Hulakovský even called for the Bohemian Lands to leave the German Confederation (Hulakovský 1845, 48). For similar reasons other Czech activists had adopted this aspiration by 1848, and Borovský publicly voiced it in March 1848 (Kohn 1953, 28).

Third, to become stronger vis-à-vis the German activists, the Czech activists tried to increase the number of "Czechs" by embracing not only the Czech-speaking inhabitants of Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian Silesia but also the Slovaks living in Upper Hungary. Vocel had already done so in October 1839, and others continued to do so later. In the support of this union some of them invoked Šafařík's statistical and geographic work (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, May 7, 1843, 974; Anonymous 1843, 8). Hulakovský even found a denomination for them: "Czech-Slavs" (*Čechoslované*) (Hulakovský 1845, 21, 52–53). This fully corresponds to the logic of the threshold principle and prefigured what happened between the Czechs and Slovaks in 1918.

For identical security reasons Czech intellectuals openly declared their loyalty to the Austrian Empire. They did not desire its destruction for they saw in it the only guarantee of their survival between two dangers: one represented by the tsarist autocracy, the second by the ambitious Germans. Their attitude completely corresponded with what Metternich claimed in June 1848, namely that the nations ruled by the Habsburgs kept together due to their need "for mutual protection and joint strength against threatening neighboring empires" (Metternich-Winneburg 1884, 429–430). They well understood that "under the given geographic and power conditions, the Austrian Empire represented the relatively most favorable state-political framework for the constitution and preservation of the Czechs as a distinct nation" (Kořalka 1985, 248). Malý even claimed in 1845 that the Czech nation's existence entirely depended on the preservation of the empire and that it was because of external threats including the one from Germany that he was "a sincere Austrian patriot" (Malý 1845, 16–18).

This affinity for the Austrian Empire motivated by security considerations had been expressed since 1839 when Vocel argued that the protection it granted to the Czechs made them loyal subjects of the emperor (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, October 5, 1839, 2173). Its preservation thus became crucial for him and other activists during the 1840s. In September 1842 an anonymous author wrote in his pamphlet *Slawen, Russen, Germanen: Ihre gegenseitigen Verhältnisse in der Gegenwart und Zukunft* (*Slavs, Russians, Germans: Their Mutual Relations in the Present and Future*) that he saw the Czechs' future only within the Austrian Empire because

> surrounded by powerful neighboring states, none of its peoples [nations] would be able to defend its political existence on its own; any desire for the security of a peaceful state, which is the next goal of civil society, must make every prudent inhabitant of the territory of the Austrian Empire feel the need for a government that is equal to the other powers of Europe. But any people wanting to join one of the great neighboring nations would inevitably forfeit their national existence. The need for universal security is therefore the bond that inextricably binds the various peoples of the Austrian Monarchy together. (Anonymous 1843, 170)

On the contrary, without the Austrian Empire the Czechs risked their "downfall" (*Untergang*) (Anonymous 1843, 228).

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When deliberating their own security within the context of geopolitics and material power, the Czech activists saw in the economic strength and geographical position of Bohemia and Moravia "the breastplate of Austria" (Anonymous 1843, 175) and in them and other Slavic nations the core of its power. In 1841 Vocel stated that if the widespread suspicion of Russia's hostile designs was justified and the warmongering attitude of France from late 1840 turned into aggression, and "if the existing political system were to be shaken by the interaction of French and Russian cannons, then […] the inclination of the Catholic Slavs for the German imperial house, acquired during the peace, could have important consequences in a conflict with the Tsarist Empire" (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* 14 March 1841, 578). Additionally, the Czechs and other Austrian Slavs could help the emperor to conquer the lower Danube (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, May 7, 1843, 977; Anonymous 1843, 189–193). This meant that if the German desire to control the river was motivated by the need of a barrier against Russia, the Slavic-Austrian dominance, reinforced by the expected loyalty of local Slavs, would fulfill the same role. In such a case the Austrian Slavs could become the Germans' bastion against the tsar's empire, together they could guarantee the European peace that had been shaken in 1840 (Anonymous 1843, 233–237).

For this support the Czech activists expected a *quid pro quo*. Arguing with the high number of Austrian Slavs, they claimed that the Austrian Empire could never be Germanized. On the contrary, all its Slavic nations deserved not only cultural but also political equality with Germans and Magyars (Hulakovský 1845, 12). Already in the mid-1840s this equality became a synonym for national autonomy (Hulakovský 1845, 41; Chownitz 1846, 185–187). If granted to the Czechs and other Austrian nations, then Hulakovský promised that the Slavs would defend Austria with the same fervor as they had already done against Frederick II of Prussia and Napoleon I (Hulakovský 1845, 47).

This is how the concept of Austro-Slavism was already formulated before 1848 (Kočí 1971, 191–201; Kořalka 1982, 134). That it was a geopolitical-security concept is obvious not only from the Czechs' fear of Germans and Russians that gave rise to it but also from how Palacký introduced it in his formal refusal to attend the German National Assembly as a member in April 1848. He shared the Germans' fear of Russia, and like some other leading Czech patriots he considered its expansionism to be the main threat to the small nations of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Therefore, he also proposed Austria's control of the lower Danube. However, this solution was to serve not only the security of Germans but all the nations living in that region and in the whole Austrian Empire, and these nations were to be put on an equal footing. The second anti-Russian barrier was to be erected in an independent Poland. In this way Palacký offered his alternative to the idea of a German Central Europe (Alexander 2005, 35–36).

The 1848 Revolution

The year 1848 represented another important milestone but no actual turning point in the antipathy between the German and the Czech activists. Although this animosity is often said to have started in the summer, a closer look reveals an obvious continuity from the preceding years. During the early March phase of the revolution any understanding and cooperation aimed at constitutional changes was already quite limited and contemporary witnesses saw little cordiality between the two groups.[26] The reason lay in the divergent opinions on the positions they were to assume not only in the Austrian Empire and the German Confederation but also within the broader European framework (Tobolka 1901, 7). Malý later remembered that the conflicting geopolitical issues never entirely disappeared but were merely muted at this time (Malý 1872, 80; Malý 1876, 516).

If constitutional demands took precedent over geopolitical interests in March, then the latter soon returned with full force and became a major factor defining the quality of German-Czech relations in the following months. They played a crucial role especially for the Germans, who felt threatened from all sides, waged wars against the Danes and Italians from late March and expected

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the outbreak of a greater conflict with Russia and France at any time (Groh 1961, 196–197; Hachtmann 1997, 657–658; Kittel 2002, 375). As a topic of debate, geopolitics also became more important than ever because Germans, with two-fifths of the population, were a national minority in the Bohemian Lands (Hein 1998, 75; Hewitson 2010, 54). The affiliation of these lands to Germany was therefore primarily legitimized by the necessity of having them for the security of the entire German nation (Klíma 1994, 8–28). The expediency of this justification, however, does not change the fact that in 1848 the German activists certainly considered the Bohemian Lands, in the words of liberal journalist Jacob Venedey, as a "German fortress" (*Zwingburg*) without which all of their fatherland would be "irrevocably exposed to every enemy from the east" (Fenske 1976, 394).

Concern for their own security led the German activists to the unequivocal conclusion that the Bohemian Lands must remain Austrian (Křen 1996, 73). Only in this situation would the German nation be strong enough to resist the pressure of Russia and the Slavs in the east, the French in the west, and the Italians in the south (Wollstein 1977, 199). The extent to which the question of the future of the Bohemian Lands was perceived from the perspective of external threats is illustrated by August Ludwig von Rochau's statement made on May 2, 1848: "To permit the emergence of a Slavic state in Bohemia would be to thrust a poisoned sword into Germany's breast. To release Bohemia, which reaches into the geographical center of Germany, […] from the German state, to abandon it to Russian influence and pan-Slavist propaganda, would mean nothing other than suicide for Germany" (Burian 1992, 240). Karl Heinrich Brüggemann expressed himself in the same spirit nineteen days later: "It would certainly be no small sacrifice for Germany if we were to give up these lands […] Our whole eastern border would be shattered, a foreign state would stretch right into the heart of Germany, which could only too easily become a bastion for Russia […] We fully recognize the newly awakened power of the concept of nationhood and the urge of states toward national borders; but for that reason alone, we […] cannot allow a large ambivalent state to be established in the center of our fatherland" (Burian 1992, 239). In the same month this opinion was shared by Graffen, whose negative attitude toward the Czechs had been formed as a result of his geopolitical-security concerns since 1841.[27]

These statements were made when the German politicians and journalists were becoming increasingly convinced that of all the Slavic nations it was the Czechs who were most intent on breaking up the Austrian Empire and seceding their lands from the German Confederation with the aim of incorporating them into a Slavic empire or, even worse, allying with Russia. The inevitable outcome was the increasing hostility toward the Czechs (Kühne 1863, 244–245; Kittel 2002, 372; Řepa 2014, 66, 75, 81–82, 84, 91; Vick 2002, 159–160). Austrian liberal Victor Franz von Andrian-Werburg had already become a vocal supporter of German control of the entire Danube in the first half of the 1840s (Kaindl 1926, 127), and in 1848 the Czechs' alleged pan-Slavic and anti-German aspirations made him a determined enemy of "Czechism" (*Czechismus*), which at the end of March 1848 he considered "a kind of terrorism" (Adlgasser 2011, 61). In May he saw the situation as so serious that he expected an early outbreak of civil war between the Czechs and the Germans as part of the "war of extermination" (*Vernichtungskrieg*) between Germans and Slavs. For strategic reasons, he therefore insisted on German rule being maintained in the Bohemian Lands as in Posen (Adlgasser 2011, 84–85, 90, 143–144). At that time other German activists, and not only those in Austria, predicted the same "terrible war of nations" (*ungeheurer Nationalkrieg*) between the Germans and the Slavs (Bergsträsser 1929, 38; Blackstock and Hoselitz 1952, 62, 67).

In the spring and summer of 1848, the Czech activists contributed to the fear of this catastrophic scenario with three events, albeit certainly unintentionally as most of them were not considering either the dissolution of the Austrian Empire or war with Germans: first, Palacký's refusal to enter the National Assembly in Frankfurt explained with his Austro-Slavic vision of Central and South-Eastern Europe; second, the Slavic Congress in Prague from 2 to 12 June; third, the June uprising in Prague from 12 to 17 June (Burian 1992, 238; Štaif 2000, 56).

Each of these events attracted attention throughout Germany, altogether they increased the perception of the Czechs as a serious security threat. Although the Czech political arena was dominated by men loyal to the Habsburgs and certainly not aimed at promoting Russian interests, the German

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journalists and deputies in Frankfurt saw in Prague the center of the pro-Russian and anti-German Slavic "hundred-headed hydra."[28] Therefore, it was in Bohemia that the future of the entire German nation was to be decided even at the cost of war (Anonymous 1848, 6; Randers-Pehrson 1999, 390; Vlček 2002, 103; Wigard 1848, 661–676).

Because geopolitics prevailed over constitutional preferences in the attitude toward the June uprising, the counter-revolutionary victory of the Austrian army was celebrated even among liberals and democrats whose representatives in Frankfurt agreed to the possible deployment of federal troops in Prague (Breuilly 1998, 321; Müller 1977, 250, 254; Wigard 1848, 655–676). Their unceasing conviction of the geostrategic importance of Bohemia and Moravia for the control of Central and South Eastern Europe did not allow them to yield (Hahn and Berding 2010, 598; Kořalka 2008, 571; Siemann 1985, 152).[29] In reaction to Palacký's idea of Austrian control of the Danube Bavarian geographer Moritz Wagner stated that Austria alone could never prevent Russian expansion and that it needed the support of the other federal states, which also predetermined the relationship of the Bohemian Lands to the whole of Germany. Wagner defended the need for their submission to German interests by arguing that "by its character and geographical location Bohemia is an essential part of Germany," and "if we agreed to the political separation of Bohemia from Germany, which is the real intention of the Czechs, it would be an act of suicide for us" (Wagner 1848, 4). The only solution was the creation of a "united, free and strong Germany," which would include the Bohemian Lands (Wagner 1848, 10). Friedrich Wilhelm Schulz, a democratic deputy in Frankfurt, pointed out that a nation is defined not only by language and economic interests but also "the strategic considerations of security" (Schulz 1848, 4) that were shaped by those of geography. These moved him to demand for inclusion in Germany the regions inhabited by other nationalities including the Bohemian Lands so that the Germans "would be able to halt the path of Russian influence and Russian rule as far as the western border of Bohemia" (Schulz 1848, 15).

Conclusion

The political writings and personal testimonies of both German and Czech activists testify that the collision course was set long before 1848 and that the controversial arguments the two groups raised in their debates were primarily of geopolitical and not cultural, constitutional, or linguistic nature. It was the desire for their own security that had considerable potential to unite but also divide them. Fear of non-German countries stimulated the solidarity between German activists from various political movements and federal states but made them indifferent to the same desire for security of other nations. This attitude provoked an identical situation among the Czech patriots whose nationalist agenda developed in the same way but with geopolitical goals different from those of Germans. The contradictory quests for security formed an unbridgeable divide between the two groups by the summer of 1848. Their mutual mistrust then prevented them from coming to an understanding against a common threat: the effort of some German activists to persuade the Czechs to join an anti-Russian alliance (*Völkerbund*) immediately failed because the Czech leaders regarded them as a similar threat (Hofman 1957, 95).

Cultural and linguistic demands represented an important value worthy of protection because culture and language were significant in the process of national self-determination. Before 1848, however, in their negative perception of each other, linguistic or cultural differences played only a secondary role to the more intensive fear of war. If the international crises of the early 1840s made this fear more intensive, the diverging interests of nationalist activists threatened to make the war more general and violent. This was predicted in some of their texts used in this article. Another anonymous pamphlet published in 1848 recalled the prophecy of historian, geographer, and traveler Johann Georg Kohl after his visit to Russia in 1841. Kohl warned that

> it is not without fear and horror that one can think of all the endeavors of the Slavic linguists and historians and the activities and endeavors that necessarily arise from them for these

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> Slavic warriors – to exchange the pen for the sword in defense of ideas and desires is as common as it is easy – because the Slavic and Germanic worlds have become so intertwined and interwoven that if the ties that bind them were to be cut, the unravelling of this entanglement would have terrible consequences. It could lead to centuries of war and bloodshed. (Anonymous 1848, 5–6)

With the reference to the June uprising in Prague the pamphlet added: "This prophecy of doom has dramatically come to pass this year." (Anonymous 1848, 6)

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Notes

1 The police reports on public opinion in Brno in July, August, October and November 1839, Moravský zemský archiv, Brno (MZA), 36, Policejní ředitelství Brno 95; *Neue Speyerer Zeitung*, August 14, 1839, 713; *Deutsche Volkshalle*, September 1, 1839, 1–3; *Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 15, 1840, 117–118, January 16, 1840, 125–156.
2 *Deutsche Volkshalle*, February 9, 1840, 115, August 6, 1840, 571–572; *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, November 18, 1839, 2518–2519; "Das asiatische Gleichgewicht." *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung.* September 11 and 12, 1840, pp. 2025–2026, 2035–2036.
3 "Kleinasien und deutsche Colonisation." *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung.* January 1, 1845, 2.
4 *Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 5, 1839, 1734; *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, August 6, 1839, 1698–1699; "Die slavische Universalmonarchie." *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung.* September 17, 1839, 2033–2034, September 18, 1839, 2041–2043.
5 Joachim Lewelel. 1843. "Der Panslawismus und Polen." *Die Grenzboten*, 681–691.
6 Moritz Wilhelm Heffter. 1843. "Der Weltkampf der Teutschen und Slawen, seit dem sechsten Jahrhundert nach unserer Zeitrechnung." *Neue Jahrbücher der Geschichte und Politik*, vol. 1, 97, 526, vol. 2, 403–433.
7 *Deutsche Volkshalle*, August 6, 1840, 571–572, January 5, 1841, 9.
8 The police report on public opinion in Vienna in February 1843, Glossy 1917, 148.
9 Höfken, Gustav. "Die Czechen und die übrigen Westslaven." *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung.* November 24, 1839, 2565–2568.
10 *Über die in Österreich bestehenden Schwierigkeiten einen Krieg zu führen*, Graffen to Sieveking, Vienna, March 11, 1841, Staatsarchiv Hamburg (StAH), 111-1 Senat, 2790.
11 Graffen to Lappenberg, Vienna, August 18, 1842, StAH, 111-1 Senat, 2790.
12 Könneritz to Zeschau, Vienna, November 17, 1846, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Ministerium der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, Sächsische Gesandtschaften, Krakau 0860.
13 The police report on public opinion in Vienna in December 1846, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (HHStA), Kabinettsarchiv (KA), Staatsrat (StR), Minister-Kolowrat Akten (MKA) 214; The police report on public opinion in Vienna in March 1847, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 217; Sercey to Guizot, Darmstadt, March 12, 1847, Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Paris, Correspondance politique, Hesse-Darmstadt 21; Hänlein to Frederick William IV, Hamburg, November 26, 1846, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Hauptabteilung III, Ministerium des Auswärtigen I 3095/2.
14 The police report on public opinion in Vienna in October 1846, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 212.
15 Grüner to Metternich, Leipzig, November 28 and December 22, 1846, HHStA, Staatskanzlei, Konsulate, Leipzig 27; Hormayr to Ludwig I of Bavaria, Bremen, January 18, 1847, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich (BHStA), Ministerium des Äußern (MA), Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck 2297; *Kölnische Zeitung*, December 13, 1846, n. pag.; *Illustrirte Zeitung*, December 19, 1846, 394.

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16 Briey to Dechamps, Frankfurt am Main, January 28, 1847, Archives diplomatiques et africaines, Brussels, Correspondances politiques, Légations, Confédération germanique 3.
17 The police report on public opinion in Vienna in November 1846, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 213; The police report on public opinion in Prague in January 1847, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 214; The police reports on public opinion in Brno in March and November 1846, MZA, 36, Policejní ředitelství Brno 12; The police report on public opinion in Prague in November 1846, the police report on public opinion in Bohemia in the second half of 1846, Národní archiv České republiky, Prague (NAP), Presidium českého gubernia – tajné, 1819–1848 (PG) 44.
18 The police report on public opinion in Prague in December 1846, NAP, PG 44; The police report on public opinion in Vienna in January 1846, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 204; The police reports on public opinion in Vienna in February and March 1846, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 205; The police report on public opinion in Prague in June 1846, HHStA, KA, StR, MKA 207.
19 Hormayr to Ludwig I of Bavaria, Bremen, December 24, 1846, January 20, 1847, BHStA, MA, Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck 2297.
20 Graffen, *Das Jahr 1846*, February 16, 1847, StAH, 111-1 Senat, 2794.
21 The police report on public opinion in Vienna in March 1846, Glossy 1919, 109.
22 Girgl to Borovský, Prague, July 11, 1843, Quis 1903, 50.
23 Gabler to Borovský, Sychrov, November 28, 1845, Adam, Martínek, and Pokorná 2020, 134.
24 Gabler to Borovský, Sychrov, December 5, 1845, Adam, Martínek, and Pokorná 2020, 136.
25 *Pražské Nowiny*, September 24, 1846, 310, December 17, 1846, 406, January 7, 1847, 7, January 14, 1847, 15, July 25, 1847, 248–249.
26 Palacký to his wife, Prague, March 13 and 26, 1848, Kořalka 2003, 392, 396.
27 Graffen to Merck, Vienna, May 12, 1848, StAH, 111-1 Senat, 2792.
28 *Neue Königsberger Zeitung*, June 29, 1848, Fugger and Lorek 2017, 43.
29 *Neue Königsberger Zeitung*, June 21 and July 6, 1848, Fugger and Lorek 2017, 39, 47–48.

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Archives diplomatiques et africaines, Brussels
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Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich
Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna
Moravský zemský archiv, Brno
Národní archiv České republiky, Prague
Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden
Staatsarchiv Hamburg

Newspapers and Journals

Allgemeine Zeitung
Deutsche Volkshalle
Die Grenzboten
Frankfurter Oberpostamts-Zeitung
Illustrirte Zeitung
Kölnische Zeitung
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Kourier an der Donau
Neue Jahrbücher der Geschichte und Politik
Neue Speyerer Zeitung
Pražské Nowiny
Schwäbischer Merkur

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