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The Politics of Language in Europe, c. 1525–1697*

Antoni Mączak set a standard for writing comparative history, with a major Polish component. In his honour I can attempt the first, without being able to do justice to the second. But I have chosen a topic where at least I can ask questions, I hope informed ones, about Poland in European context. And as an earnest of that, I have set two famous, or not-so-famous, dates in Polish history as my rough chronological boundaries.

What follows is in the spirit of Mączak; I trust it is both complimentary and complementary. For despite his deep interest in semantics (e.g. latterly in the terminology of social dependence¹), Mączak did not — so far as I'm aware — ever examine language as such in any of the three phases of his career. Yet language as communication, as a vehicle for inclusiveness or exclusiveness, as a marker of dominance or subordination: if language in those senses does not perhaps constitute a major feature of the economic relationships with which Mączak began, it definitely has high relevance for the worlds of travel and clientage that he then made so much his own.

The 'history of language' used to mean mostly something practised by linguists as an internal part of their discipline (and not all of them much concerned with it, as for example Jan Baudouin de Courtenay illustrated in Poland). More recently it has come to connote the role of language as a historical factor far more broadly, in particular among students of the modern world. For the **pre-modern** period, we have had much discussion of language as 'discourse', and considerable advances in the less imponderable field of the social history of language (with pioneering work esp. by Mączak's friend Peter Burke);

* This article is the revised version of a lecture in memory of Antoni Mączak given in Warsaw on 30 March 2006. An earlier version of parts of it was delivered at a conference on 'Confession and Nation in the Era of Reformations. Central Europe in Comparative Perspective' at Pardubice (Czech Republic) in spring 2004 and will appear in the proceedings of that event, ed. J. Pánek and S. Ráková. I am very grateful for their permission to cover some of the same ground here.

¹ As when he finds an early reference to 'cliens' in Poland: A. Mączak, *Nierówna przyjaźń. Układy klientalne w perspektywie historycznej*, Wrocław 2003, p. 20.

nowadays '(political) communication' is a fast-rising topic². But 'language politics', language as a part of political culture, have not apparently been thought relevant. One can search textbooks in vain for basic information on what linguistic medium was actually in use by a given government or institution.

Language is and always was an essential part of the political scene: as a cultural factor; as a medium of understanding, at various levels from basic to highly sophisticated; and as a binding force in the formation of parties or groups, which serves simultaneously to set them off from outsiders. We might suppose that to be especially evident in central Europe, given the range of neighbouring or enmeshed tongues there and the subsequent significance of their interactions. At all events I want to argue that the subject deserves historians' consideration in its own right, and should not be regarded as merely a concern of linguists and literary critics; and I should like to draw some of the findings of wider sociolinguistic analysis into the political realm. But all must be tentative, since much evidence remains to be gathered, and I am not aware of any kind of adequate overview for Europe at large of the role of language in the public sphere during our period.

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But was language a *politicum* in the period I have chosen? The Polish case might suggest otherwise. When Emperor Joseph II issued his language decree of 1784 for Hungary (a matter to which I shall return), he reproved Hungarians **and Poles** as being the only nations who continued to do their business in the dead tongue of Latin³. Yet for Poland that was not, of course, true. Indeed, Polish had been subordinate in the Middle Ages; and when the emancipation of the vernacular began in later fifteenth century, it was soon stopped short by a vogue for humanist Latin. Yet Polish in due course emerged vastly enhanced in its scope by its dialogue with Renaissance culture — Latin exercised a creative influence on its vocabulary and style, and formed a carapace for the progressive emergence of Polish to play a main role in official affairs⁴. That began in 1525, with the first vernacular royal mandate *ku popisowi wszystkich służebnych jezdnych i pieszych*; then spread to the diet, the courts, and elsewhere by the 1560's⁵. We should recall the significance of the church in this, as Protestants and then in lesser degree Catholics moved

² For a synthesis of Burke's contribution, see his new survey, *Speaking Identities. Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2004. Political communication (e.g.): A. Gestrich, *Absolutismus und Öffentlichkeit. Politische Kommunikation in Deutschland zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 1994; W. Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur: Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2003; L. Schorn-Schütte (ed.), *Aspekte der politischen Kommunikation im Europa des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: politische Theologie, Res publica, Verständnis, konsensgestützte Herrschaft*, München 2004.

³ I. Katoń, *Historia critica regum Hungariae*, vol. 40, Buda 1810, p. 378–80. Cf. now R. J. W. Evans, 'The Politics of Language and the Languages of Politics: Latin and the Vernaculars in Eighteenth-Century Hungary', [in:] *Cultures of Power, 1700–1815. Festschrift T. C. W. Blanning*, H. M. Scott and B. Sims (eds), forthcoming.

⁴ C. Backvis, *Quelques remarques sur le bilinguisme latino-polonais dans la Pologne du seizième siècle*, Brussels 1958; J. Krókowski, *Języki piśmiennictwa łacińskie w Polsce XVI w.*, [in:] *Kultura staropolska*, Kraków 1932, p. 385–459; S. Rospond, *Kościół w dziejach języka polskiego*, Wrocław 1985, p. 88 ff.; W. Miłkoła-jczyk, *Łacina w kulturze polskiej*, Wrocław 1998, p. 132 ff., *passim*.

⁵ Z. Klemensiewicz, *Historia języka polskiego*. Vol. II: *Doba średniopolska*, Warszawa 1965, p. 74 ff.

across to Polish for liturgical and other functions (not least their internecine polemics)⁶. Meanwhile Polish also won out in municipal spheres previously dominated by German.

The point is that all this appears to have been basically facultative, permissive: not a ‘war’ with Latin (or even with German); but a subtle blending of roles. There were ‘champions’ of Polish (*obrońcy języka polskiego*) from the fifteenth century onwards, using rhetorical devices and other forms of verbal suasion; but a minimum of official intervention seems to have been exercised to seek to guide the nature of public linguistic interactions⁷. The basic strength of Polish lay in the consolidation of *szlachta* power and a relatively uniform *szlachta* culture, with its humanist and then increasingly Sarmatian ideology (famous from the work of Antoni Mączak and many others). This was maintained — though apparently with some shift back to Latin, which remained crucial for the public life of the *Rzeczpospolita* and an alternative language of record — through the seventeenth century and beyond. And despite the country’s increasing chaos in the times of *Potop*, that had its attraction.

This became apparent in the east: in Lithuania and Ukraine, drawn closer to the Crown through the union of Lublin in 1569 and associated land transfers. The process of social assimilation, especially of nobles, which accompanied and influenced that shift, had an important linguistic component. It was perceived cultural superiority that caused Polish to be embraced. For our purposes, political and public outcomes are what matter, and in the eastern territories of the joint commonwealth we encounter the very instructive case of Ruthene. The *ruskij jazyk* was there a kind of *lingua franca* which long drew upon liturgical use of the vernacular. Was it still *slavenskij* or *slovanskij*: i.e. ‘common Slavonic’ in some sense? How close did it really stand to the living speech of Belorussia or Ukraine? However that may have been, Ruthene formed the official language of the eastern lands before 1569, and was confirmed as such at Lublin, and in the Second Lithuanian Statute of 1588, whose redactor claimed: ‘We have laws written, not in some ordinary language, but in our own particular one’⁸.

Nevertheless, it was already a sign of the times that the guarantees offered in 1569 to Volhynia and Kiev for their legal *acta*, chancellery *dekreta*, etc. ‘ever to remain in Russian letters’ were in fact proclaimed in Polish. And the rest of the administration in the eastern territories quickly went the same way: first royal edicts, then signatures, then the bulk of the texts, till only the formulae were still in Ruthene, most of this well before the *coup de grâce* in my other liminal year of 1697, when it was tersely announced that the clerk was to write in Polish, not ‘Russian’ (*pisarz powinien po Polsku a nie po Rusku pisać*). Scribal Ruthene had become unintelligible (indeed it was no longer even an ‘ordinary language’): it lacked rules; above all it lacked credibility as a literary or learned language. It could not

⁶ Z. Klemensiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 17 ff.; S. Rospond, *op. cit.*, *passim*, rather defensive.

⁷ The stages in the public ‘emancipation’ of Polish are covered in the compendium of sources compiled by M. R. Mayeńowa and others, *Walka o język w życiu i literaturze staropolskiej*, Warszawa 1955. Their title, ‘the language war’, seems exaggerated; and is resisted by Rospond, *op. cit.*, p. 76 ff. However, defences of Polish were certainly a significant genre of the period: cf. W. Taszycki (ed.), *Obrońcy języka polskiego, wiek XV–XVIII*, Wrocław 1953.

⁸ ‘Не обчимъ акымъ языкомъ, але своимъ власнымъ права списаные маемъ’: A. Martel, *La langue polonaise dans les pays ruthènes: Ukraine et Russie Blanche, 1569–1667*, Lille 1938, p. 35 ff., quoted at p. 46. Analysis of the language in Chr. S. Stang, *Die westrussische Kanzleisprache des Großfürstentums Litauen*, Oslo 1935, who thinks it would still have been intelligible locally, at least in the sixteenth century.

compete with a Polish which had been fortified, first by the Latinate culture of the Renaissance, and then by both Reformation and Counter-Reformation⁹.

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I turn next to sketch two further cases where public linguistic issues resolved themselves over our period, seemingly without any formal interference. The first is that of Germany. In the Reich the use of German was mostly conventional. A single regulation in 1555 for 'Lower Austria' (as then understood) actually prescribed it, but that only serves to prove the rule¹⁰. The main alternative was Latin, which retained obvious status as the language of tradition in the Holy **Roman** Empire. German or bilingual documents are known from the thirteenth century. By the sixteenth, German was used for major enactments: the *Reichskammergerichtsordnung*, *Reichspolizeiordnung*, *Halsgerichtsordnung*. But no legislation underpinned this practice; indeed, for a long time the only relevant law was Emperor Charles IV's Golden Bull of 1356, with its specific provisions for languages **other** than German, in that it had called upon the imperial electors to ensure that their heirs should learn Latin, Italian and 'Slav'. Then from 1519 successive electoral capitulations (*Wahlkapitulationen*) confirmed a diglot situation: '[I]n Schriften und Handlungen des Reichs an unserm kaiserlichen Hofe [there shall be used] keine andere Zunge noch Sprache... denn die deutsche und lateinische'¹¹.

By that stage German had long been pressing for a liturgical role, with the development of a genre of *Volkspredigt* and of devotional works. Under Charles IV and his son Wenceslas this movement led among other things to the first important German version of the Scriptures, the *Wenzelsbibel*¹². German became a badge of national identity too: the word *deutsch* came — historically — before *Teutschland*, and its use as an ethnic marker was to some degree fortified by differentiation from other speech on the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, especially of Slavs. Not by accident, perhaps, did the celebrated epithet 'nationis Germanicae' or *teutscher Nation*, to indicate the Reich's cultural centre of gravity, come to prominence in the aftermath of the Hussite wars¹³.

These two factors — religious and national — moved together with Luther, a linguistic pioneer, who made a deliberate appeal both to the *gemeinste Sprache* of educated use and to a *gemeine Sprache* at a broader popular level, and who sought to implement what he called a *communissima lingua Germaniae*¹⁴. Yet German itself was not (yet) a 'language of power'. Large problems were created by dialectal variance (even if

⁹ Exhaustive investigation in Martel, op. cit.

¹⁰ Printed in A. Fischel (comp.), *Das österreichische Sprachenrecht: eine Quellensammlung*, Brünn 1910, p. 3. 'Niederösterreich' here included both 'Oberösterreich' (i.e. Tyrol etc.) and Innerösterreich (i.e. Styria etc.), so the provision could have been intended to exclude Italian or Slovene.

¹¹ H. Hattenhauer, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Rechts- und Gesetzessprache*, Hamburg 1987, esp. P. 6–8.

¹² L. Lentner, *Volkssprache und Sakralsprache. Geschichte einer Lebensfrage bis zum Ende des Konzils von Trient*, Wien 1964, p. 141 ff.

¹³ Cf. H. Jakobs and H. Thomas [in:] *Nation und Sprache. Die Diskussion ihres Verhältnisses in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, A. Gardt (ed.), Berlin 2000, p. 7–101.

¹⁴ *Ich habe keine gewisse, sonderliche, eigene Sprache in Deutschland, sondern brauche der gemeinen deutschen Sprache... [A]lle Reichsstädte Fürsten-Höfe schreiben nach der sächsischen und unsers Fürsten Canzeley, darum ist*

only Dutch would issue in a separate language, partly as an outcome of the political emancipation of the United Provinces). The rise of the Saxon variant, notably thanks to Luther, took place to some extent at the expense of earlier south-German *Kanzleisprachen* (and the speech of Germans at places like Cracow). It was long resisted by Catholics¹⁵. Altogether the unconformity through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between Catholic Habsburg political dominance based in the south and Protestant princely linguistic dominance based in the north is a determinant worthy of note in the continuing disarray of early modern Germany¹⁶.

The second case exhibits the same comparatively untroubled interplay, but with a very different balance between Latin and vernacular. In Hungary Latin indeed — as Joseph II was to lament — long maintained a stable linguistic ascendancy, and it continued to hold this ground until the late eighteenth century¹⁷. Virtually all official business was recorded in Latin — and much was actually conducted in it. That included, most conspicuously, proceedings at both houses of the diet, but especially the upper house. A new account of eighteenth-century Hungarian parliamentary life (and there's nothing comparable for earlier periods), by dint of unprecedentedly thorough dissection of such things as session diaries, seems to confirm the probable hegemony of spoken Latin, above all in the upper house and much plenary business of the lower house, where interventions in Magyar are sometimes commented on, presumably for being unusual¹⁸. The same applied in the counties, where the debates of their noble congregations were carried on in Latin, at least in areas of mixed ethnicity, and their minutes everywhere recorded in that language. The same also held for almost the whole of the country's central administration, up to the Lieutenantcy Council and Chancellery, and down to county level and below. The entire legal system was squarely Latinate above the manorial courts (except of course for some direct witness testimony), and so was all education above the age of 11 or so years. That was true for literary culture too, with a majority of all books still published in that language until the mid-eighteenth century, and of learned ones even beyond¹⁹.

auch die gemeinste deutsche Sprache: D. J o s t e n, *Sprachvorbild und Sprachnorm im Urteil des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Bern/Frankfurt a. M. 1976, p. 46 and *passim*; F. T s c h i r c h, *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*. Vol. II: *Hochmittelalter bis Gegenwart*, 2nd edn., Berlin 1975, p. 107 and *passim*; Cf. E. A r n d t and G. B r a n d l, *Luther und die deutsche Sprache. Wie redet der Deutsche man jnn solchem fall?*, Leipzig 1983.

¹⁵ H. E g g e r s, *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte*. Vol. III: *Das Frühneuhochdeutsche*, Reimbek bei Hamburg 1969, pp. 48 f., 80 ff. General reflections on the evolution of dialect and standard German in: S. B a r b o u r et al., *Variation im Deutschen: soziolinguistische Perspektiven*, Berlin 1998.

¹⁶ Cf. R. J. W. E v a n s, 'Language and State-building: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy', *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. XXXV 2004, p. 1–24, at 5–8.

¹⁷ D. R a p a n t, *K poiatkom maďarizácie*, Bratislava 1927–31, vol. I, p. 3–91. Cf. now E v a n s, 'Politics of Language'. Hints about the earlier situation from J. M. B a k, 'A Kingdom of Many Languages: The Case of Medieval Hungary', [in:] *Forms of Identity. Definitions and Changes*, L. L ö b et al. (eds), Szeged 1994, p. 45–55.

¹⁸ I. S z i j á r t ó, *A diéta. A magyar rendek és az országgyűlés, 1708–92*, Budapest 2005, p. 132–5, 180 f.

¹⁹ D. K o s á r y, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, Budapest 1980, p. 129 ff., 529 ff.; K. B e n d a, *Emberbarát vagy hazafi? Tanulmányok a felvilágosodás korának magyarországi történetéből*, Budapest 1978, p. 299 ff. A case-study in I. P a v e r c s i k, *A kassai könyvek útja a nyomdától az olvasóig*, Budapest 1992. É. K n a p p and G. T ü s k é s, in: *Companion to the History of the Neo-Latin Studies in Hungary*, I. B a r t ó k (ed.), Budapest 2005, p. 37–54, survey part of this output.

Why was Hungary so different from her sister–realm, the *Rzeczpospolita*? On the one hand, Latin signified the **weakness** of the country’s Magyar element in the aftermath of the Turkish occupation and associated debilitating wars and population shifts. Significant elites simply did not know Hungarian, and were not (yet) moved to learn it: not just the equivalents of some Prussian burghers or Lithuanian squires, but whole swathes of Croats, Saxons, other Germans, prelates, *déraciné* aristocrats, regional nobles, then Serbs and other immigrants. The only scope for Magyar came with some aspects of the administration of the temporarily independent Transylvanian state in the seventeenth century; but even that was then reduced after Transylvania’s incorporation in the Austrian Monarchy. Within that Monarchy, on the other hand, Latin signified the continued **strength** of Hungary’s claim to separateness *vis-à-vis* her foreign ruler and her right to negotiate with Vienna on relatively equal terms. The only exceptions were some Austrian, and thus German–language, inroads in financial and especially military management.

This system appears to have given rise to no significant friction. Of course, localized squabbles were always possible, and we encounter, particularly among the country’s Calvinists, some of the same rhetorical concerns as in Poland, notably in connection with promoting vernacular translations. Guilds, town councils, and the like could be a locus for practical disagreements about language use. But Hungary displayed a well–nigh complete absence, right through to 1784, of formal directives, whether by ruler or estates, in favour of a given or different linguistic order.

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There follow in the rest of this overview several cases where, by contrast, we find some kind of active intervention by the authorities. It is worth keeping in mind the question whether that was because those polities were more powerful, more directive, and more uniform than the ones we have so far considered. In any event, each reveals a linguistic dimension to the process of early–modern state–building in centralizing mode and under a dynastic aegis.

Firstly, three west–European instances, beginning with a crux in the history of France which has often been commented upon, typically from a literary perspective. In 1539 the French crown issued at Villers–Cotterêts a long *ordonnance* about procedures of government. Towards the end, the document addressed matters of what we would nowadays call ‘transparency’: „nous voullons et ordonnons que [*les arrêts*] soient faitz et escriptz **si clerement qu’il n’y ayt ne puisse avoir aucune ambigüité** ou incertitude [*decrees so clear that there is not and cannot be any ambiguity or incertitude*]... Et pour ce que telles choses sont souventes fois advenues sur **l’intelligence des motz latins contenuz esd arrestz** [*understanding of the Latin words contained in the decrees*] nous voulons que doresnavant tous arrestz... de nos courtz souveraines [all judgments of high courts] (etc.) soient prononcez, enregistrez et delivrez aux parties en **languaige maternel françois** et non autrement”²⁰.

²⁰ Quoted from J. Chaurand (ed.), *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française*, Paris 1999, p. 149 (*italics here and in later quotations mine*).

The earlier part of this justification, with its stress on public ignorance of Latin texts and hence the scope for their abuse, is suggestive of an argument we shall encounter again later. But the larger issue appears at the end, and has given rise to much debate. Is this *langage maternel françois* to be equated with the *langue du roi*, the speech of the Valois court and administration, as long argued — pro and con — by both supporters and detractors of the French state, and by experts like the famous and exhaustive chronicler of French linguistic history, Ferdinand Brunot? Or did it continue to include dialects (earlier specified as *vulgaires du pays* or similar)?²¹

Whatever its purpose, Villers–Cotterêts certainly in the event encouraged standard forms of French, which were anyway spreading; what no less an authority than Lucien Fèvre saw as the linguistic manifestation of *la grandeur, la prospérité, la vitalité d'une France dont tout le Midi... a voulu faire partie*²². French still needed its *obrońcy* (like Joachim du Bellay); and dialect might still seem a liability for it (as for German). But clearly it was becoming the language of an increasingly secure culture and of reasonably uniform channels of state power. It had built on the classics (as had Polish); was nursed by more and more grammarians and lexicographers; and could confidently cite the ancient Greek model for diversity within an essentially national mould²³.

A similar and exactly contemporary instance across the English Channel is the wording of the 'Act of Union' (as it later came to be known) for the incorporation of Wales into England's structures of government in 1536. Again I quote a passage from a much longer text: „Also be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that **all justices, commissioners [etc.] shall proclaim and keep the sessions, courts [etc.] in the English tongue; and all oaths... and affidavits [etc.] to be given and one in the English tongue;** and also that from henceforth **no person or persons that use the Welsh speech or language shall have or enjoy any manner, office, or fees within this realm of England, Wales or other the King's dominion,** upon pain of forfeiting the same office or fees, unless he or they use and exercise the English speech or language”²⁴.

The background here is of English as an old–new vehicle, (re–)emerging from its Norman French chrysalis, rather earlier than Polish, but incompletely: England of the Tudors still made much use of law French in its court proceedings and verdicts even continued to be recorded in Latin till 1732²⁵. More than in the French case, the decision taken in 1536 was connected directly with executive homogeneity, smoothness and efficacy (however disputed the extent of that 'revolution' from above may be among historians today), and with judicial reorganization.

Wales, a complex of lordships and jurisdictions in the west of Britain, made an early association of the nation with its tongue (*iaith*), rather than with a territorially–

²¹ F. Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900*. Vol. II: *le seizième siècle*, Paris 1906, p. 30–2. Two important qualifications to the traditional view are P. Fioretti, 'L'ordonnance de Villers–Cotterêts', *Le Français Moderne*, vol. XVIII 1950, p. 277–88, and D. Trudeau, 'L'ordonnance de Villers–Cotterêts et la langue française: histoire ou interprétation', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. XLV (1983), p. 461–72.

²² L. Fèvre, 'Politique royale ou civilization française? Remarques sur un problème d'histoire linguistique', *Revue de Synthèse Historique*, vol. XXXVIII 1924, p. 37–53.

²³ Background in Chaurand, *op. cit.*, p. 115 ff. (S. Lusignan), p. 147 ff. (G. Clerico).

²⁴ Printed in I. Bowen (ed.), *The Statutes of Wales*, London 1908, p. 87.

²⁵ The subject is too large to be engaged with here; but cf. the new and suggestive argument of J. Catto, 'Written English: The Making of the Language, 1370–1400', *Past & Present*, vol. CLXXIX May 2003, p. 24–59.

–demarcated land, which like ‘Germany’ did not exist; and Welsh had in fact developed a more sophisticated vernacular legal tradition in the Middle Ages than England. But English was already taking over in administration there, alongside Latin, by the fifteenth century²⁶. The Act of 1536 reflected that, and confirmed a socio–linguistic process. The ‘language clause’ (*cymal iaith*), as later nationalists would call it, provoked no significant protest in the country at all, and was actively welcomed by the gentry, attracted by the prospect of equality of status and by the opportunities to be vouchsafed them if they operated in English²⁷.

Again, as with Villers–Cotterêts, there may have been a cultural agenda. ‘His Highness’ [King Henry VIII], as the Act indicates at another point, ‘minding and intending to reduce [his Welsh subjects] to the perfect order, notice and knowledge of his laws of this his realm’, did undertake ‘utterly to extirp all and singular the sinister Usages and Customs differing from the same’²⁸. Did such ‘sinister Usages and Customs’ include their Celtic language, so radically alien to the English eye and ear? But if so, the agenda was not a consistent one. In 1563, legislation enjoined the production of religious texts in Welsh, building on the claim in the twenty–fourth of the recently enacted Thirty–nine Elizabethan Articles of faith: ‘It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have Publick Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people’. From that initiative grew the immensely influential Welsh Bible translation²⁹. Born of some misgivings about Welsh loyalties perhaps, these were basically practical measures, revealing of the limits of English linguistic ambition.

A further British example, with a different message, is that of English versus Gaelic in Ireland. Here were languages in early conflict. The Statute of Kilkenny, decreed by the English authorities in 1366, was already aggressive, condemning the fact that ‘... many English of the said land [of Ireland], **forsaking the English language**, manners, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashions and language of the Irish enemies... whereby... **the English language [etc.]... are put in subjection and decayed, and the Irish enemies exalted and raised up, contrary to reason ...**”

It is therefore commanded, among other things, ‘that every Englishman do use the English language and be named by an English name, leaving off entirely the manner of naming used by the Irish’. And severe punishments are threatened: ‘[I]f any English, or Irish living among the English, use the Irish language among themselves, contrary to this ordinance, and therefore be attainted, **his lands and tenements, if he have any, shall be seized** into the hands of his immediate lord, [or, if not] **his body shall be taken off** by one of the officers of our Lord the King, and committed to the next gaol ...”

²⁶ L. Beverley Smith in: *Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb: Yr Iaith Gymraeg cyn y Chwyldro Diwydiannol*, Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), Cardiff 1997, pp. 24, 38, 41f. (also in a parallel version as *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution*: my references are to the Welsh edn). For the historical context: G. Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales, c.1415–1642*, Oxford 1987, p. 253–78.

²⁷ Cf. *Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb*, pp. 78ff. (G. H. Jenkins et al.), 128ff. (P. Roberts), on the gentry.

²⁸ Bowen, op. cit., p. 75f.

²⁹ G. Williams, *Welsh Reformation Essays*, Cardiff 1967; P. Morgan, *Beibl i Gymru*, n. p., 1988.

Clergy similarly convicted will lose their benefices³⁰. But we should bear in mind that all this had an impact only in the Pale of English settlement around Dublin; and the statute itself was actually issued in French (as were most acts of the Irish parliament till 1472). Moreover, its backdrop lay, as the above extracts imply, in a **loss** of ground by English locally.

That weakness continued in Ireland into and through the sixteenth century. Kilkenny was revoked in its linguistic aspect in 1495, though evidently not because its concerns had been assuaged, since it had to be reimposed a century later. Meanwhile, a series of related enactments were passed to secure or assert English as a tongue requisite for the law, for appropriate forms of schooling, and for grants of urban citizenship. In Ireland (as in Wales) the towns remained bastions of English, the minority tongue (like German in Poland)³¹. Thus the provisions for English in Ireland were still in good measure a **defensive response**.

Yet English, like French, was by this stage fast becoming a hegemonic language over its (expanding) range as a whole, and that necessarily impinged on its situation in Ireland. Indeed, it had grown into an imperial language too, though in a notably different sense from that of German in the authentic central–European Reich; and English attitudes to Ireland were increasingly coloured by the colonizing experience in America. It has recently been argued that Irish became for conquering English elites rather what the Indian languages of the New World were to Spaniards, reckoned ‘barbarian’ whenever they proved unable to render European concepts, which were seen as corresponding to reality. Indeed, worse still, Gaelic with its culture was largely ‘invisible’ to the incoming English too, since so few of them made any effort to acquaint themselves with it³².

A crown witness to this is the governmental secretary, Fynes Moryson. His Irish experience did, however, prompt Moryson to one prescient observation: ‘In general all nations have thought nothing more powerful to unite minds than the Community of language’³³. Can we not discern in those words the inkling of a still distant central–European future?

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Besides, Moryson also became renowned as a traveller (thus becoming a favourite source for Antoni Maćzak). As such he was much more perceptive about conditions in Central Europe, including language, than in the Celtic lands. That included Poland and especially Bohemia. It gives me my cue to return to this region too, and to address Czech as my last and fullest example of linguistic politics. Despite obvious resonances with its Polish cousin–tongue, we shall find nearer parallels to France and England. Yet with

³⁰ T. Crowley (ed.), *The Politics of Language in Ireland, 1366–1922. A Sourcebook*, London 2000, p. 14–16.

³¹ *Ibidem* 20ff.; cf. J. J. Hogan, *The English Language in Ireland*, Dublin 1927, p. 15–36. M. Rockel, *Grundzüge einer Geschichte der irischen Sprache*, Wien 1989, p. 64–72.

³² P. Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland. English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion*, Cambridge 2001.

³³ *Ibidem* 66f., 88–90. Cf. Fynes Moryson and John Taylor, *Cesta do Čech*, tr. and ed. A. Bejblík, Prague 1977.

a crucial difference: whereas Bohemia, like those states, was a pioneer in the political deployment of language, it was estates (*stany*) there, not monarchies, which took the lead. The most striking feature of the Czech case is **precocity**. Czech-speakers simultaneously burst two barriers in the late Middle Ages: the political-social tutelage of German and the religious tutelage of Latin; and the consequent trajectory of their tongue was arguably unique, since its linkage with a specific national cause became, for the time being, more intimate than any other.

There's a more general preliminary point to be made here first. An association of the word *jazyk* not only with tongue, physically and metaphorically, but with religious and/or national affinity, stretched far back among the Slavs in general, and the intermingling proto-Czechs, proto-Moravians, and proto-Slovaks in particular. The usage continued in later medieval Europe, broadening out to make language into a key constituent of the medieval idea of *natio*, and of its more modern derivatives. For instance it acted as a marker to designate the delegations to that very Council of Constance through which the Czech vernacular — as a consequence of the burning of Jan Hus — was indirectly launched on its ecclesiastical career³⁴. Even if often a junior partner in identity, language could assume temporary dominance as an independent variable. That was the situation in the Bohemian lands from c. 1400, as the western orientation of the country's predominantly Slav elites left a highly porous border for contacts with the rest of the Empire, which yet coincided with what they still perceived as a basic line of ethnic division.

Tension between Czechs and Germans in Bohemia was already apparent earlier, certainly by the time of the so-called Dalimil Chronicle in the early fourteenth century, with its strong linguistic, or at least *jazyk*-based, patriotism — as well as its condemnation of plurilingual diversity: *proto bude jazyka rozdělení a ihned země jisté zkažení*³⁵. (We may be reminded of the situation in Ireland.) This mood then hardened in the increasingly fraught circumstances of the kingdom's expansion under Charles IV, though the emperor-king himself was polyglot and multicultural (evidenced by his Golden Bull, as we have seen), and a cultivator of Czech, in part — presumably — to take the wind out of the Bohemian estates' sails on the issue of ethnic allegiance³⁶. But it was the Hussite contest, with its validation of the vernacular liturgy, which propelled Czech into becoming the main language of both church and state. Hus himself, of course, (a true forerunner of Luther in this respect too) exhibited advanced awareness of language as both system and medium. The *Orthographia Bohemica* confidently attributed to him, which famously established the scheme of diacritics, is genuinely pioneering work, with a clear and

³⁴ L. R. Loomis, 'Nationality at the Council of Constance', *American Historical Review*, vol. XLIV 1940, p. 508–27. Cf. overall on the *lingua-natio* relationship, with special reference to the Czech case: F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, 4 vols, Prague 1993, I, p. 337–52.

³⁵ 'Therefore the division of language shall forthwith be the certain destruction of the land'. The standard edn is now *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, J. Daňhelka et al. (eds), 3 vols, Prague 1988–95; cf. J. Bělič, 'K otázce češtiny jako národního jazyka', *Slovo a Slovesnost*, vol. XIII 1951, p. 71–86, esp. 78 f.

³⁶ For this point, see A. Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia: Czech Literature and Society, 1310–1420*, Minneapolis 1998, p. 12.

structured sense of the operation of what we would today call Czech phonology³⁷. Moreover, Hus's interest was also practical and committed: he censured those who did not teach Czech to their children and those who spoke a macaronic mix of Czech and German³⁸.

From the beginning there was a key place for translation of the Scriptures³⁹. The Bethlehem Chapel in Prague provided a base from 1391 for Hus and others to preach exclusively in Czech. Full vindication of this endeavour came with the chief Hussite manifesto, the Prague Articles, which called for free preaching of the word of God and dismantling of the hierarchic and opaque workings of the church. Meanwhile Czech higher culture as a whole, though in uneasy interplay with the more radical reform programme, shared its endorsement of the vernacular. Fifteenth-century 'Dalimil' redactions gained a sharper edge, alongside the retreat of German from almost all public functions in the core lands of the Bohemian crown. The recedence of Latin was far less complete, and by the end of the fifteenth century new, more cultivated forms of it entered into a degree of symbiosis with the first generation of Czech Humanists. That went with early Bohemian printing in both languages, but notably the Czech Bibles of 1488 and 1489 within the country and 1506 in Venice. Classic expression of this new balance appears in Viktorin Kornel ze Všehrd's 1495 preface to his translation of Chrysostom, where he asserts an enhanced status for Czech by cutting out other vernaculars as the mediators of learning to Bohemia⁴⁰.

All this was somewhat like the rise of English — and at much the same time, as the career of John Wyclif showed — but more swift. At the same time Czech had clearly outstripped all the other Slavonic tongues in significant ways. As late as the 1570s even Polish continued to be recognized by its own speakers as a junior partner in terms of richness of expression⁴¹. Yet, as we shall see, Czech had a substantially more distant relation to Latin than Polish: much more embattled, even with the activity of Všehrd and his likes; the impact of humanism proved belated and feeble. Above all, its speakers felt the need to consolidate and assert their linguistic terrain. Let us briefly note some of the formal provisions for the use of Czech over the two hundred years from the Hussites' first espousal of it. I shall take three overlapping headings: legal/constitutional, political/administrative, and ecclesiastical.

In terms of the **dispensation of justice**, it was Moravia which took the lead. The local customary, the *Kniha Tovačovská*, reports for the year 1480: „[B]y the will of the hejtman

³⁷ J. Schröpfer (ed.), *Hussens Traktat 'Orthographia Bohemica': die Herkunft des diakritischen Systems in der Schreibung slavischer Sprachen und die älteste zusammenhängende Beschreibung slavischer Laute*, Wiesbaden 1968. The title, however, derives from František Palacký, who found the MS in 1827.

³⁸ 'Pražané [sic!] i jiní Čechové, jenž mluví od poly česky a od poly německy': Jan Hus, *Výklady*, A. Molnár (ed.), Prague 1975, p. 189; cf. V. Novotný, *M. Jan Hus: život a učení*, 2 vols, Prague 1919–1931, I, p. 182–7, II, p. 195 ff.

³⁹ V. Kyas, *Česká bible v dějinách národního písemnictví*, Prague 1997; Šmahel, op. cit., II, p. 34–6.

⁴⁰ Cited in A. Pražák, *Národ se bránil. Obrany národa a jazyka českého od nejstarších dob do přítomnosti*, Praha 1945, p. 30–32; cf. J. Martínek, 'Die Einstellung der böhmischen Humanisten zu den Nationalsprachen', [in:] *Studien zum Humanismus in den böhmischen Ländern* ed. H. B. Harder und H. Rother (eds), Köln 1988, p. 291–302; R. J. W. Evans, 'Europa als Peripherie in der Frühen Neuzeit', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte*, vol. III 2002, p. 59–79.

⁴¹ Mayenowa et al., op. cit., p. 27 and passim; Bäckvis, op. cit., p. 25 + n., 27.

and the lords and the whole land, entries in the new registers began to be written in the Czech tongue (*začali se v jich dsky nové českú řečí vkladové vpisovati*)... to make less work and better sense for those who do not know Latin; for many interpreted Latin according to their own sense (*mnozí latinu k svému rozumu vykládali*), so we might have plain Czech sense instead”⁴².

The purpose is reminiscent of that later vindication of French we have already met. In 1495 Bohemia followed suit, with a measure which laid stress on its applicability at all levels: ‘This was enacted into law withal, that all land records of the kingdom of Bohemia, great and petty, commercial and criminative, and commemorative, are to be written in the native Czech language (*mají jazykem českým přirozeným psány býti*)...’⁴³. The basic constitutional document, the *Zřízení zemské*, initially (in 1500) specified only foreigners (*cizozemci*) as affected by the requirement ‘that all should conduct their suits before the court of the land in the Czech language, either themselves, or by hiring someone to do so’. Later, however, this provision was made to apply to nationals too, in other words to Bohemia’s large minority of Germans. From 1549 the *Zřízení zemské* specifically allowed the parties to present translations, but only so long as they had been duly authenticated in advance⁴⁴. From 1579 the code of municipal law confirmed this for the towns, with provision for approved translation: ‘The plaintiff is and shall be obliged to make his accusation... in the Czech language. ... And if any party has testimony, he should **give it to a sworn [interpreter] to have it turned into the Czech language ...**’ German oral evidence through a *Dolmetscher* was usually allowed, especially in petty cases; but Czech always enjoyed precedence⁴⁵.

The most important forum in the **political sphere** was the diet, which appears to have been conducted solely in Czech. German and bilingual documents, however, were generated too (as is clear in the published series of the body’s sixteenth-century records). Royal coronation privileges were issued in Czech and Latin; the estates despatched their external correspondence in Latin or, more reluctantly, in German⁴⁶. Language created a problem at the general diets which from time to time brought together representatives of all the Bohemian lands. By the early seventeenth century it gave rise to marked friction there, as in 1611, when Bohemia and Moravia insisted that all business *ex praesidio* be

⁴² *Knih Tovačovská aneb pana Ctibora z Cimburku a z Tovačova pamět obyčejů, řádů, zvyklostí starodávných a řízení práva zemského v Mor.*, V. Brandl (ed.), Brno 1868, p. 57.

⁴³ Viktorin ze Všehrd, *O právích země české knihy devatery*, H. Jireček (ed.), Praha 1874, p. 162; cf. 7.

⁴⁴ ... *aby všickni před saudem zemským českým jazykem své pře wedli sami skrze se, neb kohož sobě zjednati mohli: Zřízení zemské Království českého za krále Vladislava roku 1500 vydané*, F. Palacký (ed.), Praha 1863, p. 16 and passim.

⁴⁵ ... *má a povinen bude původ svau žalobu v jazyku českém... činiti... A měla-li by která strana přivody... dej je sobě přisežnému při témž právě do jazyku českého přeložiti ...*: Pavel Kristián z Koldína, *Práva městská Království českého a Markrabství moravského*, J. Jireček (ed.), 5th edn., Praha 1876, p. 43. German in W. Weizsäcker (ed.), *Quellenbuch zur Geschichte der Sudetenländer*, vol. I, München 1960, no. 47. Z. Winter, *Kulturní obraz českých měst: život veřejný v 15. a 16. věku*, Praha 1890–1892, vol. I, p. 150f., vol. II, p. 640–2.

⁴⁶ *Sněmy české od leta 1526 až po naši dobu = Die Böhmisches Landtagsverhandlungen und Landtagsbeschlüsse vom Jahre 1526 an bis auf die Neuzeit*, A. Gindely et al. (eds), 12 vols, Praha 1877–1954) II, pp. 69, 89, 191, 398, 403, 412, etc passim; ibidem VIII, pp. 302 f., 343 for coronation. Cf. J. Klík, ‘Národnostní poměry v Čechách od válek husitských do bitvy bělohorské’, *Český Časopis Historický*, vol. XXVII 1921, pp. 8–62, 289–352, at 328 ff.

promulgated in Czech, with translations for the other provinces. The latter were allowed to use German from the floor, so long as an official translation was read out in full session (a proviso which sounds uncannily like the stipulations introduced for the Sudeten minority at the Czechoslovak parliament in the 1920s)⁴⁷.

German did have some status in Bohemia: all the domestic business of Silesia and the Lusatias was done in German, and abundant *de facto* scope existed for it in dealings with the central authorities, including the diet (compare the situation in the towns of Polish Prussia). From the 1520s such bodies as the Bohemian Chancery had separate registries for German affairs. The Bohemian Chamber (*Komora*) was more squarely German at times, and seems to have recruited bilingually⁴⁸. The number of germanophone town councils was on the increase; and in practice many other matters were dealt with at least bilingually between the centre and the localities. Moreover, there was widespread and growing employment of German by Czechs too in Bohemia. For all the fears of purists, however, we find no significant linguistic interference in Bohemia: not more than 1,500 or so Germanisms in the stock of up to 70,000 contemporary Czech words⁴⁹.

The limited administrative provision for German seems to have presupposed a general rule of Czech; but this was long not formally enacted. In the towns Latin records were mostly replaced by Czech ones during the earlier sixteenth century, sometimes with a period of overlap; thus German wills (say) would be entered in Czech. Manifestly there must have been exceptions: we know of Malá Strana documents in German as well as Latin from the mid–sixteenth century onwards relating to Prague’s royal household. Yet many towns were anyway hard put to write German letters at all, even to recipients elsewhere in the Reich⁵⁰. Some municipalities (especially the Prague ones) might also make a formal requirement for newcomers to learn Czech within a year of their arrival — recognizably in line with the Irish legislation discussed above, though in Bohemia, by contrast, the majority language was the one protected by legislation⁵¹.

The language of **the church** likewise seems to have been customary for the most part. Evidently Czech formed a touchstone for the Utraquists vis-à-vis Rome⁵², and their faith was frequently identified as the ‘Czech religion’. In its service various vernacular texts continued to be produced, including several celebrated Bibles by the publisher Daniel Veleslavín (as well as the more radical version published at Kralice for the fully czechophone Bohemian Brethren). Remember the **official** provision for Welsh, whose royally-sponsored Bible translation was exactly coincident, and of equal cultural importance; or the **quasi-official** sustenance of Ruthene as an essentially liturgical

⁴⁷ J. B. Novák, ‘Jazyková praxe na generálním sněmu 1611’, [in:] *Od pravěku k dnešku: sborník prací z dějin československých k šedesátým narozeninám Josefa Pekaře*, 2 vols, Praha 1930, II, p. 30–8. J. K u č e r a, *Minderheit im Nationalstaat: die Sprachenfrage in den tschechisch-deutschen Beziehungen, 1918–1938*, München 1999, p. 210 ff.

⁴⁸ S t r á n s k ý, *Český stát. Okřik*, B. R y b a (ed.), Praha 1953, 299f.; N o v á k, op. cit.; F i s c h e l, *Sprachenrecht*, pp. 1f., 6; cf. pp. IX–XX, passim.

⁴⁹ E. S k á l a, ‘Vznik a vývoj česko-německého bilingvismu’, *Slovo a Slovesnost*, vol. XXXVIII 1977, p. 197–207, at 201.

⁵⁰ Z. W i n t e r, *Život církevní v Čechách. Kulturně-historický obraz z XV. a XVI. st.*, 2 vols, Praha 1895–6, I, pp. 150–3, 747; E. D e n i s, *Konec samostatnosti české*, tr. J. V a n ě u r a, Praha 1893, p. 298–301.

⁵¹ Z. W i n t e r, op. cit., I, p. 65.

⁵² e.g. V á c l a v K o r a n d a, *Traktát o velebné a božské svátosti oltární*, Praha 1493; cf. Z. V. D a v i d, *Finding the Middle Way. The Utraquists’ Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther*, Washington, DC 2003, p. 90.

standard. Services, readings, communion and particularly singing might be conducted in Czech, though more Catholic- and humanistically-inclined Utraquist priests reintroduced some Latin. Yet overall there seem to have been few clear statements of the rules⁵³. Even where formal provisions existed, they could be invoked more in the breach, as with the requirement that (Catholic) bishops had to know Czech⁵⁴.

Then of course German was the language of Lutheranism, in Bohemia as elsewhere, building bridges to Czech Protestants too, although a new book has reopened the question how many of those there really were. Certainly, the significance of the language dimension can only be enhanced if, as is now implied, it continued to mark off the country's non-Catholics from each other, even in the decades around 1600 — more sharply and significantly than in Poland — and if the activities of a Counter-Reformation substantially instigated by non-Czech-speakers (contrast Poland) actually played a prominent part in undermining the broad majority of Utraquists still committed to their own vernacular as a central tenet of their churchmanship⁵⁵.

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Despite — or because of — this remarkably early endorsement, the discourse about Czech in its official capacities is striking also for its **defensiveness**. Whether in legislation or in broader commentary, the language is seen to need protection. Moreover, its proponents themselves need protection, since in Bohemia it is the **estates**, both nobles and burghers (and the Utraquist establishment, linked to both) which defend Czech as part of their campaign against rivals at home and abroad. There were signs of this already in the fifteenth century. The jurist Všehrd appealed to a fear of emulation, above all from the German side: 'so that, since we are Czechs, we should burnish and propagate our language; for other nations are ever diligent in that, and even while learning German we should write and speak Czech and hold to our good Czech habits, so that nothing worse may befall us (*abychom se v horšie neměnili*)...' ⁵⁶.

But the issue was really joined with Habsburg takeover of the Bohemian crown in 1526. From that point onward a double contest ensued. Firstly with the rulers themselves: contrast Poland, where kings were normally native-speakers (though the issue was certainly raised with Henri of Valois and Batory); and Hungary, where 'neutral' Latin still smoothed over the issue. The Bohemian estates early urged Ferdinand I to issue a new Czech version of Charles IV's Golden Bull, but the king would not do so; and he did not learn much Czech either (albeit as late as 1547 he disclaimed full competence in German either)⁵⁷. But within his own family Ferdinand did observe the spirit of the Bull: his younger son Ferdinand, who later governed in Prague for fifteen years, became proficient in Czech; and so in some measure did his elder one, Maximilian, the future emperor — helped by estates' pressure for Czechs in his entourage. In 1575 Maximilian's oral

⁵³ Z. Winter, op. cit., pp. 834–5, 849 ff. David sees Czech as an important marker, but gives little detail: op. cit., pp. 89–90, 216–17, 225–6.

⁵⁴ Cf. Stránský, *Český stát*, p. 185 (and below n.31).

⁵⁵ Z. V. David, op. cit., esp. pp. 225, 258, 354–6.

⁵⁶ Viktorin ze Všehrd, *O právích země české*, p. 437, 453.

⁵⁷ *Sněmy české*, I, pp. 36, 179, 234 for the Golden Bull. Ferdinand: *ibidem* II.97.

confirmation of the *Confessio Bohemica* (he refused any written statement) was given also in Czech, and he could intervene *viva voce* in the language. But by that time — and in the absence, as was claimed, of sufficient stimulus — he had apparently forgotten much of it: ‘*k horšimu jest, neb císař J. M. také uměl česky, než nemaje při dvoře Čechů skoro jest řeč zapomenouti ráčil ...*’⁵⁸. The estates made the same attempt, with far less return, in the case of (the young) Rudolf II⁵⁹.

All in all, however, the Habsburgs’ linguistic proficiency, or lack of it, amounted to no major constitutional grievance, even if the rebels in 1547 did justify their cause as the ‘preservation of freedoms, of the kingdom’s privileges, **and of our Czech tongue**’⁶⁰. More of a target was the recovery and advance of German in Bohemia during the sixteenth century. I am concerned for present purposes not with the facts of that disputed case, but only with **perceptions** of it⁶¹. A notable witness (though his text was not known at the time) is Jan Blahoslav, leader of the Brethren — and also grammarian. It is sad, he says, ‘that such a noble language, in its copiousness and diverse qualities very similar, if not equal, to other celebrated tongues or languages, should be so abandoned and discarded as if ailing’ (*tak má býti opouštěn a jako oulehlí zanechán*). He laments its decline since the age of the humanists, [whereas] — and here Blahoslav echoes Všehrd — ‘the **German** nation is assiduous both in promoting and in polishing its own language’⁶². In the same mould are comments of Veleslavín, in his series of multilingual dictionaries and important prefaces to works translated into Czech. Veleslavín, on the other hand, was probably more distinctive at the time in the stress he laid on the larger Slavonic linguistic family — that would become commoner as a topos in the baroque period, when Czech-speakers had lost their sense of seniority over other Slav varieties⁶³.

By 1600 controversy grew over episodes concerning the public use of language, in both the ecclesiastical and civil spheres. One was raised by the appointment to the episcopate — despite the formal requirement mentioned earlier — of two non-Czech-speaking aristocrats⁶⁴. Another involved the acclaimed politician, Karel Žerotín, while he was hejtmán of Moravia. Žerotín’s withering reply in 1610 to

⁵⁸ ‘What’s worse, His Imperial Majesty did know Czech too, but not having Czechs at his court has been pleased to forget most of the language ...’: *ibidem* II, p. 569; IV, p. 380n. (for 1575). Cf. J. Svátek, ‘Habsburkové a český jazyk’, [in:] *his Obrazy z kulturních dějin českých*, Praha 1891, p. 3 ff., an overly rosy view.

⁵⁹ *Sněmy české*, III, pp. 342, 494, IV, pp. 364, 578, VIII, pp. 770, 804. Cf. Svátek, *op. cit.*, p. 13 ff., critical.

⁶⁰ ... *zachování svobod, privilejí království a jazyku našeho českého*: W. Eberhard, *Monarchie und Widerstand: Zur ständischen Oppositionsbildung im Herrschaftssystem Ferdinands I. in Böhmen*, München 1985, p. 452 n.; cf. the denunciation of Rome’s attempts *k ublížení pravdy Krista pána a ku potupě národu i jazyka našeho českého*, *ibidem* 442 n.

⁶¹ Klík, *op. cit.*, takes a distinctly nationalist view; A. Míka, ‘Národnostní poměry v českých zemích před třicetiletou válkou’, *Československý Časopis Historický*, vol. XX 1972, p. 207–29 is more balanced. Cf. also E. Skála, ‘Die Entwicklung der Sprachgrenze in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien von 1300 bis etwa 1650’, *Germanistica Pragensia*, vol. V 1968, p. 7–16, vol. VI 1972, p. 75–85.

⁶² ... [kdežto] *německý národ jak o zvelebení a jako pulerování jazyku svého pílén jest*: Jan Blahoslav, *Grammatika česká*, I. Hradil and J. Jireček (eds), Wien 1857, p. XVIII and *passim*.

⁶³ Cf. M. Kopecký, *Daniel Adam z Veleslavína*, Prague 1962, p. 32 ff. For the absence of Slav (linguistic) solidarity in this period, cf. F. Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter*, Sigmaringen 1980, p. 130–7.

⁶⁴ Denis, *Konec samostatnosti české*, 631 f.; cf. O. Odložilík, *Karel starší ze Žerotína*, Praha 1936, p. 101 f.; Stránský, *Český stát. Okřik*, p. 189.

a department of the city authorities of Olomouc which had written to him in German betrays considerable pent-up emotion: „[S]uch a letter... is against not only the custom of the country and of my office, but also your own rules, since you well know that in this country we have our own special language (*jazyk svůj obzvláštní a vlastní máme*), of which you need not be ashamed; but we should rightly have to be ashamed if we permitted this our own native tongue, so eminent, venerable and widespread, to be extruded by a foreign one (*týž jazyk náš přirozený, tak vzácný, starožitný a rozšířený měl od cizího vytisknut býti*)”⁶⁵.

All this unease culminated in the law of the Bohemian general diet of 1615, printed in an Appendix in the original and in my English translation⁶⁶. It is a remarkable document, and I can only make a few comments on it here. Note firstly its length and detail: there had been a much briefer Moravian precedent a few years before (doubtless inspired by Žerotín)⁶⁷; but this text is unprecedentedly circumstantial. Note also its emotional and rhetorical force, heightened with a vocabulary of degeneration from the very outset (*soudíce to, že s zahynutím jazyka českého i národ český i jméno Čechův by zahynouti musilo...* [judging that the extinction of the Czech language would bring with it also the extinction of the Czech nation and the Czechs' very name...]). Moreover the legislators provide singular and crucial evidence about Czech's **loss** of function and standing at various levels of civil and ecclesiastical life.

Yet there are odd things about this document too. The remedies which it ordains appear strong — even ferocious (like the Kilkenny ones) — but hopelessly impracticable: for example that those *‘kteříž by jazykem českým dobře mluvíti uměli’* [who can speak the Czech language well] (and how should that be judged?) are to be rewarded with a double inheritance; whereas anyone who *‘potřeby své v něm srozumitelně přednésti nemohl’* [cannot intelligibly present his needs in that tongue], shall be excluded from citizenship and office. Those who refuse to speak Czech (though being able to), or prevent others from doing so, actually lay themselves open to banishment, or — if they stay! — are to be deprived of civil rights. Altogether we find in this law a complex but rather ingenuous mixture of linguistic and ethnic grievance, with the former shading into the latter; as notably in the passage which moves from decreeing that **‘no such foreigner [ignorant of Czech] newly accepted into the country nor his children to the third generation’** shall be able to gain preferment, through some tortuous prose, to conclude with unabashed political guarantees for the **‘original Czechs as the true, real and natural sons of our dear homeland’**. Yet language is clearly the burning issue of the day which has unleashed the whole outburst.

That Bohemian language law formed part of the uneasy build-up to the great revolt. In fact it was enacted right alongside measures to resolve the oppositional grievances over churches at Broumov (Braunau) and Hrob (Klostergrab) which within three years would

⁶⁵ Karel st. z Žerotína, *Listové psaní jazykem českým*, V. Brandl (ed.), 2 vols, Brno/Praha 1870–1872, II, p. 58 (no. 875).

⁶⁶ For the text from Pavel Skála ze Zhoře, see below. Most of it also appears in P r a ž á k, op. cit., 40–2; much is in D e n i s, *Konec samostatnosti české*, p. 635 f. F i s c h e l, op. cit., p. 7–10, has a German translation; so has W e i z s ä c k e r, *Quellenbuch*, no. 49. Cf. also W. W o s t r y, ‘Das Deutschtum Böhmens zwischen Husitenzeit und Dreißigjährigem Krieg’, [in:] *Das Sudetendeutschtum*, G. P i r c h a n et al. (eds), Brno 1937, p. 295–370, at 341 ff.; K l i k, *Národnostní poměry*, 342 ff.

⁶⁷ Printed in F i s c h e l, *Sprachenrecht*, loc. cit.

trigger the Defenestration of Prague⁶⁸. Thus there could be little time to gauge any effects which the law might have produced. And some, like the diarist Dačický, manifestly thought the initiative had come too late: ‘It possessed no validity, for the matter is already obsolete, ignored, incurable and irremediable, through the Czechs’ own indifference and discord’⁶⁹. But debate surrounding the law did introduce a linguistic element into the revolt, which enjoyed significant Czechophone support — even if some of its leaders could hardly ‘string together three words’ of the language, as the legislators of 1615 had put it, and there is a Czech–nationalist view which saw the (ill–conceived) insurrection precisely as the culmination of a German(–language) revival⁷⁰. The patriotic town councillor of Litoměřice, Pavel Stránský, in his *Okřik* (‘Outcry’), written in the year of the outbreak of the rebellion, is brief but fierce, especially, as his full title indicates (‘to heedless Czechs against the immigrant languages thrusting themselves into the churches of Bohemia’), about the penetration of German into the ecclesiastical domain, which had really taken place noticeably during the decade since Rudolf’s Letter of Majesty of 1609. Invasion from a domineering Reich worked, according to Stránský, through subversion of the native tongue, aided by local unconcern. In highly coloured prose he even accuses his compatriots of linguistic perfidy⁷¹. Germans, he goes on, keep Czechs out of their guilds; Czech is losing ground in the courts; landowners put German preachers in for a few immigrant settlers; and so forth. ‘Our language is utterly beaten and supplanted. Ancient families have... Germanized themselves; the names of towns (*etc.*) are repudiated, disfigured ...’⁷².

Many echoes of the language law can be discerned in this long–unpublished tract, and some of them would later recur in the now exiled Stránský’s more famous work, the *Respublica Bohema* of 1634, where he likewise berated self–imposed linguistic decadence⁷³. Then two years after the *Okřik* another municipal official, Pavel Ješín, marketed his *editio princeps* of the Dalimil chronicle (which had been largely forgotten in the interim), with a dedication to two protagonists of the uprising, dated on the day of the confederation with Hungary. Ješín announces his intention to show his nation ‘that their ancestors... professed nothing dearer after God and the soul than their homeland, freedom and language’⁷⁴. But he adds the worry that ‘our Slavonic tongue [has been] debased and humiliated’: it has vanished from Meissen, Brunswick, Lüneburg, Bremen and the entire course of the Elbe through Lusatia, both Marks of Brandenburg, Saxony,

⁶⁸ Pavel Skála ze Zhoře, *Histořie česká, od r. 1602 do r. 1623*, K. Tieftrunk (ed.), 5 vols, Praha 1865–70, I, p. 350 ff.

⁶⁹ *Ale to žádné platnosti neneslo, nebo věc již jest zastaralá, obmeškaná, nezhojitedlná a nenapravitedlná skrze vlastní nedbalost a nespomnost českou*: Mikuláš Dačický z Heslova, *Prostopravda; Pameť*, E. Petrů and E. Pražák (eds), Praha 1955, p. 334f.

⁷⁰ E. g. Klík, ‘Národnostní poměry’, p. 48 and *passim*, writing in 1921.

⁷¹ ... v češtině neb naprosto němý neb nevybroušeným otců svých jazykem zatrhající rozplodek... na vůkol dosti opodál jazyk náš již zhola opovrhl ...: Stránský, *Český stát. Okřik*, p. 364. The full title is *Proti hostinským v Čechách se do kostelův tlačícím jazykům na nedbalého čecha učiněný Okřik*.

⁷² *Jazyk náš naprosto vybyt a vytlačen, rodové starožitní... se zněmčili; jména měst [etc.] jsou zavržena, spotovořena ...*: *ibidem* p. 369.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, esp. p. 108f., 300.

⁷⁴ *Die älteste Reimchronik des sogenannten Dalimil, herausgegeben im Jahre 1620 von Pavel Ješín von Bezděží*, ed. J. Daňhelka (Munich, 1981), sig. Bf. (This edn is wholly in Czech; its German title would assuredly not have amused Ješín.) Cf. Stránský’s comments on Silesia, *Český stát. Okřik*, p. 203.

Pomerania, Mecklenburg, Lauenburg, Holstein and as far as Denmark, because of persecution, especially exclusive guild regulations and the like. That point had rarely been made earlier, but it anticipates many subsequent fears⁷⁵.

With the defeat of the revolt, such discourse was outlawed, and the apprehensions of the legislators in 1615 became self-fulfilling. On the face of it, the new Catholic *Zřízení zemské*, the *Verneuerte Landesordnung* of 1627, just extended the bilingual option, available *de facto* over much of Bohemian public life in the sixteenth century, to all of it *de jure*. But (symbolically perhaps) though it was issued in both German and Czech, the latter version appeared only in incomplete form. On the whole, earlier practice had been linguistically dual ('utraquist', as it would come to be known): as we have seen, it was mainly foreigners (*cizozemci*) rather than native non-Czech-speakers against whom lingual exclusivity seems to have been directed. Remarkably we have no evidence of German protest about that 1615 language law, even though it was passed at a general diet of all the Bohemian lands: the decision, we are told, was unanimous. After 1627, as Czech languished, the entire quarrel appeared obsolete. The parallel with the fate of Ruthene in the century and a half before 1697 is striking.

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To sum up. The Bohemian clash had — I think — been distinctive in its own time: quite markedly divergent from the evolution in Poland and Germany (as well as in other European regions not touched on here, so far as I know). The sharpest contrast of all lies with the neighbouring Hungarian lands. Only in the very different polities of the rising national states in the west do we encounter some roughly comparable developments. Yet even in Bohemia, 'language politics' remained localized, inconsistent, and uncoordinated, usually — as we have seen — implicit unless some challenge to existing arrangements was identified.

How would these early modern experiences map onto later national contests? There is no space for a long conclusion. In the Bohemian lands the seeds had been set for a future Herculean ideological contest, and conditions created which helped ensure it would prove irresolvable. Precisely the progressive rediscovery of these Czech *obrany* — Hus, Blahoslav, Velešlavín, Žerotín, the 1615 language law, Stránský and the rest — in an age of ethnic awakening (*obrození*) would punctuate the course of modern Czech national self-assertion. That yielded a crucial element for a fraught future of competing nationalisms.

Elsewhere the legacy was a mixed one. English and French, well established as dominant varieties by the nineteenth century, needed no official status until almost the end of the twentieth. By contrast, the era of modern Habsburg linguistic regulation, inaugurated by that decree of 1784, transformed Hungary into a cockpit of ethnic tension fanned by the claims of rival vernaculars, now on the **same lines** as Bohemia, though the role of German turned out quite divergent in the two contexts. Ironically, however, it was

⁷⁵ ... nižádnému z Rodičů Slowanských aneboližto Srbských posslému, řemeslu se učiti nedagj/ ani koho w Cechu trpj/aneb k řemeslu a živnosti připaustěgj/ dokad životnj powinnostj a přisahau toho, že ne z Slowanské, ale Německé kwe possess, nedoložj: *Reimchronik des sogenannten Dalinil*, sig. Biii^f. An earlier example: G r a u s, *Nationenbildung*, p. 95 n.; cf. *ibidem* p. 74, 81.

the same Austrian Monarchy which sustained Polish in its later nineteenth-century struggles with the linguistic hegemony of the other occupying authorities: ultimately successful struggles, given the earlier advances of the language which I adumbrated before. So patterns shifted. But, as Antoni Maćzak demonstrated so well in his later work, master–client relations are always with us, and their most significant locus is the exercise of state, or at least of cultural, power. I hope it has been fruitful for me to lay out, in the period of his greatest expertise, some evidence that his analysis can be applied to languages too.

**Artikul sněmu generálníhoho, 1615:
O zachování starožitného jazyka českého a vzdělání jeho**

A jakož jsou sobě stavově i to ku paměti přivedli, kterak vzácní předkově jejich, snaživše se jazyk a národ svůj český vzdělati, rozmnožiti a zachovati, a soudíce to, že s zahynutím jazyka českého i národ český i jméno Čechův by zahynouti musilo, bezpochybně příkladem národův těch, kteříž, chtěje sobě spůsobiti u národův jiných slavně jméno, netoliko sami v zemích svých jazyk svůj přirozený sobě zostřovati hleděli, ale i od sousedův svých, s nimiž v přátelství a nějaké smlouvy vcházeli, toho při nich mezi jiným obzvláště, aby jazyku jejich se učili a v zemích svých užívali, žádali — to za právo nařídili, aby před soudy v tomto království jinak mluveno a pře vedeny nebyly než jazykem českým.

Což pak při predcích našich, kteříž jsou tak na vlast svou jakožto praví jeho synové laskaví a vzdělání národu i jazyka svého žádostivi byli, vysoce chvály hodně a potřebně jest, tak že naproti tomu při mnohých nynějších obyvatelích království tohoto, potomcích jejich nemůže se než tupiti, že šlěpěji predkův svých nenásledují, více se na uvedení do vlasti své milé všelijakých cizích jazykův a národův vydávají. Čemuž kdyby jednou časně v cestu vkročeno nebylo, že nemohlo by naposledy to než s velikou záhubou i utištěním národu našeho českého býti.

Jakož pak na oko se spatřuje, že vždy více a více do země cizincův přibývá, kteříž se v ní usazují, své živnosti a obchody vedou, velikých statkův docházejí, na ouřady rozličně, obzvláště v městech, v městečkách, do rady, mnozí neumějíce tří slov českých, stranám česky své věci přednášejícím nerozumějíce a práva království tohoto povědomi nejsouce dosazování bývají; ano i v mnohých místech tohoto království před soudy a v místech radních jazyky cizími, což patrně čelí proti zřízení zemskému B 32, i také proti výš připomenutému předkův našich nařízení, že mluví a pře vedou. Ano i na nejedněch kollaturách stavův, k kterýmž však lidé poddaní osadní, větším dílem mimo jazyk český jiného žádného neumějící, náležejí, kněží cizozemci, jazyka českého neužívající, se dosazují a chovají; ještě tomu na odpor že neslyší se, aby Čechové z země jinam se táhnouti, osazovati, kdekoli u cizích národů podobného pohodlí a fedručku užití, a kde v které cizí zemi jazykem českým buď při právích mluveno aneb v kostelích slovo boží kázáno býti mělo. Odkudž zřejmé jest, že Čechové ubývají a cizozemcův do království českého zhusta přibývají musí. A protož na tom císař s stavy jednomyslně se snesl:

I. Aby všickni ti, kteříž z cizích zemí posavad do království českého buď za obyvatele do země anebo do měst za měšťany přijati jsou, děti své i hned z mladosti jazyku českému povinni byli dáti učiti, tak aby jsouce v Čechách rodilí a zrostlí, toho, že Čechové jsou, poněvadž jeden národ od druhého ničím tak jako jazykem rozeznán býti nemůže, skutkem dokazovali.

II. A aby děti cizozemců, také v nové posavad do země přijatých, větší příčinu k učení se jazyku českému měli: protož aby dědicové obojího pohlaví vyšších i nižších stavův, kteříž by jazykem českým dobře mluvíti uměli, po smrti rodičův svých napřed před jinými v statcích pozemských dvojnásobně dědili, a tak jim raději statkové pozemství zůstávali; jiní pak kteří by česky neuměli, aby na penězích neb jináč díly své přijíti a na tom přestati povinni byli.

III. Na potomní však a budoucí časy od zavření tohoto generálního sněmu aby žádný cizozemec, kterýž by jazyku českého neuměl a potřeby své v něm srozumitelně přednésti nemohl, do země za obyvatele ani do měst za měšťánina žádným způsobem přijímán nebyl, nýbrž aby každý ten, kdož by toho, aby do království přijat byl, žádati chtěl, nejprve se jazyku českému naučiti povinen byl, a když by se naučil, to teprv aby mu se toho dostati mohlo a prvé nic; však s toutou přitom znamenitou výminkou: aby žádný takový v nově do země přijatý cizozemec ani děti jeho do třetího kolena na žádné úřady zemské neb měšťské i jiné, ani také do žádných soudův dosazován nebyl; a to jak proto, že není možné cizozemcům tak rychle všech zvyklostí a obyčejův zemí svých, v nichž zrozeni jsou, odvyknouti, aby snad jsouce v nějakých povinnostech potřebováni, něco takového do země a dobrých pořádkův našich nevtroušovali a právu království tohoto, podle nichž samých obyvatel české země souzení býti mají, tak naspěch rozuměti a se naučiti; tak ovšem i proto, aby starožitní Čechové jakožto praví, vlastní a přirození vlasti naši milé synové před tímž v nově do země přijatými cizozemci jako nějakými pastorky jejich většího fedru Čku a odměny za věrné a platné služby králi a království činěné užiti mohli...

IV. Nicméně jak při sněmích též při soudech vyšších na hradě Pražském, tak i ve všech městech a městečkách JMC a Její M Králové, též panských, rytířských, měšťských a duchovních při právicích nemá jinak mluveno, pře vedeny, slyšány, příčiny přijímány a souzeny býti, než to vše jazykem českým.

V. Tolikéž v těch farách, kostelích neb školách, v kterýchž jest před lety desíti slovo boží jazykem českým kázáno bývalo a dítky téměř jazyku českému se vyučovaly, aby to nyní ještě i budoucně v tom předešlém dobrém způsobu zůstávalo, a jiní cizího jazyku správcové školní, kněží a kazatelové, kteříž by česky neuměli a nekázaly, tam uvozováni a dosazováni nebyli. ...

VI. ... kdož by koli ten byl, a jsa obyvatel království českého jazykem českým, uměje jej, mluvíti nechtěl a jiné též od mluvení českého odvozoval, aby v zemi trpín nebyl, nýbrž v půl léte pořád zběhlém ven z země se vystěhovati povinen byl. A pokudž by toho neučinil, aby jako rušitel obecného dobrého dále žádných práv a svobod království českého užívati nemohl.

Pavel Skála ze Zhoře, *Historie česká, od r 1602 do r 1623*, K. Tieftrunk (ed.), 5 vols, Praha, 1865–1870, I, p. 355–8 [*italics mine*; a few minor passages omitted]

Law of the General Diet of 1615: On the Preservation and Cultivation of the Venerable Czech Language

And the estates also recalled to mind how their noble ancestors, seeking to cultivate, extend and conserve their Czech language and nation, and **judging that the extinction of the Czech language would bring with it also the extinction of the Czech nation and the Czechs' very name**, and doubtless following the example of those nations which, wishing to secure for themselves an honourable name among other nations, not only looked to

intensify the use of their own native tongue in their own lands, but made a point of requesting from their neighbours, with whom they entered into friendship or some kind of treaty, that their language be taught and employed in those other lands — [these ancestors] enacted into law that before the courts of this kingdom no other language than Czech should be spoken or utilized in procedure.

Yet what was highly praiseworthy and necessary among our ancestors, who thus cherished their homeland as its true sons should and showed themselves ambitious for cultivation of their nation and language, **serves only to shame many of the present denizens of this kingdom, their descendants**, who far from following in the steps of those ancestors, set more store by **introducing all manner of foreign tongues and nations into their dear homeland**. This, unless it were nipped in the bud, could not fail to lead in time to great perdition and oppression of our Czech nation.

It is plain to see that **more and more foreigners continually enter the country** and settle in it, ply their crafts and trades, acquire large properties, and come to occupy various offices, especially in towns and townships, on the council, **many of them unable to string together three words of Czech or to understand parties who present their case in that language, and ignorant of the laws of this kingdom**; indeed in many places here before the courts and in council chambers they speak and record their suits in foreign tongues, which clearly infringes article B 32 of the land ordinance and the above-mentioned enactments of our ancestors. Moreover **in some of the parishes of the estates**, where most of the people are peasant farmers who know no other language but Czech, **foreign priests with no Czech are installed and maintained**. Yet by contrast we do not hear of Czechs moving elsewhere from this land, settling or finding comfort and support among foreign nations, or that in any foreign land the Czech tongue should be spoken in the law-courts or used for preaching the word of God in churches. **Whence it is manifest that the Czechs must diminish and foreigners soon advance in the kingdom of Bohemia**. And therefore the emperor and the estates unanimously agreed:

I. That all those who till now have been accepted from foreign lands into the kingdom of Bohemia, either as denizens of the country or as citizens of the towns, **should forthwith be obliged to have their children learn Czech from their youth**, so that born and raised in Bohemia they should demonstrate by deed that they are Czechs, **since nothing so distinguishes one nation from another as its language**.

II. And so that the children of foreigners who are newly received into the country might have greater cause to learn the Czech language, **heirs and heiresses of both higher and lower estates who can speak the Czech language well shall inherit landed property first and in double measure after the death of their parents**, so that such property shall rather remain with them; whereas those who do not know Czech will be required to take their share in money or otherwise without further recourse.

III. Henceforth and for the future from the conclusion of this general diet, **no foreigner who does not know Czech and cannot intelligibly present his needs in that tongue shall by any means be accepted as a denizen of the country or as citizen of a town**; but all those who request acceptance into the kingdom shall first be obliged to learn the Czech language, and only when they have learned it may they receive this and not before. Yet with this signal condition withal, **that no such foreigner newly accepted into the country nor his children to the third generation shall be preferred to any state or municipal or other office, or to any courts of law**, and this [for two reasons: firstly] because

it is not possible for foreigners [either] so swiftly to unlearn all habits and customs of their own lands where they were raised, but that being called upon in some duties they might perhaps insinuate something into our country and against her good order, or so promptly to understand and learn the laws of this kingdom according to which alone the denizens of the land of Bohemia are to be judged; [and secondly] also so that the original Czechs as the true, real and natural sons of our dear homeland should avail themselves of greater support and reward for their faithful and true service to the king and the kingdom than these foreigners newly accepted into the country who are like their stepsons. ...

IV. No less at the diets and in the higher courts in Prague castle as well as in all royal towns and townships and in all manorial, municipal and ecclesiastical courts nothing is to be said nor trials conducted nor causes heard nor judgments given except in the Czech language.

V. Likewise in those parishes, churches or schools in which ten years ago the word of God was being preached and children educated in the Czech language, now and in future things are to remain in that good ordering, and other school rectors, priests and preachers using foreign tongues, who cannot speak and preach in Czech, are not to be appointed or instituted. ...

VI. ... Whosoever, being a denizen of the kingdom of Bohemia and of Czech speech, knowing the language, shall be unwilling to speak it, and divert others from speaking it, is not to be tolerated in the country, but on the expiry of half a year shall be obliged to emigrate from the country. And if he should not do so, as a troubler of the common weal he shall no longer enjoy any rights and freedoms in the kingdom of Bohemia.

translated from: Pavel Skála ze Zhoře, *Historie česká, od r. 1602 do r. 1623*, K. Tieftrunk (ed.) 5 vols, Praha, 1865–1870, I, p. 355–8 [*italics mine*; a few minor passages omitted]