

CZECHS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND THEIR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

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19th century Europe was a space of large-scale migrational movements. In the Habsburg Monarchy, which included the Czech lands, four types of migrational movements can be identified. The first type was migration to Western Europe and overseas, chiefly to the American continent, which culminated in the Czech lands at the turn of the 20th century (Chada 1981; Šatava 1989; Polišíenský 1991, 1996). The next type of migration was to the east, primarily to tsarist Russia, which reached more significant dimensions mainly in the 1860s and 1870s (Auerhan 1920; Vaculík 1997). The third considerable migrational movement was an internal one, to towns within the Austrian Empire as a feature of the urbanization and industrialization of the empire. In the 19th century, the inhabitants of the Czech lands migrated not only to towns nearby, but also to cities a long way from the Czech lands but which were still a part of the Habsburg Empire. They migrated mainly to Vienna (Horská 2002:154-164), Gratz, Ljubljana, Maribor, Zagreb, Rijeka, Lvov, and other cities that are now located in other independent countries. Another type of these internal migrations within the Austrian Empire was a so-called internal colonization. Throughout the 19th century, the scarcely inhabited areas from which the Turkish army had retreated were being populated. The new inhabitants coming from more populated parts of the monarchy could obtain cheap land there and run the farmstead; they also gained tax relief and other benefits from the Austrian government or the local nobility. In the extensive areas of present-day northern Romania, Croatian Slavonia, and Serbian Banat were thus formed areas with a quite

diverse structure of inhabitants. It was possible to find German, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, and Ukrainian villages and also villages of the other nations of the Austrian Empire side by side there (Heroldová 1996; Secká 1996). Not before the second half of the 20th century but mainly after 1989 these areas gradually became ethnically homogeneous again owing to the re-immigration of minorities into the lands of their ancestors and owing to their gradual assimilation into the majority culture.

The Czech settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina are a result of migrational movements that are similar to the internal migrations to the towns within the Austrian Empire and the internal colonization of the areas deserted by the Turkish army. However, it is specific for them that Bosnia and Herzegovina was not an organic part of the Austrian Empire, but an occupied territory, which the Austrian army did not enter until the last third of the 19th century.

This text deals with historical aspects of the creation of the Czech minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the life in urban and rural enclaves, and the current conditions of their existence.¹

The Arrival of Czechs in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the Balkan states whose cultural scene was considerably

¹ This text has been drawn up on the basis of the results of field inquiries undertaken in 1996-2004. It is a contribution towards the realization of the project K9058117 / 17 of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

influenced by the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and its presence in the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire took control of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1528 after more than one hundred years of fighting on its territory and controlled it for more than 350 years. The first one hundred years of the Ottoman supremacy in particular was a period of economic development for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Muslim state created a base here for further expansion into Europe and brought order and stability to the country (Lovrenović 2000: 83-94).

The riches of the Ottoman Empire, however, were dependent on the success of its army on the fronts. Starting in the second half of the 17th century, stagnation and decline were becoming evident, which were later accompanied by discontent among the local population (Filipović 1997: 86). In the 1860s and 1870s, this discontent grew in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina into a series of armed rebellions, which signaled that the Ottoman Empire was no longer able to govern the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina effectively. Internal problems of the Ottoman Empire and at the same time defeats at the fronts forced the Ottoman Empire to agree to a peace treaty with European powers and to begin negotiations on the current situation (Malcolm 1996: 119-136). At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, devoted to the situation, the Austrian diplomatic corps succeeded in persuading the powers concerned to allow Austria-Hungary to occupy the country militarily, administer it, and thus establish peace and order here. Following the Istanbul Convention, from 1879 until 1908, this administration was exercised on a foreign territory, where the Turkish sultan remained its ruler; from 1908, the year of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was already administered on a territory that was a part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, subject to the Austrian emperor.

The acquisition of Bosnia and Herzegovina was an important success for Austria-Hungary in terms of politics mainly because it strengthened its position in the Balkans, expanded its ability to enforce its policies

towards Serbia, and thus also indirectly toward Serbia's traditional ally, Russia (Hladký 1996: 40). Therefore, the Austrian administration paid a great deal of attention to the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and strived toward Bosnia and Herzegovina becoming an integral part of the monarchy in all respects. Apart from a military supremacy, what were concerned were strong ties in the areas of industrial activity, business, communications, state administration, the educational system, and also everyday life. The Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Finance was put in charge of the occupation government, which administered the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Provincial Government in Sarajevo with a military governor as its head. Subordinated to the Provincial Government were the occupation army, provincial police, and administrative government apparatus. Noel Malcolm and Ladislav Hladký mention that the Ottomans governed the Bosnian *vilayet* with only approximately 120 officials (Malcolm 1996: 138; Hladký 1996: 44). The Austro-Hungarian government of Bosnia and Herzegovina was employing 7,379 officials in 1897 and at the time of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 their number was increased to 9,535. In addition, there were almost 23,000 soldiers in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1895 and more than 2,000 policemen in 1902 (Hladký 1996: 44).

The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina became an area of rapid urbanization, Europeanization, and basically also of colonization, which on the one hand threatened the identity of the local population but, on the other hand, brought European civilization's innovations. The rapid development of industry, the road and railway network, the energy industry, military bases, and also schools, libraries, theaters, and concert halls or spa buildings brought an unprecedented amount of work opportunities. Thereby, an opportunity for extensive migration was created, which was used by the Croats, Austrians, Germans, Czechs, Italians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Slovenes, and other nations of Austria-Hungary. First it was

migration into towns. Only later were conditions created for migration to the rural areas.

Between 1878 and 1914, some 180,000 to 200,000 people immigrated to Bosnia and Herzegovina from other regions of the Habsburg Monarchy, whereas approximately 150,000 people emigrated, predominantly Muslims to Turkey. Consequently, the percentage of the Muslim population declined from 38.78% in 1879 to 32.35%; the percentage of the Catholics, on the other hand, increased from 18.08% to 22.87%. The number of the Orthodox Christians rose by approximately 1% (conf. cf. *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* 1982/2: 190; Hladký 1996: 46).

In urban areas, Czechs lived for the most part spread among other nations and nationalities. However, even compact Czech communities were created in several places in the country. During the census of 1910, the percentage of the people of the Czech origin was 0.37% (7,095 people) of the total number of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 13.05% of the total number of people from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy living on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (46,859 people). Based on the regions, the highest numbers of Czechs were in the Sarajevo region (2,350), in the Banja Luka region (2,297), in the region of Travnik 825, Tuzla 764, Mostar 585, and Bihac 224 (Uherek 2000: 9).

Czechs could settle in towns soon after the Austrian military occupation. In Sarajevo, for example, the first Czech tradesmen appear in 1879. However, migration takes place immediately after the military intervention even in some smaller towns. *Posel z Prahy* (*Prague Courier*) from 30th January 1879 informs us, for example, that a tradesman from Jičín², Mr. Wanzl, settled down in the small spa town Kiseljak (west of Sarajevo) and opened a “Czech-style pub” there which he called “U města Jičina” (By the Town of Jičín). Already in late January - early February 1879, his wife and hired servants

joined him in Kiseljak. Similarly, the first six colliers left for the coal mines in the vicinity of Banja Luka in December 1878 to follow a former expert of the company Saxonia, Mr. Edelman, who had already been preparing conditions for black-coal mining (*Posel z Prahy* 1879, no. 5 from 7th January, p. 3). Already then, however, there were Czech state officials, soldiers, and policemen in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were soon followed by judges, geologists, engineers, architects, doctors, and other qualified professionals, inclusive of pedagogical and cultural workers, teachers, actors, and musicians. Nevertheless, both skilled and unskilled laborers, domestic servants, and cooks also had an important position among the immigrants to Bosnia and Herzegovina. All these had a considerable effect on the changes in the way of life, which then, mainly in the towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina, included the introduction of a number of advancements that had not been common there up until that time. In the period before World War I, the highest numbers of Czechs were in Sarajevo (1,702), in Tuzla (415), in Banja Luka (409) (data from 1910 census) and also in Mostar, Brčko, Zenica, Usora and in Bosanski Brod.

Migration from the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy to rural Bosnia was not as massive and easy as the one to towns. Farmland was held by Muslim beys and the land that could be leased required extensive clearing (the extractions of rocks, stumps, roots, etc.) before it could be cultivated. In order to attract new settlers from the lands inside the Habsburg Empire to rural areas, the Austrian authorities initiated a goal-driven campaign in 1890. The campaign was finished in 1906 but had not evoked much of a response in Bohemia. However, it had appealed to some Czech emigrants from Volhynia in the Ukraine, which was a part of tsarist Russia. Czech peasants had gone to Ukrainian Volhynia at the end of the 1860s and in the 1870s to improve their living conditions (Valášková et al. 1997:9-20). Apparently, the most important reason for their departure from Volhynia was pressure from the tsarist

² Jičín – a town in Eastern Bohemia

authorities on the new settlers to convert to Orthodox Christianity. For this reason, some of them decided to return to the protection of the Austrian state and settled several agricultural districts along the Sava River. From 1894 to 1896, these Czech migrants created compact Czech rural enclaves in the districts of Nova Ves, Mačino Brdo, Vranduk, Malica, and Detlački Lug.

Contemporary eyewitnesses and independent observers agreed that the conditions for farming for the newly-settled farmers in Bosnia and Herzegovina were quite hard, and the creation of a prosperous farmstead demanded considerable effort and ingenuity (Auerhan 1930). In some areas, for example in Detlački Lug, the situation was so complicated that the immigrants left the allotted land and went back to Volhynia. As a result, only four Czech families stayed in Detlački Lug. Czechs often compensated for the low crop yields by earning extra money through various handicraft activities and part-time subsistence farming. It was their handicraft skills that made them beneficial to the other ethnic groups around them.

The goal-driven campaign which took place in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the years 1890 – 1906 was carried out according to the official statistics published in the work *Bericht über die Verwaltung von Bosnien und Hercegovina* from 1906 with the following result:

A total of 1,817 families with 9,660 members settled in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina and were allotted 21,893 ha of land. According to nationality, 830 families were Polish, 365 Ruthenian, 331 German and 107 Czech. Hungarians, Italians and Slovaks were represented among other nationalities. In this way, 23 Czech families came originally to Nova Ves in 1894, 25 Czech families to Mačino Brdo in 1896, 26 families to Vranduk and 22 families to Malica. (Uherek et al. 2000:46)

The Life of Czechs in the Environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina before 1992

The life of an immigrant group in an occupied or colonized country that is occupied or colonized by the state from which the immigrants come has its own specific features. After the migration, specifically to towns, no signs of disorganization or uprooting were noticed, such as those described for instance by William Isaac Thomas or Robert Ezra Park (Park 1967:105-110 [1925]). Although the immigrants moved to a culturally different area, it was they who established the rules of interaction. Particularly the towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina become rapidly Europeanized. New Christian quarters were created there, water mains were run into towns, canalization was built together with public lighting, public transport, parks, theaters, libraries, post offices, barracks, officers' casinos, Christian schools, and a new system of medical care was introduced. Especially in towns the percentage of the Christian population steeply rose. A notable example is Sarajevo.

Until 1878, Sarajevo was mostly a Muslim city. In 1879, a total number of 21,377 inhabitants were living there, of whom 69.45% were Muslim, 17.52% were Orthodox (i.e. Serbian), 1.9% were Jews, and 3.26% were Catholics (678 Catholics in total) (Kreševljaković 1969: 38). The census of 1910 lists 51,909 inhabitants of the city, which means that their number had more than doubled. There were 17,224 Catholics there then, thus their number compared to that in 1879 rose 25 times. There were 4,703 Orthodox Christians in the city in 1910, and 4,320 members of the Jewish community. The number of Muslims in absolute numbers also grew owing to immigration and a higher birth rate, but their percentage in the urban population was only 48% in 1910.

The Habsburg Monarchy took the cultural specifics of the Muslim population into consideration, but only in the most urgent cases. For example, it introduced an institute of official female doctors, even though only men were allowed to practice medicine in the Austrian monarchy, for Muslim women had been refusing to be examined by male

doctors; however, such measures were rather sporadic.

Immigration from the Austrian Empire to Bosnia and Herzegovina was not homogeneous in terms of language and culture. Czechs were able to communicate in German in public, yet they had their own language and feeling of solidarity. Therefore, soon after their arrival, they started to create informal institutions for meetings of compatriots and communication in Czech in cities. These were primarily roundtable societies, which met in local restaurants. Most of these societies ceased to exist without leaving precise records about them. The first recorded Czech society in Sarajevo was Kroužek mládenců (Bachelors' Circle) from 1885. From 1896 Český vzdělávací spolek Palacký (Czech Educational Circle Palacký) functioned in Sarajevo. In 1898 Český vzdělávací spolek Palacký changed its name into Český lidově vzdělávací odbor (Czech Union for the Education of the People) and in 1900 Kroužek mládenců took the name Česká společnost (Czech Society). Both institutions were free associations without approved regulations, and we have hardly any information about them.³ According to the minutes by Josef Liebecait, "...they had only a single aim in view: to maintain the Czech spirit among the countrymen by various entertaining projects, common trips and lectures" (Liebecait 1930:13).

At the end of 1905, the Český lidově vzdělávací odbor and the Česká společnost together created the Česká beseda v Sarajevu (Czech Club in Sarajevo), which was registered by the Provincial Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 16th November 1905. As it arises from the Česká beseda Statutes, it was an ethnically exclusive organization for the Czechs living in Sarajevo, which could, however, also be attended by Czechs staying in Sarajevo only temporarily or by citizens of "another Slavic nationality." They had a statute of "guests," or rather

"permanent guests" (they differed from the members in that they did not have the right to vote and could not be elected to the Beseda's executive body). New members of the society were accepted by an elected committee of the Beseda. The members paid a monthly fee and formed the highest executive body of the Beseda, which was a general meeting. Membership was annulled for those who voluntarily left the Beseda or were expelled by the committee and those who "left Sarajevo" (Stanovy 1906). In addition to Česká beseda, a branch of Svaz českých turistů (Federation of Czech Tourists) also functioned before World War I and Společnost žen a dívek (Society of Women and Girls) between the wars. In addition, there was a Czech postschool⁴ here in the period between the world wars.

The reason for the creation of the formal social institutions in Sarajevo was that it was a large city in which informal mutual contacts could only affect a part of the group. In smaller settlements, where the members of Czech enclaves lived, the individual families met face to face in everyday communication and did not need to create formal social institutions. The situation changed in 1918, when independent Yugoslavia was created and the Czechs became an ethnic minority on the territory of a foreign country - not an Austrian minority, however, but a Czechoslovakian minority; for at the same time that independent Yugoslavia was formed, independent Czechoslovakia was also created.

Czechs in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the most part welcomed the state-formation process in Czechoslovakia and openly showed their loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic by creating a network of minority organizations called Česká or Československá Besedas. These organizations functioned in a total of 12 towns and villages in the 1920s and 1930s. The first were formed in cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Prijedor, Mostar, and Banja Luka, where the population was scattered. In

³ These free associations were mentioned in the Second Annual Report of the Czechoslovak Community in Sarajevo 1929-1930 (Liebecait 1930).

⁴ On Sundays the postschools organized teaching in the Czech language.

rural areas, Czech Besedas were only formed in two enclaves: in Nova Ves in 1921 and in Mačino Brdo in 1934.

The Czech Besedas were primarily an institution of minority communication, but they also functioned as restaurants, libraries, and educational centers. Additionally, concerts, dance performances, balls, Shrovetide carnival processions, and feasts of St. Catherine were held there. They furthermore welcomed in the New Year, Easter, celebrated harvest festivals, played theater, and the Besedas even served as centers for dance ensembles and music orchestras. Loyalty to their country of origin was shown by celebrating the birthday of the first Czechoslovak president T. G. Masaryk and 28th October, the day of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic. Each Beseda created a slightly different cycle of feast days and anniversaries to celebrate. The Beseda in Sarajevo had a civic character and this was reflected in their activity that Czech opera singers and professional musicians stayed in Sarajevo. The Besedas in Tuzla and Zenica belonged to technical intelligentsia; the Besedas in Nova Ves and Mačino Brdo had a rural character. Obviously, not all Czechs visited Besedas in towns. We calculated that in Sarajevo it was approximately 30% to 50% people of the Czech origin in the town who did visit the Beseda.

A process parallel to the institutionalization of minority life in Czech enclaves in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a decrease in the number of members of the minority and an assimilation of its parts into the majority culture.

After the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, part of the minority gradually left Bosnia and Herzegovina and returned to Czechoslovakia. It arises already from Rawenstein's Laws that migration has a selective character. It may be supposed that it was mainly those who had prerequisites for integration into the Bosnian milieu that stayed in the new environment. That means that they had gained a certain level of social position, property, had found good employment, they liked it there, or they just did not have anywhere to return.

However, the process of assimilation into the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina was of a specific nature. There was no parity of the minority when compared to the majority population, but three large groups (i.e. Muslims, Croats, and Serbs) who had higher or lower prestige in relation to the Czech enclaves. Much is implied by the question of intermarriages which has been studied in the Czech population in Sarajevo:

The most complete data that we have about the Czechs in Sarajevo before World War II come from 1910. In that year, during the official census, the Česká Beseda in Sarajevo, or rather one of its members, an official in the Provincial Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina Jan Zapletal, made a register of the Czechs in Sarajevo. The Česká beseda published this register in 1910, updating it continuously within the bounds of their possibilities and published it again in 1913 (Zapletal 1913).

The register from 1913 contains a total of 990 names representing individual Czech families, or rather Czech households, including the names of single individuals. The total number of the individual Czechs, that is to say single or living in Sarajevo without their spouse is 402 in the register. The rest, thus the other 588 persons listed, formed a household with someone, for the most part a family with children. Based on this register, it is possible to determine that 1,702 Czechs lived in Sarajevo in 1910 and 1,986 Czechs in 1913. It is also possible to calculate that from the 588 households having several members, there were 202 intermarriages already in 1913. These mixed marriages either were childless or had between one and six children. In a considerable majority of the intermarriages, it was the husband who was of Czech origin, while his partner came from a different ethnic group. The reason for the exceptions being so rare may be that women who married a member of a different ethnic group stopped speaking Czech at home, and the nationality was derived from the language of communication in the census. For this reason, they were not included among Czechs.

The authors of the register recorded the following types of mixed marriages. The most numerous intermarriages were Czech-Croatian, and there were 77 in Sarajevo, i.e. 38%. The second place was taken by the mixed marriages identified as Czech-German, namely with the wife speaking German. In the register, we have found 66 of this type, i.e. 33% out of the total number of intermarriages. Another large group was formed by Czech-Hungarian mixed marriages, the number of which in the register was 26, which formed 13% of all intermarriages. The other types of mixed marriages were already less common. 12 marriage contracts were signed between Czech men and Slovenian women, i.e. 6%. 8 Czech men had taken marriage vows with Serbian women, i.e. 4%, and 5 each with Italian and Polish women, thus 2.5% each. In three instances, the nationality of the partner was not listed.

From our list, we can see that the number of marriages formed with partners from other ethnic groups does not correspond to their proportional representation in the locality. During the census of 1910, the official

statistical data registered 36,400 inhabitants in Sarajevo speaking Serbo-Croatian (70.1%), out of which approximately 18,400 were Bosnian Muslims, 8,400 were Serbian, and 9,600 Croatian (on the basis of the statistics of Sarajevo inhabitants according to their language of communication, we have estimated the number of the Muslims from other states to be 60, out of whom 31 were from Turkey). The most frequently represented group of inhabitants of the town, the Muslims, did not form a part of the existent intermarriages with Czechs in 1910 at all. Of the three most populous groups in Sarajevo, only the Croatian group can be considered as preferred in terms of the choice of a partner (the percentage of the partners selected for matrimony exceeds the representation of the Croats in percentage in the town by twofold – 18.49%). However, if we wanted to make an order of preferences in the choice of partners in the intermarriages in 1913 in relation to the availability of partners, the result would be following [Table 1]:

Table 1: Marriage Preferences of Czechs living in Sarajevo in 1913

Order	The type of the intermarriage with Czechs	Share of the inhabitants of the nationality in the city	Share of the intermarriages with the Czechs	Index ¹
1	Hungarian	2.68%	13%	0.15
2	Slovenian	1.52%	6%	0.25
3	Italian	0.90%	2.5%	0.36
4	German (Austrian)	10.1%	33%	0.30
5	Polish	1.14%	2.5%	0.46
6	Croatian	18.49%	38%	0.49
7	Serbian	16.18%	4%	4.05

¹ The “index” is a quotient of the percentage of people of the respective nationality in the City of Sarajevo and of the percentage of the intermarriages with the Czechs.

The resulting order of preferences (which, however, cannot have a completely definitive informative value since we do not know how many intermarriages had already been formed by Czechs before their arrival in Sarajevo) implies two realities. Firstly, it points out the important part played by the affiliation to a creed in a more intimate communication between ethnic groups (a preference for partners of the Catholic creed is evident), and secondly, it shows a preference for partners who were also foreigners in the given environment and consequently were not so strongly bound within relational, local, and other formal and informal ties created in the long term. A certain exception was made in the case Croats here (Catholic population), for these can also be included in the preferred group, because the number of the actually selected partners also here clearly exceeds the amount of partners that would be hypothetically chosen in a case of an accidental selection without being affected by ethnic, creed, property, educational, or any other barrier (that means Index 1). On the other hand, it is necessary to bear in mind that there were also a significant number of foreigners among the Croats in Sarajevo.

The obtained data do not confirm that an important part was played by a language affinity when selecting partners in intermarriages. Not even Slavic solidarity is expressed by the preferences (Uherek 1998:135-136)

Based on the register from 1913, it was the ethnically endogamous marriages with Czechs that were undeniably the most preferred. Quantification of this data is, however, irrelevant, because it is not known who got married in Sarajevo and who had come with their spouse. (Admittedly, it may be similar in the case of intermarriages of Czech and German speakers.)

We can also read in the register of Czechs in Sarajevo that a total of 316 children had been born to intermarriages of the Czech community by 1910, who were not counted

among Czechs by the authors of the register, but we may suppose that a part of them inclined towards Czech language and culture and later declared themselves to be of Czech nationality.

The trend of creedal endogamy also continued after 1918. There is no information about a marriage with a member of the Muslim faith between the wars (only the variant of a Czech woman and a Muslim man would be considered). Marriages of this type do not appear until after World War II.

The activity of the Czech Besedas and other minority societies was interrupted in 1941 by the war. After 1945, it was only partially renewed. Czech enclaves saw a decrease in the number of their members again owing to re-immigration to Bohemia, which occurred between 1945 and 1948. In the 1950s and 1960s, most Czech Besedas disappeared and Czech social life in Bosnia and Herzegovina developed only in rural settlements, primarily in Mačino Brdo and Nova Ves.

The progress in the process of assimilation of Czechs in the environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina is shown in table 2 based on censuses.

Table 2: Czechs in Bosnia & Herzegovina

Year	Number of Czechs
1921	5,886
1948	1,978
1953	1,638
1961	1,083
1971	871
1981	639

A decrease in the number of people claiming Czech nationality in Sarajevo also corresponds with the tendency suggested by the table. In 1981, only 129 people claimed to be of Czech nationality, which made up less than 0.0003% of the total number of the inhabitants of Sarajevo (448,500).

In the Independent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina: the war years

Bosnia and Herzegovina was declared an independent state on 5th April 1992, and the first years of its existence were marked by a civil war, which lasted until 1995. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the formation of newly independent states were both accompanied by nationalist rhetoric. The construct of a South-Slavonic nationality as an umbrella identity started to lose its credibility even before the break-up of the state. Thus a way opened for the revival and establishment of identities that were connected to the ethnic arrangement before the creation of the communist state after World War II. Tone Bringa, in his book *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* includes testimony that implies that a number of children in Bosnian schools in the 1960s and 1970s did not even know that they could declare a national identity other than Yugoslavian (Bringa 1995:4). Their parents did not emphasize their Serbian, Croatian, or Muslim provenance to them in any way. Nevertheless, they gave them Orthodox, Catholic, or Muslim first names. In several years, the situation had completely changed. Not only could every member of a family be assured in a short time to which nation they belonged, but due to the dissimilarity of the first names was each local inhabitant able to deduce to which nationality someone belonged without even knowing them. People with a Catholic first name were identified as Croats, people with the Orthodox one as Serbian, and with a Muslim one as Muslims. "It was as if socialist Yugoslavia was determined to defy the modern world and maintain pre-modern structures intact" (Hann 1995:81).

The descendants of Czech immigrants to Bosnia and Herzegovina lived in intermarriages now and the greater part was either of the Catholic creed or creedless with Catholic names. For that reason, they could be identified as Croats. Of course, it was the idea of South-Slavism that appealed to them most. Since the term covered the ethnic identities, it could also be applied to them,

and the Czechs did not have to consider themselves as a minority. However, with the end of the Yugoslavian nationality, many began to think more about their origin, and Czech ethnicity for the Czechs themselves within their own plurality of identities started to play a more important part.

During the period of heightened tensions at the beginning of the 1990s, there were also other factors for the ranking of Czech ethnicity among important determiners of identity for the people of Czech origin in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Czechoslovakia became a democratic country, its world prestige increased, and the contacts between Czechoslovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina could be more intensive, that is not only personal, but also commercial relations. At the same time, during the period of heightened tensions and later even during the war, the inhabitants of the affected areas were looking for a point of support outside the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina where they could take refuge if need be or where they could ask for help.

Thus, foreign origin became a value in a country being shaken by war. However, this did not hold true for Czechs everywhere. In the areas controlled by Croatian and Muslim armed forces, Czech provenance and connections with the Czech lands were prestigious, for the Czech Republic was sending humanitarian aid to Muslim-Croatian Bosnia, Czech doctors worked in Sarajevo, and the Czech president at that time, Václav Havel, was personally involved in the peace process.

On the other hand, Havel's statements against Serbian representatives were known, and Czech enclaves existed not only in the areas controlled by Croats and Muslims, but also in the areas controlled by Serbians.

In the areas controlled by Croats and Muslims, it was then possible and prestigious to claim to be Czech, but in the Serbian areas it was dangerous. Considering the fact that the Czechs were also Catholics and thus a group close to Croats in the eyes of the other ethnic groups living in Bosnia

and Herzegovina, they were in danger of being killed or under better circumstances merely banished in the so-called Republika Srpska (Serbian Republic). If they were identified as Croats, they really were persecuted in several cases. Having been persecuted by the Serbs, the inhabitants of Czech origin who had lived in Derventa, for example, went to the Czech Republic. However, particularly in compact rural settlements, the local Serbian population knew that those were Czechs not Croats, so it did not come to massive violence. However, the Czechs in Republika Srpska did not emphasize their origin and tried to keep a low profile during the war.

Thus, while the ethnic difference of the Czechs was suppressed in public in wartime Republika Srpska, it became valuable in the areas controlled by Muslim and Croatian armies. An external manifestation of this value was the restoration of the formal minority organizations that had closed twenty or more years earlier.

The first of these organizations was restored in the besieged Sarajevo. The Společnost bosensko-českého přátelství (Bosnian-Czech Friendship Society) and Sněžka, a humanitarian organization directly associated to it, were formed in 1993 based on a common initiative of the descendants of Czech immigrants and several local influential Muslim families. It is interesting that among the initiators of the foundation of the organization were only a few members of the old Czech families that had immigrated to Sarajevo at the turn of the 20th century. From the Czech side, the basic stimuli mostly came from people who had immigrated to Sarajevo from the Czech rural enclaves along the Sava River, in Croatian Slavonia, or in Serbian Banat during the existence of Yugoslavian state. These people had never experienced life in the Sarajevoan Czech societies during the period between the two world wars and just after World War II, but, on the other hand, they knew the Czech language and had knowledge of Czech culture.

One initiator who later also became the chairperson of the society was the director of the Sarajevo transit authority. He was not of Czech origin but had leanings towards the Czech Republic and also had good business relations with it, for trams bought in the Czech Republic were used in Sarajevo. Another initiator of the society was a Muslim businessman who had once, under communist Yugoslavia, been in Czechoslovakia as a sales representative. Another initiator was a Muslim owner of a Sarajevo travel agency and a retired officer of Czech origin who had come to Sarajevo from a Czech enclave in Serbian Banat in the 1980s. A number of other people also founded the society. An important role for the formation of the society was played by a favorite Sarajevo television presenter of Czech origin who helped to gain the necessary publicity for the newly created social ties. Descendants of the old Czech Sarajevo families, but also a number of Muslim intellectuals who had nothing in common with the Czech Republic, but were merely sympathizers, were subsequently invited into the society. The society used the Bosnian language and it had 219 members already on 30th August 1994, while in 1981, the number of persons in Sarajevo who had claimed to be of Czech nationality was 129. Thirty-two percent of the society was of Czech origin through at least one parent. The other members belonged mainly to the Bosnian middle class, the intelligentsia educated either technically or in the humanities.

Already during the war, the organization managed to arrange several prestigious humanitarian and cultural events that had a wider, rather than local, impact. After the war, however, the organization ceased to be attractive for quite a few people who were not of Czech origin. They stopped supporting it and were looking for a way of expressing themselves in organizations with stronger ties to the local environment. On the contrary, it was too undefined and cosmopolitan for a number of old residents of Czech origin. It was not that old,

ethnically closed Czech Beseda as they had known it from the time before the Second World War. Therefore, a part of the membership base of Czech origin left the Sdružení bosensko českého přátelství and founded a new organization, Česká beseda, which is a more traditional organization, an ethnically closed society of Czechs (Uherek 1998: 134-143). Both organizations have worked in tandem and form an institutional framework of a minority whose members are scattered all over the town and could hardly communicate with each other without a formal institution.

Not all formal Czech organizations were formed during the war in the areas controlled by Croatian and Muslim armies only thanks to the activity of the local people. In Tuzla, the impulse for the creation of a compatriot organization was given by a Czech student of ethnology who was earning some money on the side as a journalist. During the war he also spent some time on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and also visited Tuzla, where families of Czech origin live. He found accommodation with one of them, lived through a part of the blockade of the town, developed good contacts with the local military headquarters, and found out that a high number of families of Czech origin, who had come here at the turn of the 20th century as coal miners, mine engineers, railwaymen, etc., lived in the industrial town. In an attempt to help his countrymen in a languishing town, he gave an impulse for a creation of a compatriot organization of the Czechs in Tuzla, whose task it was to arrange cultural events, organize humanitarian aid from the Czech Republic, make economic contacts with Czech companies, etc. Here, the ethnic principle of the Czech organization was not based on the language and culture, but on their country of origin or the country of origin of a member of their family (anyone who had been born in the Czech lands, anyone whose ancestors had been born in the Czech lands, or whose spouse or one of their parents was of Czech origin could become a member of the

organization. Udruženje građana českog porijekla – Tuzla was founded in 1993 and soon it had about 500 members. It became actively involved in the social life of the town. The journalist and ethnographer who had helped to found the ethnic organization helped to organize a humanitarian project for it in the Czech Republic. The sugar, however, that was dispatched by truck from the Czech Republic for the besieged Tuzla, got lost just before the destination.

The cooperation of a Czech citizen with the inhabitants of Bosnia on the revitalization of Czech ethnicity was also recorded in Zenica. Also during the renewal of the compatriotic movement on the territory of the former Yugoslavia after 1945, an important part was played by impulses from the Czech homeland. It points to an important fact. In a period when a society of formal immigrants has already been well integrated in the local environment, the motivation for the creation of an ethnic network can hardly only be the maintenance of old customs or cultural traditions for their own sake. People are usually too pragmatic for that. However, as in this case, the motivation can be the restoration of contacts with the country of origin and the creation of a network of people of similar interests in the local environment (Uherek 1999).

A solid institutional framework proved to be very important for the realistic existence of minorities in the urban environment not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in Ukraine, in Russia, in Kazakhstan, and in other areas of post-Communist Europe. This does not apply only for the Czechs. About 25 ethnic societies were created only in Sarajevo in 1993.⁶ The need for such societies had not disappeared with the war. Nevertheless, their function changed. They are a certain kind of social emancipation. When the political situation improved in 1998, Czech ethnic societies were formed, even in the Serbian Republic, although the actual reasons of material want or

⁶ An evaluation by a Secretary of *Společnost bosensko-českého přátelství*.

expectations of direct foreign help no longer existed.

The Present

Ten years after the cessation of the military conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a country whose future is uncertain. It is a multiethnic society in the sense that there are many ethnic groups living in it. The problematic point is that these ethnic groups are more able successfully to define what divides them rather than to determine what binds them within one state. In this multiethnic atmosphere of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, minorities are rather overlooked or seen by the major competing groups more from a pragmatic point of view as a potential ally or enemy.

The Czech minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not in conflict with any of the competing groups presently. Its members mostly live in intermarriages and only a part of them use Czech as their mother tongue; some of them cannot speak Czech at all. Cooperation with the country where their ancestors were born, however, offers certain opportunities to create a new local and international social network, enrich their spiritual life, and seek opportunity for cultural and educational activities. In 2004, there were eight Czech compatriotic organizations with approximately 1,000 members registered to them on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is an almost unbelievable number considering the fact that in the census of 1981 a total of 639 persons claimed to be of Czech nationality and in the 1990s Czechs emigrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina and not vice versa. On the other hand, the number is understandable if we take into consideration that not all organizations are ethnically exclusive, and that a number of their members come from mixed marriages and thus can select their declared ethnicity.

Four compatriotic organizations are in the territory controlled by Croats during the war, and four are on the territory of the so-called Republika Srpska.

All these organizations started to appear in Republika Srpska only after the war. Between 1996 and 1998, the situation was gradually becoming stabilized and the fear of claiming membership in another ethnic group disappeared. A more intensive activity of the societies was first renewed in the compact rural enclaves of Nova Ves and Mačino Brdo, where Czech has been actively used up to the present and where people had met regularly for celebrations of the anniversaries of the traditional Catholic calendar regardless of whether they had a functioning Czech organization or not. Today, when people in the compact Czech enclaves do not fear persecution, they meet regularly every week for an informal gathering. They arrange dance parties, sing together, and celebrate holidays. Each enclave considers different celebrations to be of key importance.

In Nova Ves, celebrations are organized on St. Václav's (Wenceslas) Day, a patron saint of the Czechs (September 28) or on the feast of St. Kateřina (Catherine, November 25). They also celebrate Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter. For the gatherings, they have been using a newly renovated Czech clubhouse, a one-storey building the size of a family house, including a social hall, reconstructed with a contribution from the Czech Republic. After reconstruction, it was reopened in 2000 (Plochová 2001). Similarly, the Czech Republic currently has been reconstructing a clubhouse in Prijedor.

In Mačino Brdo, besides the major Catholic religious holidays such as Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter, there are also other opportunities for gatherings, such as annual masquerade rounds or Shrovetide carnivals held in February, mostly on the Saturday before Ash Wednesday. These are movable holidays that have the character of Bacchic celebrations with singing, alcohol, pranks, and disguise. In the church calendar, they give space to unrestrained merriment before the long period of Lent, which lasts from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Shrovetide is also celebrated this way in numerous villages in the Czech Republic, although hardly anyone

fasts in the secularized Czech Republic from Ash Wednesday until Easter.

In Mačino Brdo, the local Česká beseda has a relatively large continuously preserved society library where we can still find prints from the 1920s and 1930s.

In towns, the exhibitions and lectures on eminent compatriots living and working in Bosnia and Herzegovina predominantly under Austria-Hungary are important markers of the society activity. Minorities sometimes coordinate their activities, and thanks to this they can pool their means. In Banja Luka, they acquired a small hall with two adjacent offices, and each minority has the space available once a week. They also have several computers here and can offer a space for youth education. The compatriot organizations in Banja Luka, Sarajevo, and Mačino Brdo publish their own newsletters which come out as often as financial means allow.

Also, minority language teaching takes place within the framework of minority activities. The Czech Republic also provides for improvement in Czech by means of courses in the Czech Republic, so, paradoxically, it is the members of the oldest generation and surprisingly some young descendants of Czech immigrants between 20 and 30 years of age who speak Czech the best today. The Czech side also offers scholarships for those who are interested in the study of the Czech language at Czech universities. However, only few persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina have used this opportunity. Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens are required to get a visa to the states of the European Union and the neighboring countries. In the case of a journey to the Czech Republic, it is not only the processing of the visa for the country itself that is involved, but also of the transit visas for the countries on the way to the Czech Republic. This is often a very costly matter that exceeds the financial resources of the local inhabitants. In addition, granting a visa is preceded by providing various documents

that are oftentimes hardly available or possible to find.

The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina is anxious to please national minorities. In the near future, a law should come into force about the national minorities living on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Within its framework, the education of the minorities should also be dealt with. This law introduces the right for the so-called "benefit," which means the right for education in your mother tongue and lessons about the history and culture of the country of origin. Pupils can request such complementary education if there are more than five pupils in the class who are members of a different minority. In the case of the Czech minority, such a request will probably only be realistic for education in the two aforementioned rural enclaves, and even that is questionable, for young people of Czech origin frequently leave the rural areas and move to towns not only on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also abroad. A number of Czechs from Bosnia and Herzegovina have also moved into the Czech Republic.

Although the interest of the Czechs from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Czech language and culture has grown considerably in the last decade when compared with the 1960s to 1980s, it cannot be supposed that this would stop the processes of gradual assimilation into the environment of the local society. However, the activities of the enclaves may differ in a number of ways depending on the local political and social situation, which is so problematic that it is primarily those who have a support abroad who have a feeling of security. Bosnian Croats have it, Serbs too, why could Bosnian Czechs not have it as well? Quoting David Chandler: "The overwhelming concern for Bosnian people is security, ... and the state itself has been established on very weak foundations and there is little guarantee that current arrangements, as they stand, will last past international withdrawal" (Chandler 1999:195).

The war, the feeling of insecurity, and ethnicization of the society have changed the priorities of identities. This does not, however, mean that the Czechs in Bosnia and Herzegovina would have only one. Many of them hesitate how to classify themselves in which situation, and many have reconciled themselves to the fact that they will no longer be able to answer this question, although it seemed so easy to answer fifteen years ago.

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