

VICTOR JAESCHKE

A NATIONAL "STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL"? – THE BADENI CRISIS OF 1897 IN CISLEITHANIA'S GERMAN-LANGUAGE PRESS

Abstract

This article observes the role of Cisleithania's (i.e. the Austrian "half" of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy) German-language press in the so-called Badeni Crisis of 1897 which was triggered by the issuance of two language ordinances designed to make Czech, together with German, an equally valid language in the inner administration of the Crownlands of Bohemia and Moravia. By comparing the reporting style of two newspapers from different regions – the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* and the Bohemian newspaper *Prager Tagblatt*—this essay explores how interpretations of this serious political crisis differed in the periphery and the centre of the Habsburg empire. The author shows that, even though the Badeni Crisis directly affected mainly German-speaking Bohemians, the reporting style of the *Prager Tagblatt* was less sensationalist and its choice of words less nationalistic and militaristic than the coverage of the same events by its Viennese counterpart, the *Neue Freie Presse*. In a second step, reasons for this surprising discrepancy are traced.

Key words: Badeni Crisis; Habsburg Empire; Cisleithania; German nationalism; language and nationalism; Vienna; Prague

NARODOWA „WALKA O PRZETRWANIE”?
KRYZYS BADENIEGO 1897 ROKU
W NIEMIECKOJĘZYCZNEJ PRASIE PRZEDLITAWII

Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest roli niemieckojęzycznej prasy w Przedlitawii (czyli austriackiej „połówce” Monarchii Austro-Węgier-

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skiej) podczas tzw. kryzysu Badeniego w 1897 roku, wywołanego przez wydanie dwujęzycznych ordynacji, co miało sprawić, że język czeski, obok niemieckiego, stanie się równorzędnym językiem wewnętrznej administracji Królestw Czech i Moraw. Poprzez porównanie sposobu przekazu informacji w ukazujących się w dwóch regionach gazetach – wiedeńskiej „Neue Freie Presse” i czeskiej „Prager Tagblatt” – autor docieka, w czym interpretacja tego poważnego kryzysu politycznego różniła się na peryferiach i w centrum imperium Habsburgów. Pokazuje, że choć kryzys Badeniego bezpośrednio dotknął przede wszystkim niemieckojęzycznych Czechów, to ton przekazu w „Prager Tagblatt” był mniej sensacyjny, mniej nacjonalistyczny i militarystyczny w doborze słownictwa, niż to miało miejsce w relacjach o tychże wydarzeniach, które ukazywały się w wiedeńskim odpowiedniku gazety, „Neue Freie Presse”. Następnie autor prześledził powody tej zaskakującej rozbieżności.

Sł o w a k l u c z o w e: kryzys Badeniego; imperium Habsburgów; nacjonalizm niemiecki; język i nacjonalizm; Wiedeń; Praga

INTRODUCTION

The Minister President resigned, and the thoroughly laudable language decree was rescinded. The invasion of brutality into politics thus chalked up its first success. All the underground cracks and crevices between the classes and races, which the age of conciliation had so laboriously patched up, broke open once again and widened into abysses and chasms. In reality it was during the last decade preceding the new century that the war of all against all began in Austria. (Zweig, 1943, p. 59)

What led Stefan Zweig who spent his childhood and youth in fin-de-siècle Vienna to take what is subsumed under the so called Badeni Crisis of 1897 as an occasion for this sinister résumé? It all started in April 1897 when the Austrian Minister President Count Kasimir Felix Badeni issued two language ordinances. With this legislative act, the Polish-Lithuanian nobleman from the Crownland of Galicia triggered a serious political crisis which resulted in, as Austrian historian Peter Haslinger puts it, “a degree of national radicalisation unnoticed since 1848” (Haslinger, 2008, p. 106). On the first glance, the language ordinances seemed to be of administrative character only, but in fact they had far-reaching political implications.¹

The first ordinance stated that within Bohemian administration the two languages customary to the crownland [*landesübliche Sprachen*]—German and Czech²—were to be treated equally. This touched not only upon the language used by civil servants in direct contact with the population, most importantly in front of courts, but also upon the language usage in the so called inner administration (“Verordnung der Minister des Innern, der Justiz, der Finanzen, des Handels und des Ackerbaus vom 5. April 1897, L.G.Bl. No. 12,” 1897). This *de facto* meant that all paperwork of an administrative or judicial act had to be carried out in the language of submission, which of course did not necessarily

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¹ Ironically, the language ordinances were originally designed to break the deadlock in German-Czech relations within Cisleithania and to create a stable parliamentary majority for Badeni’s government. Badeni believed that solving the language question in Bohemia and Moravia with such ordinances would help him achieve this end (Boyer, 2015, pp. 71f.).

² Officially, the two *landesübliche Sprachen* of Bohemia were “German” and “Czech-Moravian-Slovak” (Haslinger, 2010, p. 121). For practical reasons, in the following “Czech-Moravian-Slovak” will be referred to as “Czech”, even though this is in fact a simplification.

have to be German. The second and even more important ordinance stated that all civil servants to be employed in Bohemia had to prove their proficiency in both languages, German and Czech, beginning in 1901 (“Verordnung der Minister des Innern, der Justiz, der Finanzen, des Handels und des Ackerbaus vom 5. April 1897, L.G.Bl. No. 13,” 1897). Even though there was a period of grace of four years, these ordinances put many German-speaking civil servants in the uncomfortable position of having to learn a second language, while on the other hand most of the Czech-speaking civil servants and Czech candidates aspiring to become civil servants knew German already (Boyer, 2015, pp. 73f.).³

These ordinances were, unsurprisingly, received with displeasure by German parties of all colours as well as by the Germanophone press in Cisleithania, the Austrian “half” of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. All these forces called for repealing these ordinances. Especially members of German nationalist movements, which were gaining considerable support at the end of the nineteenth century, saw the dominant position of “the Germans” under siege in Cisleithania.⁴ Thus, even though the ordinances directly affected only Bohemia (alongside Moravia, because similar ordinances were issued for this crownland a few weeks later), from the outset they were not seen only as an internal problem restricted to one or two crownlands, but generated heated discussion at the central level in the political sphere of Cisleithania.

Soon, the conflict over these ordinances also entered the House of Deputies of the *Reichsrat* (Imperial parliament) in Vienna. In the course of the Badeni Crisis, the Austrian public witnessed not only massive obstructionist politics in the House of Deputies, including the longest session in the history of Austrian parliamentarianism and a record-breaking 12-hour-speech famously captured by Mark Twain (1898), but also partly violent demonstrations in Vienna, Prague and other cities. The dynamics of the crisis even lead to such obscurities like a pistol duel involving the Minister President. Last but not least, the *Reichsrat* had to be closed, the government fell and the emperor resorted to temporary rule by emergency decree (Haslinger, 2010, pp. 161–179). In the words of historian Lothar Höbelt: “Mayhem broke loose” (Höbelt, 1992, p. 6).

This essay concentrates on the role of the German-language press in the Badeni Crisis. More specifically, the goal of this work is to investigate whether the style and scale of the press coverage of the language ordinances in the *Neue Freie Presse*, one of the leading Viennese journals, contributed to the incitement of the partly violent disturbances in the context of the Badeni Crisis.⁵ Secondly, this article analyses how the coverage on the Badeni Crisis by the *Neue Freie Presse* differed from the reporting on the crisis in Bohemia’s largest German-language newspaper, the *Prager Tagblatt*.⁶ At the first glance, it seems surprising that the *Prager Tagblatt*, whose readers were potentially affected directly by the language ordinances, was more objective and less sensationalist in its reporting style on the Badeni Crisis than the Vienna-based *Neue Freie Presse*. The main

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³ All translations of German-language sources are my own. For a detailed account of the development of the crisis see: Sutter (1960, 1965).

⁴ See for instance the speech in the House of Deputies given by German nationalist Karl-Hermann Wolf on 6 May 1897 (Wolf, 1897, pp. 521–525, esp. p. 525).

⁵ This research is based on the digitised newspaper issues of the *Neue Freie Presse* from April until November 1897, available online: <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=1897&zoom=33>> [2 August 2016]. The URL of each issue used is given, due to practical reasons, only in the bibliography. The *Neue Freie Presse* was one of the biggest politically liberal newspapers in Vienna. In 1900, its average run at that time was 52 000 copies (Melischek & Seethaler, 2001, p. 6). See also Adam Wandruszka’s study *Geschichte einer Zeitung* (1958, pp. 92–122, esp. pp. 92f.)

⁶ The *Prager Tagblatt* is digitised and freely accessible online: <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=ptb>> [3 December 2016].

aim of this comparison is to bring the Bohemian perspective back into the bigger picture of the scholarly reflection on the Badeni Crisis. At present the majority of rather few works on this topic tend to concentrate on the imperial (or Cisleithanian) dimension of the crisis and as such are often rather limited to the politics at the imperial capital of Vienna (Boyer, 2015; Mommsen, 2007; Rathkolb, 2013).

THE NEUE FREIE PRESSE AND THE BADENI CRISIS

Now that we know them [the ordinances], we see that they surpass by far everything we knew about its content until now and that all fears connected to the complication of service, harassment of the population, impairment of the jurisdiction, the incomprehensibility of public books and registers, are by far exceeded. (*Neue Freie Presse* [NFP], 6 April 1897; "Die böhmische Sprachenverordnung 1897, p. 2)

With these words the *Neue Freie Presse* opened the reporting on Count Kasimir Felix Badeni's language ordinances in its Tuesday issue of 6 April 1897, the day after the ordinances were published. This listing of practical inconveniences which were feared to result from the implementation of the ordinances shows that they were originally seen by German speakers as merely useless, inconsistent and impracticable. Much attention was paid to practical implications of the ordinances, for instance, for courts or post offices. The language used here is yet quite distant from being radically nationalist. For the two following days, the language ordinances were of no major concern for the *Neue Freie Presse*. The Landtag elections in Galicia and the confirmation of Dr. Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna were seen as more important.

However, this initially unexcited reporting style changed already during the first week after the ordinances had been issued. On Saturday 10 April 1897, the day after the first heated debate about the ordinances had taken place in the *Reichsrat*, the language ordinances featured on the front page of the *Neue Freie Presse*. A slight shift in rhetoric can already be observed. Now the ordinances were interpreted not merely as impractical, but also as doing injustice to "the Germans" in Bohemia: "They [the ordinances] are unfair because they treat the Germans of Bohemia worse than elsewhere in Austria" (NFP, 10 April 1897; "Wien, 9 April," 1897, p. 1). But as yet the language ordinances had not been seen as a sign of some conflict between "Germans" and "Czechs". However, it was recognized that this primarily Bohemian problem, unfortunately, widened the chasm between the two *Volksstämme*⁷. Resentment was mainly directed against Minister President Badeni who was accused of being unable to either justify or defend the ordinances. As a result, he was even accused of stirring up growing support for German radical nationalist parties. It should have been a cause for reflection for the Minister President, the *Neue Freie Presse* wrote, "that the *Heilo-Teutonen*⁸ gain support in *Deutschböhmen*⁹ and that the German voters who were the most reliable pillars of state unity and every moderate direction, suddenly send the Schönerer, Wolf and Iro into the House of Deputies"

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⁷ The German term *Volksstamm*, here in the plural *Volksstämme*, is best translated as "nationality" and "nationalities," respectively.

⁸ A German term for radical German nationalists.

⁹ Areas in Bohemia with a German-speaking majority.

(NFP, 10 April 1897; "Wien, 9. April," 1897, p. 2).¹⁰ On 11 April 1897, the language ordinances were again topic on page two. In this short article, which mainly discusses the legal character of the ordinances, the author merely criticizes that the ordinances should have been actual laws and not ministerial ordinances (NFP, 11 April 1897; "Die Giltigkeit der Sprachenverordnungen," 1897, pp. 1f.).

It can thus be observed, that in the first week after the issuance of the language ordinances, the *Neue Freie Presse* cannot be accused of actively inciting disturbances. Lengthy reports on the matter were published only in reaction to the adoption of the ordinances and following the first debate on the ordinances in the *Reichsrat*. Before and after these events, the *Neue Freie Presse* paid little attention to the new language ordinances, even though this topic never disappeared completely. On the other hand, it can be observed that the *Neue Freie Presse* did not attempt to cover the events in an impartial manner which would have included different viewpoints. In this sense, the *Neue Freie Presse* was very clear. In its commentaries, Badeni himself was depicted as incompetent and the language ordinances as unacceptable.

In the following months, the *Neue Freie Presse* covered the Badeni Crisis both more extensively and more vigorously. On 11 July 1897 for instance, the crisis reached a new high point as the so called *Volkstag*¹¹ in the Bohemian provincial city Eger (Cheb) resulted in violent confrontation with the police. The goal of this nationalist gathering, also joined by a handful of *Reichsrat* deputies, was to express aversion for the language ordinances and to sign a resolution requesting that they be repealed. As the meeting was not officially approved, confrontation with Bohemian policemen—many of whom were Czech-speakers—was rather inevitable. In the course of this confrontation several persons were wounded (Krzoska, 2005, pp. 152f.).

The *Neue Freie Presse* dedicated its front page to these events four days in a row. In the issue of 11 July 1897, the Viennese newspaper already reported on the preparations for the meeting. On 12 July, the *Neue Freie Presse* covered the turbulent events with several articles on the first three pages, stating that the state-interference at the "*Volkstag* of Eger" was the biggest and most serious mistake of the government since the issuance of the language ordinances (NFP, 12 July 1897; "Der Volkstag in Eger," 1897, p. 1). The language used in this context can now clearly be described as nationalist: "The German people is peaceful but it is in its nature that the application of force evokes its fighting courage, like a river, with rocks standing in its flow" (NFP, 12 July 1897; "Der Volkstag in Eger," 1897, p. 1). Furthermore, the Germans of Bohemia were described as members of a superior people: "Who is this battle fought against? Against the Germans in Bohemia, against the members of a people who is the *highest standing Volksstamm* [*höchststehender Volksstamm*] in its culture, in its education, in its industry and tax revenue" (NFP, 12 July 1897; "Der Volkstag in Eger," 1897, p. 1 [emphasis added]).

In comparison to the week of 5 until 11 April, the *Neue Freie Presse* went further in its reporting on the "*Volkstag* of Eger." It not only commented on an event the day after it occurred but took over a considerably more active role this time: Three days after the actual events had taken place, the newspaper was still vigorously debating the issue on its front page, now explicitly condemning the violence allegedly practiced by "Czech policemen" (NFP, 14 July 1897; "Wien, 13. Juli," 1897, p. 1).

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¹⁰ Georg von Schönerer, Karl-Hermann Wolf, and Karl Martin Iro were the most prominent representatives of the radical German nationalist party *Alldeutsche Vereinigung* (Höbel, 1993, pp. 141, 150–166).

¹¹ The German term *Volkstag* has no English equivalent but roughly translates into "People's Day" and describes a (German) national gathering.

The Viennese newspaper also defended obstructionist politics carried out by multiple German parties in the House of Deputies—a phenomenon which haunted the Cisleithanian *Reichsrat* periodically until 1918.¹² On several occasions journalists of the paper argued that the German opposition was being forced into obstruction and that these tactics were legitimate means to fight the language ordinances (NFP, 25 September 1897, p. 1; “Oesterreichischer Reichsrat,” 1897, p. 1).¹³ In an article of 29 September 1897, one journalist even made Minister President Badeni personally responsible for the phenomenon of obstruction: “The day he [Count Badeni] put his name under the ill-fated ordinances, [...] that day obstruction was born” (NFP, 26 September 1897; “Wien, 25. September,” 1897, p. 1). In October, the *Neue Freie Presse* went even further, stating that the German people was in a state of “struggle for survival [*Existenzkampf*]” and that the German opposition in the *Reichsrat* acted “under conditions of self-defence against a violation [*Vergewaltigung*]” (NFP, 30 October 1897; “Wien, 29. October,” 1897, p. 1), obstructionist politics thus being the last hope of rescue.

It is remarkable how within half a year, the *Neue Freie Presse*—a newspaper which Stefan Zweig after all acclaimed of having been “a temple of progress” and the only Viennese journal “of high grade [...], which, because of its dignified principles, its cultural endeavours and its political prestige, assumed in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy a role not unlike that of *The Times* in England or the *Temps* in France” (Zweig, 1943, p. 84)—profoundly changed its originally moderate and reasonable interpretation of the Badeni Crisis. In April 1897, the *Neue Freie Presse* interpreted the crisis as being a struggle against the government and its unfortunate and impractical ordinances. In October of the same year, the Viennese newspaper resorted to the archaic and nationalistic interpretation of it being a struggle for national survival.¹⁴

In the light of this development, it is then not surprising that the *Neue Freie Presse* celebrated the dissolution of the Badeni government on 28 September 1897 as a national victory for the Germans:

For the first time, the German-Austrians [*Deutsch-Österreicher*] showed [...] that their national heritage was not an abandoned good which can be possessed by anyone who grasps at it and from which one can draw infinitely in order to satisfy the needs of others. What is eternally memorable about the fall of Badeni’s ministry is that it was enforced by the Germans even though they were as minority facing a Slavic majority. (NFP, 29 November 1897; “Wien, 29. November,” 1897, p. 1)

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¹² As Lothar Höbelt rightly points out, the obstruction in the wake of the Badeni Crisis fundamentally changed the character of parliamentary politics in Cisleithania. On the one hand the government did not only have to “bargain for a majority in the House, but above all it had to ensure that voting could actually take place by buying off all sizeable factions”. Furthermore, “one of the unavoidable consequences of this escalation was that opposition as such lost all credibility. If you were really trying to prevent something from being passed, your constituents might expect you to try and go ‘nuclear’, i.e., persuade forty-nine fellow members to start demanding useless roll-calls rather than just pontificate against that measure [...]. A voting-record of ‘Nays’ alone was no longer enough for your credentials as a doughty fighter against all possible governmental evils” (Höbelt, 1992, p. 9f.).

¹³ This assessment supports the thesis of Gary B. Cohen, who states that obstruction should be regarded as merely one political tool amongst many others: “historians have used these episodes [of boycott and obstruction] to demonstrate the failings of parliamentary development in the monarchy. These episodes, however, must be viewed in context. Not just radicals, but a range of political interests used parliamentary boycotts and obstruction as tools. Typically, they did so to achieve practical political goals. In most cases they wanted to return to normal legislative business as soon as they won suitable concessions and rewards, and this is what often happened” (Cohen, 2007, p. 270).

¹⁴ For further research, it would be interesting to explore why the *Neue Freie Presse* resorted to such a nationalistic rhetoric. Does the sensationalist rhetoric of the *Neue Freie Presse* need to be interpreted as a product of overproduction of news and competition between newspapers and by what Gerald D. Baldasty observes for the American press at the turn of the century, namely a “commercialization of news”? (Baldasty, 1992, pp. 139–146).

THE PRAGER TAGBLATT AND THE BADENI CRISIS

In which way and to which degree did the reporting style of the biggest German-language newspaper of Bohemia, the *Prager Tagblatt*, differ from this ultimately stark nationalist rhetoric displayed by the *Neue Freie Presse*? Following the general trend in Cisleithanian German-language newspapers of the time, the *Prager Tagblatt* was, unsurprisingly, opposed to the language ordinances of 4 April 1897 as well. Already in its issue of 29 March 1897—first rumours about new language ordinances and their content had been leaked a few days before—the Prague paper wrote: “But we believe full equality and the best means to achieve an understanding would be: *Leave each other alone* and only grant legal rights with regards to the knowledge of both languages of the crownland according to the *need*” (*Prager Tagblatt* [PT], 29 March 1897; “Zur Frage der Sprachenverordnungen,” 1897, p. 1 [emphasis in the original]). Hence, the difference between the *Prager Tagblatt* and the *Neue Freie Presse* is not to be searched in the rejection of the language ordinances as a such, but rather in style and intensesness of the reporting on the Badeni Crisis.

Very telling in this context is, for instance, the coverage of the aforementioned *Volkstag* taking place in the Bohemian city of Eger as it marks one of the high-points of violent disturbances of this crisis. In the *Neue Freie Presse*, the lead article on the front page focused on the “*Volkstag* of Eger” on four consecutive days, from 11 until 14 July, whereas the *Prager Tagblatt* dedicated its cover page only on one day, 12 July, to the tumultuous events in Eger.¹⁵ While the *Neue Freie Presse* used militaristic vocabulary, interpreting the events as an attack against the “highest standing *Volksstamm* in Austria” which would only increase the will to fight of the Germans (NFP, 12 July 1897; “Der *Volkstag* in Eger,” 1897, p. 1), the unknown journalist of the *Prager Tagblatt* was merely full of “deepest national and patriotic pain” with regards to this “historical day of a deeply deplorable part of Austrian history” (PT, 12 July 1897, p. 1;). In other words, the direction of the commentaries on the *Volkstag* were similar—with the important difference that the language applied by the *Prager Tagblatt* was less militaristic, avoiding the notion of a nationalist struggle for survival.

This discrepancy becomes even more visible in the reporting on a Communiqué which the National Liberal Party, better known as the “Young Czech Party”, had addressed to the Bohemian Imperial stadtholder on 29 July 1897. In this Communiqué, the “Young Czechs” complained about the alleged persecution of “Czechs” in areas of Bohemia which were predominately German-speaking (PT, 30 July 1897, pp. 5f.; “Das Executivcomité der jungczechischen Partei,” 1897, pp. 5f.). While the *Prager Tagblatt* printed the text of the Communiqué only on page five in telegraphic style without further commenting on it, the *Neue Freie Presse* dedicated its whole cover page to the Communiqué denouncing it as a pamphlet and using phrases such as “Czech art of agitation” and “time of deepest humiliation of the Germans in Bohemia” (NFP, 1 August 1897; “Wien, 31. Juli,” 1897, p. 1).

Just a week later similar can be seen—now in the context of an emergency meeting of all German-speaking deputies of the Bohemian diet after a flood disastrously affecting some parts of the crownland. For the *Neue Freie Presse* this meeting taking place on 8 August 1897 was again reason enough to fill the whole front page. In this article,

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¹⁵ On 11 and 13 July, the *Prager Tagblatt* reported on the *Volkstag* only in short articles on pages 11 and 8f. respectively (PT, 11 July 1897, p. 11; “Telegramme und telephonische Nachrichten des “Prager Tagblatt,” 1897, p. 11; PT, 13 July 1897, pp. 8f.; “Der elfte Juli in Eger,” 1897, pp. 8f.). For a detailed account of the events in Eger see: Sutter (1965, pp. 55–57).

the *Neue Freie Presse* interpreted the meeting in the context of the Badeni Crisis, while the *Prager Tagblatt* dedicated only two columns to this meeting, stressing the need to intensify aid campaigns in the context of the flooding (NFP, 8 August 1897; "Wien, 7. August," 1897, pp. 1f.; PT, 8 August 1897; "Zur Comitéberathung des Clubs der deutschen Landtagsabgeordneten," 1897, p. 1).

All these examples unequivocally show how even events connected to the Badeni Crisis that took place in Bohemia or Prague itself and which ultimately effected primarily Bohemians were discussed less enthusiastically in the Bohemian newspaper *Prager Tagblatt* than in the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*. Inevitably, the question arises how this phenomenon can be explained. Given the length of the article at hand, this question can of course not be answered in all due comprehensiveness and some answers may be rather reasonable speculation. However, at least two factors stand out in this context.

First of all, it has to be noted that Prague cannot automatically be regarded as representative for all of Bohemia. Prague is a special case in several ways, setting it apart from other places in Bohemia, especially from the countryside. The American scholar Gary B. Cohen shows convincingly in his monograph *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague 1861-1914* that despite all attempts of both German and Czech nationalists to create distinct national groups, compared to the Bohemian countryside, where

Czech and German peasants lived largely isolated from each other and had distinct folk traditions, [...] cultural differences were much narrower and ties to group tradition more fragile in the mixed cities. Czechs and Germans who were of the same religion and roughly the same class and were long settled in the cities lived on close terms with each other and shared much in values and habits. (Cohen, 1981, p. 87).

Especially in Prague, it is furthermore problematic to simply identify every German-speaker as "German" and every Czech-speaker as "Czech". In the Badeni Crisis, language was being connected very strongly to a notion of nationality,¹⁶ however, especially for Prague this connection is too simplistic. Religion, class, or regional identifications for instance played an important role too. The large Jewish population of Prague for example was predominantly German-speaking but cannot simply be labelled as of "German" nationality (Cohen, 1981, pp. 105f.).¹⁷ The situation in Prague is further complicated by the fact that many Prager were bilingual, at least to a much higher degree than compared to rural areas in Bohemia or provincial cities such as Eger where almost no Czech-speakers lived (Cohen, 1981, pp. 88f.; Krzoska, 2005, pp. 149f.)

Consequently, the *Prager Tagblatt* may not be considered representative for all German-speaking Bohemians. The same is, however, true for the *Neue Freie Presse* and Vienna, which too was culturally, linguistically, and ethnically much more diverse than the surrounding rural areas. In this regard, Vienna and Prague and the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Prager Tagblatt* respectively, are comparable. The important difference between them is in this context, however, that in Prague German-speakers were only a minority

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¹⁶ Language was one of the most important vehicles of nationalism in Cisleithania. Among other factors, this is due to the fact that the so called "December Constitution" of 1867 made a strong connection between the *Volksstämme* and language. There it says that all languages customary to a given crownland were equal and that every *Volksstamm* should be given sufficient means to develop its own language ("Staatsgrundgesetz," 1867, Art. 19). Thus, with this piece of legislation, in Cisleithania the equality of each language customary to a crownland became a „justiciable legal asset, developed further in some crownlands and protected by the Basic State Law [Staatsgrundgesetz]" (Stourzh, 1985, p. 1).

¹⁷ The problem of course goes deeper than this. Who at all can be labelled "German" in Austria-Hungary around the turn of the century? Today's understanding of what is "German" seems to be much more uniform than what has been understood as being "German" at the end of the nineteenth century. Most definitely one cannot speak of a consistent sense of German identity in Cisleithania (Judson, 2008, pp. 121–125).

of roughly ten percent of the city's overall population, whereas in Vienna which was also the residence of the German-speaking Habsburg dynasty, German-speakers were in the majority (K. k. statistische Central-Commission, 1903, p. 40). The census of 1900 even claims that almost 93 percent of Vienna's population was German-speaking (K. k. statistische Central-Commission, 1903, p. 40). This figure has to be treated with suspicion though, as bilingualism is not captured at all by the census.¹⁸

In the light of these findings it is, notwithstanding, less surprising that in Prague the coverage of the Badeni Crisis was less dramatic in style than in predominately German-speaking Vienna. Even though it is ultimately extremely difficult to present conclusive evidence to support this claim, it may be reasonably speculated that the everyday experience of German-speaking Prager living side by side with Czech-speakers, which not only meant peaceful co-existence but in many cases also included close personal and professional relationships between German- and Czech-speaking Prager (Cohen, 1981, pp. 123–139), had a dampening effect on the rhetoric used in local newspapers.

The second reason for the less enthusiastic reporting style of the *Prager Tagblatt* to be identified here lays in the relative distance of Prague to what one might call the epicentre of the crisis. The most important political arena in which the Badeni Crisis was argued out was the House of Deputies in Vienna—more than 300 kilometres away from Prague. As the Badeni Crisis was as much an all-Cisleithanian crisis as it was an inner problem of the crownlands Bohemia and Moravia, the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* was—paradoxically at the first glance—often closer to the action than the Bohemian newspaper *Prager Tagblatt*.

This underlines once more the ambiguous character of this crisis. On the one hand, the conflict was originally about Bohemian and Moravian civil servants and can thus be interpreted as a conflict brought from the periphery into the centre of the empire (Krzoska, 2005). On the other hand, the language ordinances which triggered the crisis were issued by the Cisleithanian Minister President in Vienna with the aim to appease Czech politicians for them to help bring about a governmental majority in the House of Deputies. In other words, the crisis had been about more than Bohemian civil servants from the very beginning. It is stunning to observe how these different layers of conflict on Imperial, Cisleithanian and crownland levels influenced each other over the course of the crisis. This came once again painfully apparent in December 1897 when after the fall of the Badeni-government in Vienna Czech nationalists took to the streets in Prague and caused major disturbances so that martial law had to be imposed over Prague (PT, 3 December 1897; "Standrecht," 1897, p. 1).

CONCLUSION

In this work, it has been shown that interpretations of the Badeni Crisis differed considerably in selected Viennese and Bohemian newspapers. Firstly, the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* played an ambiguous role in the Badeni Crisis of 1897. In the

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¹⁸ First of all, it has to be noted that not everyone who stated being a German- or Czech-speaker, correspondingly identified as of German or Czech nationality. Interestingly, it is almost never even taken into consideration that a person might have identified with the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a such, regardless of language. Furthermore, these data do not show how many persons spoke more than one language. Austrian citizens who were bi- or multilingual simply had to decide which language they would state as their colloquial language [*Umgangssprache*] (Judson, 2008, pp. 122f.).

beginning, the style of reporting on the language ordinances issued by Minister President Count Casimir Badeni in April 1897 was rather restrained compared to later phases. Nevertheless, from the outset the *Neue Freie Presse* very clearly opposed the language ordinances and never made a serious attempt to position itself as an impartial mediator between the government, Czech and German nationalists. Especially in later phases of the conflict, the *Neue Freie Presse* increasingly became prone to an outright nationalist language. In other words, the *Neue Freie Presse* never tried to calm down the overall heated atmosphere and in the fall of 1897 even fuelled already existing sentiments of national confrontation.

Secondly, it has been shown that the Bohemian German-language newspaper *Prager Tagblatt* covered the events in the context of the Badeni Crisis in a less sensationalist manner than the *Neue Freie Presse*. Most significantly, a considerable difference in choice of words can be observed. At several occasions, the *Prager Tagblatt* used a comparably more objective and less militaristic language.

Furthermore, the two main reasons for these differences were traced. Firstly, the composition of Prague's population itself. In Prague, ties between German- and Czech-speakers were often tighter and the boundaries between the coalescing national groups less rigid than nationalists of both camps tried to make their target audiences believe. On these grounds, it seems reasonable to assume that the experience of often close interaction between German- and Czech-speakers on an everyday basis had a debilitating effect on nationalist rhetoric in the *Prager Tagblatt*. Secondly, the less sensationalist reporting style of the *Prager Tagblatt* can be explained by highlighting that the crisis was as much a Cisleithanian problem as it was a Bohemian one. But for better or worse it was rather Vienna than Prague that in this case stood in the centre of public attention. In this sense, the *Neue Freie Presse* was often spatially closer to important events, especially with regards to the tumultuous sessions in the *Reichsrat's* House of Deputies.

For further research, it would be interesting to observe how exactly these different levels of nationalism displayed in the two newspapers analysed here correspond with scale and quality of nationalistically motivated disturbances in Prague and Vienna respectively. Comparisons to other newspapers would also be necessary in order to define whether German-language newspapers in general can be made responsible for contributing to the overall heated atmosphere in the context of the Badeni Crisis.

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