

GERMAN-SLAVIC RELATIONS IN TEXAS AND THE MIDWEST

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A telling incident took place in a small Texas town in 1916: not the greatest year for German-Slavic relations on either side of the Atlantic, one might think. But even at this late date, the German language was still being taught in the public schools of Needville, Texas, about 60 km southwest of Houston, using a book originally published for the St. Louis public elementary schools. In the wartime anti-German hysteria, school authorities in Needville ordered all these textbooks to be gathered and burned, but one copy was rescued and preserved—ironically not by a German-American pupil, but by a Czech girl in the second grade, whose parents spoke German as well as Czech, and wanted her to learn the language. As my essay will demonstrate, this was only the tip of the iceberg. In Texas and much of the Midwest, especially in rural areas, relations between German immigrants and their Czech, Polish, and Sorbian neighbors was for the most part quite friendly. Much of this was based on their cultural affinities which set them apart from Anglo-Americans, and at times united them against a common enemy, one might say.

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grade, whose parents spoke German as well as Czech, and wanted her to learn the language.¹ As my essay will demonstrate, this was only the tip of the iceberg. In Texas and much of the Midwest, especially in rural areas, relations between German immigrants and their Czech, Polish, and Sorbian neighbors was for the most part quite friendly. Much of this was based on their cultural affinities which set them apart from Anglo-Americans, and at times united them against a common enemy, one might say. Nationality politics notwithstanding, they were in agreement in their love of sausage, beer, and polka, so much so that Anglo-Americans in contemporary Texas sometimes have trouble telling Czechs and Germans apart.²

On the other hand, one does occasionally encounter examples of German arrogance and depreciation of Slavic nationalist aspirations in the historical record. A German Catholic newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky editorialized under the headline “Deutsch” on the importance of keeping up the German language, even though it was more difficult than English. It held up the Bohemians as a warning example of what could happen if one did not preserve the ancestral language (without mentioning German Austria’s role in its suppression):

We once had the opportunity in New York to attend an assembly which promoted Pan-Slavic tendencies. There were several hundred Bohemians gathered, they all had great black beards, unpronounceable names and all the other criteria of a noble Bohemian, but—there was hardly a single one who could speak Bohemian. One speaker cut loose in a fiery *Speech* (naturally in German) ...” When he mentioned the “noble Krezyvoklasky, the great Dubsky and the immortal Brscz (who presumably became famous only because of his horrifically unpronounceable name)” the whole hall broke out in laughter because nobody knew who he was talking about.

Please note that this is only a quote and does not represent the views of this author. Czech colleagues who have examined the account believe that the names may be fictitious, and the dating of the alleged assembly is rather nebulous,

¹ E.I. Beard, ‘German Emigration into Fort Bend County, Texas, with an Emphasis on the Needville Area’, *GTHS Journal*, Vol. 13 (Summer 1991), pp. 110–114.

² S.N. Gallup, *Journeys into Czech-Moravian Texas*, College Station, TX 1998, p. 105. I was in e-mail contact with a woman on the staff of Texas A&M University with a German-sounding name and roots in the Schulenburg area, heavily settled by both Czechs and Germans. Inquiring about their relations, I received this reply: “I never knew one from the other. My cousins and I were not taught German, so when there were problems or issues the elders spoke in German as it was probably [not] for the children to know. They all seemed to be part of a very hard working, self-supporting community with an accordion player at every family event. My aunt married into the Hromadka family and another into the Schramek family, which, I believe are both Czech.” E-mail correspondence, A. Lauter nee Seidel, 5 May 2014.

though the article itself appeared a couple of months after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War when German nationalism was at its peak. But it helps explain why smoldering resentments of Slavic nationalists would resurface when German-Americans were on the defensive. Not that there were many local Bohemians to be insulted, the 1870 census lists only seventeen in Louisville, most of them with Germanic names.³

So which is the true picture of German-Slavic relations among American immigrants? Actually, both were, at particular times and places. Texas may represent a best-case scenario, as one scholar with roots in this ethnic community observes: “Despite a history of conflict in Europe, the Czechs and Moravians got along exceptionally well in Texas with their German neighbors.” Or as another Texas scholar put it, “The Germans were a known quantity: the Anglo Americans were not.”⁴ But there were many places in the Midwest where relations were similarly amicable. The pioneer historian of Czech America, Thomas Čapek, writes that “the Čechs [sic] were drawn to the Germans by a similarity, if not identity, in customs and modes of life; besides, educated as many of them had been in German-language schools, the pioneers felt pretty much at home among the Germans—notwithstanding old-country racial antagonisms.”⁵ With respect to antagonisms, the worst-case scenario was doubtless Chicago, particularly during the World War I era, for reasons that will be explored later.

For Czechs, it was clear who was obstructing their linguistic and nationalistic aspirations. However, with the tripartite division of their homeland, Poles in Europe and America had an array of antagonists, of which Germans, not to mention Austrians, were hardly the worst. Also on the part of Germans, the issue of Polish sovereignty pitted narrow nationalism against an abstract republican principle of self-determination, winning it sympathy in many liberal circles. For

³ “Deutsch,” Louisville *Katholischer Glaubensbote*, 28.9.1870, p. 4. Though no plausible documentation for the other two names has been found, it is possible that Dubsky refers to Vilém Dubský, who in 1618 had taken part in the revolt against Habsburg Emperor. A descendant, Baroness Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach, became a prominent 19th century literary figure. Although she sympathized with the Czech nationalist cause, she did not speak the language, J. Bažant, N. Bažantová, F. Starn, eds, *The Czech Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, Durham, NC 2010, pp. 152–3.

⁴ K. Hannan, ‘Ethnic Identity among the Czechs and Moravians in Texas’, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 15 (1996), p. 8; W. Hewitt, ‘The Czechs in Texas: A Study of the Immigration and the Development of Czech Ethnicity’, ms. diss., Austin, TX 1978, p. 68. One study that emphasizes Czech-German antipathies, however, is E. Eckert, *Stones on the Prairie: Acculturation in Texas*, Bloomington, IN 2006, pp. 99–104. But she also quotes a Czech teacher who stated during the Civil War in opposition to the Confederacy, “We have to stick by the Germans” (113).

⁵ T. Čapek, *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America*, Boston 1920, p. 112.

example, Wilhelm Weber had been a supporter of the Polish uprising of 1830 before he emigrated to America and became the editor of the liberal St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*. Its younger but equally liberal competitor, the St. Louis *Westliche Post* also showed “enthusiasm” for the Polish uprising of 1863 on its pages. Forty-eighter political refugees and now Union generals Carl Schurz and Franz Sigel spoke out in favor of the Polish cause, and the country’s leading German newspaper, the influential New Yorker *Staatszeitung*, also lent moral support.⁶ While it surfaces rather infrequently in German immigrant letters, the few writers who did address it, one in 1846 in relation to Austria and four others in the wake of 1863, all showed sympathy with the Polish cause, even though all but one of them was Protestant.⁷ The prime target of their criticism was of course Russia. With bitter spite, a German Catholic miner wrote from Civil War Pennsylvania in 1863: “The despots in Europe are also stoking this fire mightily . . . Emperor Alexander of Russia has 5 warships in the port of New York at the moment, ready to help us. The polar bear should go to Poland and do justice to them first, before putting its paws on American territory.” But at least one correspondent expressed not only Polish sympathies but also a critique of Germans: “the Poles are holding on bravely, and it looks like the Prussians will be taught a lesson because they are suppressing freedom in Germany and Poland.”⁸ Even if Poles were a prime target of the Prussian *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s, German immigrants viewed this more through a confessional than an ethnic lens.⁹

Some of the German-Slavic interactions were simply a consequence of the fact that the latter lacked a critical mass to support a full range of their own institutions. Particularly in smaller communities where their numbers were few and Germans were more established, Slavic immigrants often relied initially on German organizations and facilities. Even in Chicago in the early years of Slavic immigration, the 1870 Report of the German Society, authored by Forty-eighter Fritz Anneke, sounds surprisingly pluralistic and generous: “The Society

⁶ G. Koerner, *Das Deutsche Element in den Vereinigten Staaten*, Cincinnati 1880, p. 317–18; H. Saalberg, ‘The Westliche Post of St. Louis’, ms. diss., Columbia, MO 1967, p. 99; J.S. Pula, *Polish Americans. An Ethnic Community*, New York 1995, p. 10.

⁷ W.D. Kamphoefner, “‘Auch unser Deutschland muss einmal frei warden’: The Immigrant Civil War Experience as a Mirror on Political Conditions in Germany”, in D. Barclay, E. Glaser-Schmidt, (eds.), *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America since 1776*, Cambridge, UK 1997, pp. 87–107, here 104.

⁸ W.D. Kamphoefner, W. Helbich, eds, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters they Wrote Home*, Chapel Hill, NC 2006, pp. 222–3, 178.

⁹ W.D. Kamphoefner, W. Helbich, U. Sommer, eds, *News From the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, Ithaca, NY 1991, pp. 171, 192–94.

must, according to its means, provide aid to each person who turns to it in desperation, and that includes not only Germans, but also Poles, Czechs, and members of other nationalities. Having no representation here, these people thus turn to the Germans in their need, the most closely related nation with whose language they are at least somewhat familiar.”¹⁰ The Czech language summer school founded in the 1870s in Cedar Rapids, although located in the most heavily “Bohemian” county in Iowa, initially met for a time at the German Turner Hall among other venues. Not until 1892 was fundraising begun to erect a permanent building dedicated to the school.¹¹ Likewise in the Slovak immigrant family saga *Out of This Furnace*, set in an industrial suburb near Pittsburgh, the first generation relied on the Turner Hall as a place to drink on Sundays, and for the second generation “an occasional ball at Turner Hall … held … by one or another Slovak society … were the most important social affairs in the First Ward.” Not until the third generation was it reported that “Papa went to the Slovak club” on a Sunday evening. In a place like Chicago, by contrast, Czechs did not need to fall back on the Germans; at least after 1895, they had an impressive facility of their own, the four story Pilsen Sokol on Ashland Avenue.¹²

One striking feature of Czech settlement both in Texas and in the Midwestern states of Nebraska, Iowa, and Wisconsin where they were most concentrated, is the degree to which Czechs settled in proximity to Germans. Looking at the thirty counties in these four states that had the largest “Bohemian” populations, 400 or more in 1900, there were only eleven counties where Czechs outnumbered Germans.

In Linn County, Iowa, there were nearly three Czechs for every German, and there were two other Iowa counties where the German tally did not reach half of the Czech total. But in almost two thirds of the cases, Germans outnumbered Czechs even where the latter had the largest presence.¹³ St. Louis presents a similar case: of some 2,000 Bohemians enumerated in the city in 1860, all but 200 lived in the two wards of the heavily German South Side. This was also where St. John Nepomuk, the nation’s first Bohemian Catholic parish, was

¹⁰ H. Keil, J.B. Jentz, eds, *German Workers in Chicago: A Documentary History of Working-Class Culture from 1850 to World War I*, Urbana, IL 1988, p. 42.

¹¹ According to the 1880 census, Linn County was home to 2,166 of some ten thousand Bohemians in Iowa. D. Langton, ‘The Czech School’, <<http://thegazette.com/article/20140420/TIMEMACHINE/140519746#ixzz32srcMRC0.>>

¹² T. Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, Boston 1941/Pittsburgh 1976, pp. 90, 152, 274.

¹³ Based on 1900 U.S. Census data on the number of Bohemian and German immigrants, accessed via <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/start.php?year=V1900>.

established in 1854; its 1909 edifice to this day features the Stations of the Cross in Czech and a Czech inscription over the door. Given the sequence of migration, in both these rural and urban areas one can be fairly certain that the Czechs arrived later and voluntarily settled among Germans. As Thomas Čapek remarked in 1920, “the march of the Čech [sic] pathfinders in the footsteps of the Germans had not been fortuitous, but a matter of careful premeditation.”¹⁴ This proximity in itself implies a certain affinity, but there is more concrete evidence as well.

Table 1.

Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Texas Counties with >400 Czech (Bohemian) Immigrants, 1900, by Relative Number of German Immigrants

State	County	Czechs	Germans	German % of Czechs
IA	Linn	3198	1100	34
NE	Saline	1885	846	45
NE	Colfax	1728	793	46
TX	Burleson	594	340	57
IA	Johnson	1652	970	59
NE	Butler	1291	772	60
NE	Pawnee	430	314	73
WI	Kewaunee	1737	1400	81
TX	Lavaca	1835	1641	89
NE	Saunders	1178	1117	95
WI	Crawford	562	553	98
IA	Winneshiek	677	789	117
IA	Tama	1277	1658	130
TX	Fayette	2203	3055	139
NE	Fillmore	479	742	155
IA	Howard	435	687	158

¹⁴ <http://www.romeofthewest.com/2007/04/photos-of-saint-john-nepomuk-chapel-in.html>. Čapek, *The Čechs*, 112.

State	County	Czechs	Germans	German % of Czechs
NE	Knox	567	1015	179
WI	Vernon	402	779	194
TX	Austin	877	1973	225
NE	Douglas/Omaha	3348	8373	250
WI	Langlade	479	1205	252
TX	Williamson	405	1201	297
WI	Manitowoc	1666	5923	356
WI	Chippewa	439	2186	498
WI	Racine	890	4874	548
NE	Cuming	429	2571	599
WI	Grant	406	2537	625
WI	La Crosse	549	4397	801
WI	Winnebago	573	8299	1448
WI	Milwaukee	1806	63952	3541

One of these ethnic concentrations with nearly 900 Czechs in 1900 was Austin County, Texas. It was also home to the oldest German settlement in the state, as well as the Cat Spring Agricultural Society, the oldest agricultural society in Texas, founded in 1856, and still keeping its minutes in German down to 1942. These minutes provide abundant evidence that well into the 20th century, Austin County Germans were in many respects a culture and a society set apart. Despite the conflict in Europe that was threatening to spill over across the Atlantic, the Society's 60th Anniversary Fest in the summer of 1916 featured speakers in both German and English, which held true even in the summer of 1917 after America's entry into the war. In other respects, however, the society gave evidence that it was not bound by narrow ethnic chauvinism. During the two decades before the war, its festivities were not bilingual but often trilingual, with "Bohemian" speakers invited to give addresses alongside German and English orators.¹⁵

¹⁵ Cat Spring Agricultural Society, *A Century of Agricultural Progress, 1856–1956*, San Antonio 1956, pp. 255, 278, 281, 284, and *passim*.

Czechs made up a significant minority on the society's membership rolls, easily outnumbering Anglo-Americans. In fact, Jozef Ernst Bergmann, often considered the father of the Czech immigration to Texas, was one of its founding members and was elected its first vice-president.¹⁶ Still, the society was in existence for three decades before the Czech language makes an official appearance in the minutes, when in preparation for the 1887 Harvest Festival: "It was further resolved to arrange for three speakers in German, English and Bohemian." From then on, Czech orators made regular appearances, being mentioned in six of the years between 1888 and 1898. In 1903 there was not only a Czech speaker, but the local lodge #22 of the SPJST, the secular Czech fraternal organization, was expressly invited. From then on, there was a decade long break, but this may simply reflect availability. In May 1914 it was noted that in addition to German and English speakers, "should Frnka of Columbus come to the Festival it will be up to the president to invite him to speak in Bohemian; that is if he desires to make a speech." If in fact Frank Frnka did, this was the last recorded Czech orator. Incidentally, he was a farmer born in Texas of Moravian parents.¹⁷ Nevertheless, even after World War I there are Czech as well as German names among the musicians hired for various dances and festivities, with groups like Prause's Orchestra, the Hillboldt Brass Band, and Herring's Orchestra alternating with the famous Baca's Band from Fayetteville, some 40 km away, which shows up from 1920 all the way into the 1940s, and even the Gold Chain Bohemian Band from Schulenburg, a 65 km drive.¹⁸

This is not the only evidence of trilingual Texas. The biographical sketch of Rudolph Benjamin Spacek, born in 1884 in neighboring Fayette County, says that "Czech was the language spoken at home, but everyday contact with Germans and classes at Professor Hill's German School made him proficient in that tongue as well."¹⁹ (Incidentally, his younger brother was the grandfather of actress Sissy Spacek.) That Czechs should learn German is perhaps not too surprising given the German reputation for cultural hegemony; that Texas Germans would learn Czech is more remarkable. But here is what my department chair, Walter

¹⁶ Cat Spring Agricultural Society, *The Cat Spring Story*, San Antonio 1956, pp. 23–24, 104, 110 and passim; D.Z. Chroust, 'Jozef Ernst Bergmann: "Father" of the Czech-Speaking Immigration in Texas?' *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, Vol. 20 (2006), pp. 48–64.

¹⁷ Cat Spring Agricultural Society, *A Century of...*, pp. 126, 131, 137, 164, 182, 187, 189, 197, 199, 218, 271, and passim.

¹⁸ Ibid., 288–385, passim. Mark Odintz, "SCHULENBURG, TX," Handbook of Texas Online <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hjs11>>, June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association. On the Baca bands, see Gallup, *Czech-Moravian Texas*, 91.

¹⁹ I. Polansky, 'Rudolph B. Spacek, Fayetteville Solid Citizen', <http://www.fayettecountyhistory.org/footprints4.htm>, 1 June 2014.

Buenger, writes about a third-generation Texas German farmer who grew up in the same county: "Grandfather spoke, read, and wrote German and English, and judging from the letters I have read his English was better than most college freshmen these days. (That is not saying much.) He and his mother spoke Czech and I believe read a bit of Czech. I have found some legal documents that seem like tenant agreements in Czech. (Probably for his mother's farm.)"²⁰

Another trilingual location was Spillville, Iowa, the place where Antonin Dvorak composed his New World Symphony. Given Spillville's small size and obscurity down to the present (2012 population: 361), one might ask, why there of all places? The answer is simple: Dvorak had been invited by Czech-American musician Josef Kovarik, who met him while studying in Prague. Kovarik's immigrant father, who was the teacher of the Catholic school in town, was able to instruct in all three of the languages spoken by his pupils: Czech, German and English. In a letter from 1971, his daughter, Anna Mary Kovarik, wrote: "In his records dad states that the average number of pupils in the school was 60 and during the winter season ... the number increased to 110. With this in mind, and knowing that the ages of the children varied from 6 to 12 or older and that the teaching had to be done in three languages, the English, Bohemian and German, one realizes what an enormous task this was."²¹

As late as the 1950s there were farm children who started school in Spillville knowing only Bohemian, but Texas Czechs and Germans stand out even more in their language preservation. The 1940 census shows over 25,000 Texans of the third generation with a Czech mother tongue, and over 70,000 with German. In fact, Texas was the only state in the union where third-generation speakers of German outnumbered those of the second generation, and the same was true for Poles, though with Texas Czechs the second generation held a slight edge. Unfortunately, this data is not broken down by county.²² But the 1970 census enumerated mother tongue at the county level and sampled the entire population. Even at this late date, the isolated settlement of Fredericksburg and its surrounding county, 150 km west of the Texas capital, still had a German speaking majority of 57 percent, 125 years after its founding. But in second

²⁰ Prof. W. Buenger, e-mail communication, 2 June 2014.

²¹ Anna Mary Kovarik, letter of 3 December 1971, quoted by S.A. Klimesh in www.svu2000.org/conferences/2003_Iowa/12.pdf. The founder who gave Spillville its name, Bavarian immigrant Joseph Spielmann, after losing his first wife married a Czech immigrant widow, Anna Komeda. His half of their joint gravestone is in German hers in Czech. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/f.cgi?page=gr&GRid=76188691>.

²² Sixteenth U.S. Census, Series P-15, #10, *Mother Tongue of the White Population*, Washington, DC 1943, p. 20.

place statewide was Lee County, with 35 percent of the population, or more than 40 percent of the whites, claiming German mother tongue, a great historical irony in view of its population makeup.²³ It is home to a heavy concentration of Sorbs (or what the Germans call Wends) from a Slavic language island in eastern Germany that has hung on until the present. A shipload of some 500 people came to Texas in 1854 in part to guard their Lutheran faith which was threatened by the Prussian Union Church, the forced unification of Lutheran and Reformed Protestants. But the Sorbs came also to escape the increasing pressures of Germanization in Prussia. However, they never had a critical mass to maintain their own religious institutions beyond the congregational level, and they allied themselves with the German Missouri Synod, many of whose immigrant founders were similarly motivated by Lutheran separatism. The Sorbs sent their theological candidates to the German Lutheran Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Thus these Sorbs became so Germanized in Texas that into the twenty-first century the Lutheran churches of Giddings and nearby Serbin still offered German-language services once a month. On their church cemeteries one sees dozens of tombstones with German inscriptions, but there is only one at Serbin entirely in Sorbian, and another one a few miles eastwards at Warda that is bilingual, Sorbian and German.

However, one really can't fault the Sorbs; they were just assimilating to the dominant culture in their area and their denomination.²⁴ Incidentally, they hold a rousing picnic every year the fourth Sunday in September. Some years they have featured polka bands from the German Lausitz near the Polish border, but other years they've invited a local Texas Czech band instead.

²³ Calculated from data in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population: General Social and Economic Characteristics*, Vol. 45, Table 119, Social Characteristics for Counties, 906–927. Exact county figures on percentage with German mother tongue are as follows: Gillespie, 57; Lee, 35; Fayette, 28; Washington, 26; Austin, 22; speakers of Czech were not separately enumerated in this source.

²⁴ The standard work on this migration is George R Nielsen, *In Search of a Home: Nineteenth Century Wendish Immigration*, College Station, TX 1989. The original Serbin congregation did split over language issues in 1870, reuniting in 1914, by which time “German had become the common language for most of the people” (p. 103). See also T. Malinkowa, *Shores of Hope: Wends Go Overseas*, Austin, TX 2009. According to her, there was another Wendish settlement in Iowa that “changed first to German and then to English” (p. 210–11). Also available in German as *Ufer der Hoffnung*, Bautzen 1999. In 2001 I took an East German visitor to tour the Wendish Museum in Serbin, and she was delighted to meet one of these Sorbian descendants who spoke fluent German, having grown up with the language.

Illustration 1

Bilingual German-Wendish Tombstone, Warda, Texas



Photo courtesy of Georgie Bernstein Boyce, Abilene, Texas. The hymn verse reads:

Wie wohl ist
mir, o Freund
der Seelen, wen
ich in Deiner
Liebe ruh!

Kak ſbožny
Bym, dyž wot=
pocžuju, moj
Jefu, w twojej
lubofzi.

This was not the only Slavic group that allied itself with German Lutherans. Since the bulk of Slovaks were Catholic, Slovak Lutherans hardly had the numbers to sustain their own denomination or train their own clergy, though they

probably recruited pastors initially from the homeland. But as early as the 1880s some Slovak students were admitted to a German Lutheran seminary. In 1910 the Slovak Synod joined the Synodical Conference which otherwise consisted largely of German Lutherans. Not that all was sweetness and light between the groups. The biggest bone of contention was fraternal organizations, which were as much anathema to conservative Lutherans as they were to Catholics, whereas Slovak fraternal organizations had actually sponsored some of their first congregations. Still, there were apparently no disputes involving language usage.²⁵ And despite these tensions, in 1971 the Slovaks became part of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the largest Lutheran body of German origins, being organized as a separate, non-geographical district of about sixty congregations, located mostly in steel and coal towns of the northeast. The most prominent intellectual heir of this group was Yale theologian Jaroslav Pelikán, descended from two generations of Slovak Lutheran pastors and trained in theology at the Missouri Synod's seminary in St. Louis. A smaller group of about thirty Slovak Lutheran congregations is allied with another Lutheran body, the ELCA, whose origins include both German and Scandinavian roots.²⁶

There was also a small Czech Protestant body tracing its origins back to the Hussites, with the Latin name of Unitas Fratrum, often simply called "Brethren" in Texas. With only a dozen or two congregations, it had similar problems of critical mass, not being large enough to sustain its own seminary to train its clergy. The Brethren solved their problem in much the same way as the Sorbs and the Slovaks did, sending their theological students off to a German-language seminary in St. Louis. But given their more Calvinist orientation, the Brethren chose not the Lutheran seminary but the Evangelical Eden Seminary.²⁷

One sees similar German-Slavic cooperation on the Catholic side. The 1906 U.S. Census of Religious Bodies did a heroic job of tallying language use across the various denominations, including the amazingly wide variety among Catholics: 99 different constellations of single or multiple ethnic languages in parishes, each also classified by whether or not they used English in addition.

²⁵ J.G. Alexander, *The Immigrant Church and Community: Pittsburgh's Slovak Catholics and Lutherans, 1880–1915*, Pittsburgh 1987, pp. 76–83. U.S. *Census of Religious Bodies*, Washington, DC 1916, p. 366.

²⁶ [Http://www.selc.lcms.org/](http://www.selc.lcms.org/); <http://www.svots.edu/content/dr-jaroslav-pelikan-falls-asleep-lord>; <http://www.slovakzionsynod.org/>.

²⁷ At least three Brethren ministers were trained at Eden between 1910 and 1918, and in general the Brethren maintained good relations with the German Evangelical Synod. *Unity of the Brethren in Texas (1855–1966)*, Taylor, TX 1970, p. 35, 76, 164.

Table 2.

Numbers and Membership of Catholic Parishes Classified by Language Use, 1906

Languages	Total Parishes	Total Members	Parishes using no English	Members in Parishes using no English
German only	1,881	1,519,978	584	625,972
Bohemian only	143	154,073	99	111,509
German & Bohemian	40	32,107	16	18,100
Polish only	437	736,150	371	687,871
German & Polish	24	23,180	0	0
French only	723	1,031,530	254	566,689
German & French	42	38,973	1	637
Italian only	291	826,023	165	45,816
German & Italian	9	3,693	1	162
German, Bohemian & Polish	6	4,148	0	0
Bohemian & Polish	2	951	2	951

What stands out in this data is the frequency with which parishes shared German with one of the Slavic languages: Polish or particularly Bohemian, all the more impressive considering the size of the groups. Although there were seven times as many French-speaking as Bohemian Catholics, Bohemians were almost as likely as the French to share parishes with Germans. The contrasts with Italians was even more stark; though they slightly outnumbered Polish Catholics, there were six times as many members in parishes shared between Germans and Poles as there were shared by Germans and Italians. In fact, the latter were even outnumbered by trilingual parishes shared between Germans, Poles, and Bohemians. (But there were only two parishes nationwide shared only by Bohemians and Poles.) So with the possible exception of the Irish, who are subsumed under the English speakers, Germans and Slavic groups were the

most likely to share Catholic nationality parishes. Proximity no doubt played a role here, but much had to do with affinity as well.²⁸

Unfortunately this data is aggregated nationwide, but there are other sources that allow us to focus on German-Slavic cooperation down to the parish level. Some of the evidence is written in stone. The gravestone commemorating four of the founders of a Catholic parish near Schwertner, Texas, about 75 km north of Austin, include Alois Schwertner's inscription in German and three of the other founders' in Czech [Illustration 2a, 2b].²⁹

Illustration 2

Stone commemorating the founders of Holy Trinity Catholic Church, New Corn Hill, near Schwertner, Texas: Bernhard Schwertner in German, Ondrej Kubala in Czech.

Two other Czech founders, Frantisek Kernavek and Cyrill Blazek,
are memorialized on other two sides: Photos courtesy of Marek Vlha, Brno



²⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies, 1906, Part I*, Washington, DC 1910, pp. 118–21.

²⁹ C. Stearns Scarbrough, „SCHWERTNER, TX,” Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hls29>), June 15, 2010, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.



The cornerstone of the church is similarly reflective of this linguistic pluralism, basically saying Holy Trinity in German, Czech, and Latin [Illustration 3a, 3b].

Where is the English, one might ask? Apparently on the side that is mortared into the wall. As the Latin inscription records, the edifice was erected in 1913, under an Irish Bishop named Gallagher and the parish Rector, Moravian-born Wm. J. Skocek. It remains unclear whether the Czech and German founders originated from the same area, but all were from Bohemia or Moravia.³⁰

One gains a more systematic view from a *Schematismus* of German-speaking Catholics in the United States compiled by a priest on his own initiative and published in 1892.³¹ It also tallies members of other nationalities in these parishes,

³⁰ This was the birthplace given in the 1910 Census when Skocek was serving a parish in Austin. According to a passport application, Schwertners originated from Hunersdorf (Hennersdorf?), Bohemia; a Kubala who arrived in Texas in 1912 listed his birthplace as Frykovice [Fryčovice], in eastern Moravia. The parish is named Holy Trinity after the church in Ostravice in Moravia where most of its parishioners originated. ‘Holy Trinity and Corn Hill – Austin Diocese News’, <http://krnavekreunion.webs.com/aboutourfamily.htm>.

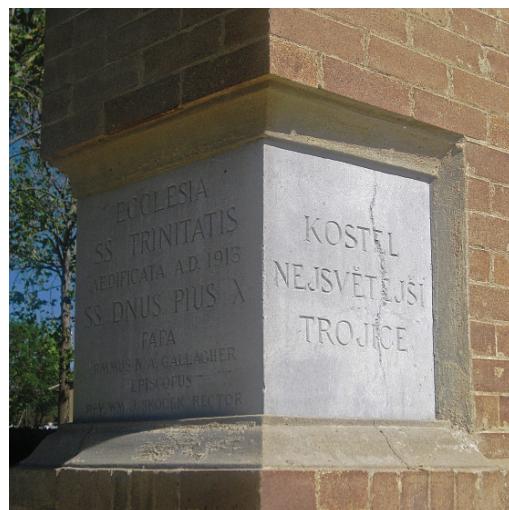
³¹ J. Enzberger, ed., *Schematismus der katholischen Geistlichkeit deutscher Zunge in den Vereinigten Staaten Amerikas*, Milwaukee 1892.

Illustration 3

Cornerstone of Holy Trinity Catholic Church, in German, Czech, and Latin.

The Latin translates: Church of the Most Holy Trinity, erected A.D. 1913,

Most Holy Lord Pius X, Pope; Most Reverend N.A. Gallagher,
Bishop. Rev. Wm. J. Skocek, Rector. Photos courtesy of Marek Vlha, Brno



only four of which were common enough to rate abbreviations: English, French, Polish, and Bohemian (but no Italian!). In the states of Texas, Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin, there were some thirty-five main parishes or branch locations (*Filiale*) listed in this directory where Bohemians or Poles (or in a few instances a combination of both), outnumbered Germans or English speakers. Where there was just a small scattering of Slavic Catholics in a Germanophone parish, they may have had to communicate with their priest with whatever German they could muster. But in most of the cases where a parish had a Slavic majority, these churches were served by priests whose origins indicate that they were probably bilingual. For example, there were a dozen locations where the priest had roots in the Diocese of Budweis (Budowice), and six more with priests from Olmütz (now Olomouc), Moravia, five of them in Texas. Seven were served by priests from the Breslau (Wroclaw) diocese. Ironically, Berlin, Wisconsin (which gave no ethnic breakdown on its members) was served by a Father Czarnowski with roots in Posen (Poznan), whereas Pulaski, Wisconsin and an equally Polish branch parish were served by the Reverend Schneider. However, despite his German name he was very likely bilingual, given his roots in Culm, Posen. Slavic immigrants in Texas were the least likely to be served by someone of their own tongue; about half of their parishes had to make do with priests from Luxembourg, Bamberg, Regensburg, and Rottenburg, not to mention two in the Cat Spring area served by a German-American named Spinneweber from Pittsburgh. But in Nebraska and Wisconsin, the bulk of such parishes were served by people from Czech or Polish areas, many of them with unmistakably Slavic names. The priest at Spillville, Iowa, neglected to give an ethnic breakdown of his parishioners, but he was of indisputably Czech origins: Thomas A. Biley (Bily), who immigrated from Luznic, Bohemia, in 1884.³²

Beyond the churches, another area in which German and Slavic immigrants were sometimes allies and at other times rivals was with respect to language policies in schools, both parochial and public. One German linguist (and chauvinist) argues that German-Americans were the vanguard of a linguistic and philosophical pluralism in the American school system; in fact one of his articles bears that title.³³ There is certainly a case to be made for linguistic pluralism, but it was not always the rule. The most dramatic instance of cooperation was the Bennett and Edwards Law controversies in Wisconsin and Illinois

³² The birthplace was given when Bily naturalized in Houston, TX in 1911. Digitized record accessed through ancestry.com.

³³ H. Kloss, ‘Die Deutschamerikaner als Vorkämpfer eines sprachlichen und weltanschaulichen Pluralismus im amerikanischen Schulwesen’, in *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, Vol. 18 (1983), pp. 217–231.

respectively, involving school laws passed in 1888. These two states enacted identical laws tightening attendance rules and imposing language regulations on parochial as well as public elementary schools. The stumbling stone was the following provision: "No school shall be regarded as a school ... unless is taught therein ... reading, writing, arithmetic, and American history in the English language." The Republican governor of Wisconsin had learned that there were 129 Lutheran schools in his state with no English instruction whatsoever. These laws united German Lutherans and Catholics against a common enemy and mobilized their Slavic ethnic allies, sweeping Republicans from power in both states. Pamphlets attacking the Bennett Law were published in German, Polish, and Bohemian.³⁴ Although there were fewer Republican votes to be lost among Slavic immigrants, one suspects that they were particularly mobilized to turn out in unprecedented numbers for the Democrats. They made themselves felt already in the 1890 city election in Milwaukee, where the Democratic ticket featured a Polish candidate for controller, and the city council ended up with five Polish aldermen, equal with the Americans, and only one behind the Irish, although the Germans had an absolute majority of 19 of the 36 board members.³⁵ At the state level, Wisconsin's congressional delegation was transformed from a 7-2 Republican advantage into an 8-1 Democratic majority, while Democrats took a two-thirds majority in the state legislature, and last but not least, elected a Czech immigrant, Charles Jonas, as lieutenant governor in 1892.³⁶ Illinois saw the election of its first Democratic governor since the Civil War, and the first immigrant and first Chicagoan ever: German John Peter Altgeld, who carried 19 of the 20 Chicago wards with immigrant majorities among the voters. His election was celebrated in the Polish press, and opposition to the Edwards law was one of the few issues it singled out.³⁷ Needless to say, the school laws were quickly rescinded in both states. German Catholics were also subjected to assimilative pressure in Minnesota, but here it was the immigrant Archbishop John Ireland who attempted (with little success) to undermine German Catholic schools by obtaining public funding for English-language Catholic schools. Poles

³⁴ R.J. Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest. Social and Political Conflict, 1888–96*, Chicago 1971, pp. 122–148 (quote 124); L.P. Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School*, Columbia, MO 1987, pp. 187–204.

³⁵ B. Still, *Milwaukee: The History of a City*, Madison, WI 1948, pp. 260–62, 296–97; R.J. Jensen, *Midwest*, 137.

³⁶ R.J. Jensen, *Midwest*, 141–42; C.W. Chrislock, *Charles Jonas (1840–1896): Czech National Liberal, Wisconsin Bourbon Democrat*, Philadelphia 1993, pp. 133–38.

³⁷ *Dziennik Chicagoski*, January 12, 1893, as translated in the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, accessed at the Newberry Library website, <http://flps.newberry.org>.

doubtless saw Germans as their allies there as well, and both would have been further alienated by Ireland's support for the anti-alcohol crusade.³⁸

Besides protecting their parochial schools, German and Slavic immigrants were sometimes allied in efforts to introduce heritage languages into the public school curriculum as well. Although some state laws specified German, most of them provided for instruction in any language requested by the school board or a specific number of parents.³⁹ Nevertheless, Germans were the main beneficiaries of such laws because they were the ones most likely have the critical mass in a community to sustain such a program. But there were instances in which they supported the language aspirations of other groups. German had early on obtained a place in the Milwaukee public schools, but Polish was added in 1907 and Italian shortly thereafter, though the conditions were rather stringent: 75 percent of a neighborhood school's population had to request it. The impact was rather limited with Italian, which was only taught in one school, but by 1913 the city had five grade schools teaching Polish to nearly 2,400 pupils, or about one-sixth or one-seventh of the school age population, or at least a quarter of the number that were attending Polish parochial schools.⁴⁰ In Nebraska in 1913, Germans joined forces with Bohemians and Scandinavians to pass an ethnically neutral law providing for the instruction of any modern European language in any school where the parents of 50 pupils petitioned it, and eight Czech communities took advantage of it.⁴¹

Despite occasional rivalries, in Texas one sees a similar German-Czech coalition supporting their native languages in public schools—schools that were sometimes de-facto parochial schools, even taught by nuns. When an 1871 law required teachers to be certified for competency in English, Fayette County officials petitioned to allow one longtime teacher to be examined in one of the two languages in which he was fluent, Czech or German, because he feared his

³⁸ R.J. Jensen, *Midwest*, 74–76, 207; J. Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*, Chapel Hill, NC 1997, p. 294.

³⁹ H. Kloss, *The American Bilingual Tradition*, 2nd ed, Washington, DC 1998, p. 106–7.

⁴⁰ H. Kloss, *The American...*, 117. According to the 1920 census, there were over 15,000 people of Polish birth or parentage born between 1897 and 1907 living in Milwaukee; D. Praszałowicz, ‘The Cultural Changes of Polish-American Parochial Schools in Milwaukee, 1866–1988’, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 13 (1994), pp. 23–45, here Table 2.

⁴¹ F.C. Luebke, ‘The German-American Alliance in Nebraska’, *Nebraska History*, Vol. 49 (1968), pp. 165–185, here 177–79. A 1911 bill would have forced children to attend three months of public schools unless parochial schools taught in English, but it died in committee (174–75). According to Luebke, “many communities” adopted German-language instruction under the provisions of the law. On Czechs see R. Rosicky, *Czechs in Nebraska*, Omaha 1926, pp. 412–18, who appears oblivious of the interethnic cooperation.

command of English was insufficient. After a year's grace period he managed to pass the English exam, and continued to instruct in all three languages in the public schools. Not until 1905 did Texas law require English as medium of instruction, and even then it allowed the teaching of foreign languages as a subject in elementary schools. Despite the nationalistic wave of World War I and the English-only crusading of the Ku Klux Klan, German was reintroduced into a couple of communities, and seven districts taught Czech in 1932.⁴²

This cooperation stood in contrast to patterns in most Northern industrial cities. In 1900 when the Chicago *Zgoda* was crusading for Polish language rights within the Catholic Church, it criticized not only the zealous Americanizer, Minnesota Archbishop John Ireland and his fellow Irishman Archbishop John Joseph Keane of Dubuque, Iowa, but also Michigan Bishop Frederick Eis, a German native who immigrated at age 12 and was trained in the United States. The following year, reporting on the Polish Catholic Congress, *Zgoda* warned: "The Polish people are on the verge of taking drastic steps if the bishops do not agree to have the Polish priests hold higher offices, such as vicar and bishop, or higher. Why doesn't Bishop Eis or Bishop Messner name a Polish priest for promotion?": the latter the Swiss-German bishop Sebastian Messner of Green Bay, the future Archbishop of Milwaukee. Eis had issued a directive requiring English to be preached in at least one of the weekly masses throughout his diocese, a directive quickly echoed by Messner.⁴³

Cleveland, which had a program of German instruction in its public schools, was the scene of similar tensions. The 1906 Cleveland Education Survey reported that in the city, "about half [of the Bohemians] are Catholic and the rest are free-thinkers ... the common Slavic feeling manifests itself most strongly in antipathy to the German language."⁴⁴ A 1907 petition to eliminate German instruction signed by over 13,000 supporters was presented to the school board by a group calling itself the "Taxpayers' Educational League," but drafted by four men with unmistakably Polish names. In the discussion of the issue after 1914, a Polish immigrant expressed his resentment that the German language was forced on Poles back in Europe.⁴⁵ Jews from these areas tended to favor the German language. Among an eight member delegation protesting the reduction

⁴² H. Kloss, *American Bilingual...*, 227–29; C.K. Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas*, College Station, TX 2004, pp. 32–55.

⁴³ P. Gleason, *The Conservative Reformers: German-American Catholics and the Social Order*, South Bend, IN 1968, pp. 49–50.

⁴⁴ L. Ayers, *Cleveland Education Survey*, Vol. 20, pp. 59–60.

⁴⁵ L.L. Sommerfeld, 'An Historical Descriptive Study of the Circumstances that Led to the Elimination of German from the Cleveland Schools', ms. diss., Kent, OH 1986, pp. 113–14, 123, 137.

of German instruction in Cleveland were two Austrian Jewish members, one from Moravia and the other from Krakow. Similarly in St. Louis, a committee formed in 1878 to defend German instruction in the city's elementary schools was headed up by Reform Rabbi Solomon Sonnenschein.⁴⁶

Chicago shows a gradual deterioration of German-Slavic relations by the end of the nineteenth century. During the 1870s and 1880s, Germans and Bohemians had often been allied in the labor movement, resisting, for example, the temperance crusade of Anglo-Irish leaders of the Brotherhood of Carpenters. It was police violence against Bohemian and German strikers that triggered the protest meeting that led to the Haymarket Affair, and when the Haymarket Martyrs Monument was dedicated in 1893, speeches were held in English, German, Bohemian, and Polish.⁴⁷ But increasingly, issues of language came between them. Germans had succeeded in placing their language in the public school curriculum, but demands for equal treatment, especially from Bohemians, had been rebuffed. The *Illinois Staatszeitung* complained in 1893: "The total number of votes of the Irish, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Bohemians, and Poles does not exceed the German votes alone, and yet, the Swedes and Bohemians tell the school board that their language has as much right to be taught in the public schools as the German." It was often argued that the German language was special compared to other "less important" tongues. That is apparent in the arguments advanced at an 1893 protest meeting which attracted a standing-room crowd of nearly 600 German women at the North Side Turner Hall against curtailment of German instruction: "how is it possible that the study of German, a world language, can be considered useless and treated accordingly in a cosmopolitan city like Chicago?" But as the *Staatszeitung* reported in 1900, "The Bohemians insist that they have as good a right to their demands as has the German element of this city."⁴⁸ In Chicago, however, Germans proved to be anything but proponents of linguistic pluralism. When World War I broke out, Bohemians and Poles were determined to eliminate German from the public school curriculum, even if their own languages suffered collateral damage.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ S.K. Troen, *The Public and the Schools: Shaping the Saint Louis System 1838–1920*, Columbia, MO 1975, pp. 65–78.

⁴⁷ H. Keil, J.B. Jentz, *German Workers...*, pp. 92–94; J. Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, New York 2009, pp. 169, 291; <http://graveyards.com/IL/Cook/foresthome/ne-haymarket3.html>.

⁴⁸ Illinois Staatszeitung, 10 March 1893, 11 March 1893, 8 June 1900, as translated in the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, accessed at the Newberry Library website, <http://flps.newberry.org>.

⁴⁹ J. Zimmerman, 'Ethnics against Ethnicity: European Immigrants and Foreign-Language Instruction, 1890–1940,' *Journal of American History*, Vol. 88 (2002), pp. 1386–92.

World War I is often portrayed as an era of mindless anti-German hysteria, and it did represent somewhat of a turning point, but in fact the experience of German-Americans varied widely from place to place. Chicago stood out for its hostility to things German, renaming 82 of 115 streets with German names, while Cincinnati replaced only a dozen, and Milwaukee and St. Louis even fewer. Part of the difference is explained by the prevalence of Slavic immigrants, subjects of the Dual Monarchy. In St. Louis, with only a small Slavic population, German street names were even a laughing matter.⁵⁰ In Chicago, Czechs and Poles figured prominently also in the crusade to end German instruction in the city's public schools.⁵¹ One of the things that set Chicago apart from other cities was the size and diversity of its Slavic population. Much more than New York, the Windy City was the journalistic and intellectual center of Slavic America. Already in 1900, Chicago was home to more than 36,000 Bohemians, nearly triple the number in New York City or Cleveland, its Czech population surpassed only by Prague and Vienna in the Old Country. Similarly with their Slavic brothers or rivals, Chicago is known as the second largest Polish city in the world, second only to Warsaw. In Chicago, both elements had the intellectual leadership and the ethnic press to promote their national agendas when World War I opened the possibility for independence from German rule.⁵²

Even Milwaukee, despite its large Polish element (but with relatively few Bohemians), presents a rather different scenario. Germans and Poles mostly lived in different parts of town and encountered few rivalries within Catholic parishes.

⁵⁰ K. Wüstenbecker, *Deutsch-Amerikaner im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart 2007, pp. 283–85, 342–50. A letter to the *St. Louis Times*, (an English-language offshoot of the German *Westliche Post*), made light of the campaign to abolish German street names, at the same time highlighting the prominence of Germans in city offices: “In place of the objectionable Allemania, Berlin, Carlsbad, Germania, Hamburg, Hannover, Hertling and Unter den Linden, we could have Niederlücke, Otto, Tamme, Fette, Baur, Stockhausen, Rice, Bergman, Schwartz, Kralemann, Udell, Eilers and Schranz”: all, incidentally, drawn from the Board of Aldermen under German-American Mayor Henry Kiel, who was re-elected in 1917 by a record margin. D. Detjen, *The Germans in Missouri, 1900–1918: Prohibition, Neutrality, and Assimilation*, Columbia, MO 1985, p. 214. <http://exhibits.slpl.org/mayors/data/dt48283221.asp>.

⁵¹ J. Zimmerman, ‘Ethnics against Ethnicity...’, pp. 1386–92; D.A. Pacyga, ‘To Live Amongst Others: Poles and Their Neighbors in Industrial Chicago, 1865–1930’, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 16 (1996), pp. 55–73. Although there were some instances of German-Polish cooperation in Chicago, St. Boniface parish saw a longstanding language dispute between the two groups, and another Polish parish, Saint Hedwig’s, hosted a meeting to promote the removal of German street names in its ward (58–59).

⁵² A. Cozine, ‘Czechs and Bohemians’, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/153.html>; M.G. Holli ‘The Great War Sinks Chicago’s German *Kultur*’, in M.G. Holli, P.d’A. Jones, eds, *Ethnic Chicago*, rev. ed., Grand Rapids, MI 1984, pp. 460–512.

In fact, Germans had been relatively supportive of Polish aspirations. Moreover, there was an internal split among Poles between Catholic and more secular elements which Germans, especially socialists, attempted to exploit. Though no one has investigated this in detail, it seems likely that the authorization of Polish instruction in public schools in 1907 may have been a strategic move on the part of German socialists to woo secular Poles.⁵³

Not only did the superpatriotic hysteria virtually eliminate German instruction in *public* schools (and that of most other languages as collateral damage), it also brought a new wave of legislative interference with *parochial* schools. A Nebraska law of 1919, and similar measures in Iowa, Ohio, and several other states, forbade instruction in *any* school, including parochial, in any language except English. And an Oregon law, passed by initiative with Ku Klux Klan support, in effect outlawed parochial schools entirely by requiring public school attendance for all children aged 8 to 15. Although both were overturned by the Supreme Court, German instruction, or indeed foreign language instruction generally in American schools was never the same.⁵⁴

Political means were not the only methods the Klan used to promote its English-only agenda in the 1920s. In Washington County, Texas, it used anonymous threats, beatings, and tarring and feathering in an attempt to force churches and other institutions to abandon their use of German. A notice posted on the door of a Lutheran church in Berlin, Texas, just outside Brenham, warned “*Speak the English language or move out of this city and county*” [italics original].⁵⁵ The loyalty of Texas Germans was vouched for by none other than Colonel Mayfield, the publisher of a Klan weekly in Houston: “The Records show that our soldiers of German descent fought as valiantly overseas as those of families of longer resident in America. . . . Still, this is America, all America and nothing but America The people who do not care to speak our native tongue . . . should be driven from it.” It demanded in bold headlines: PREACH IN ENGLISH.⁵⁶ One of the demands the Klan made in Brenham was that

⁵³ On the Polish split see D. Praszałowicz, ‘World War I in the Milwaukee Ethnic Press’, in T. Gladsky, A. Walaszek, M.M. Wawrykiewicz, eds, *Ethnicity, Culture, City*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 289, 299–301. In contrast to the situation in Chicago, the Milwaukee Polish press was rather differentiated in its attitudes toward Germans, German-Americans, and particularly those in Milwaukee (292–3, 299–301).

⁵⁴ [Http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.law.032](http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.law.032). Jorgenson, *The State and the Non-Public School*, 205–15. Kamphoefner, Helbich, and Sommer, *News*, 25.

⁵⁵ W.D. Kamphoefner, ‘The Handwriting on the Wall: The Klan, Language Issues, and Prohibition in the German Settlements of Eastern Texas’, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 111 (2008), pp. 52–66, here 52.

⁵⁶ Colonel Mayfield’s Weekly, 21 Jan. 1922.

soldiers' funerals not be conducted in German; it seems that Klansmen could not bear this *prima facie* evidence that refuted their equating of language with loyalty. The next county over, a dispute over the use of German at a political rally put on by the Cat Spring Agricultural Society escalated several weeks later into a shootout on the streets of Sealy, Texas, between Klansmen and Germans that left four people dead (two on each side), one German hospitalized with severe stab wounds, and a Klansman convicted of murder.⁵⁷

Race was not the primary concern of the Texas Klan; rather, as one of Colonel Mayfield's headlines screamed, "It's the KKK vs. Jew, Jug, and Jesuits." Particularly on the jug issue, Germans and Bohemians saw eye to eye. The Klan paper reported on four Bohemian bootleggers from Schulenburg, Texas, arrested by Federal officials.⁵⁸ Meanwhile at the Cat Springs Agricultural Society, matters were remarkably calm, as the minutes record. In preparations for the 1922 Anniversary Fest: "It was decided ... to order 40 gallons of ice cream, three gallons of orangeade, five kegs of beer. ... The sheriff and constable will be invited." In fact, from 1921 to 1926, the minutes record orders for no less than 31 kegs of beer for the society's various balls and festivities. After 1926, beer purchases no longer show up explicitly in the minutes, but that doesn't mean they switched to lemonade. The sheriff seems to have been a particular favorite of the society; the minutes record at least seven balls or festivities to which he was explicitly invited. Sheriff Remmert was himself a Texas German and was elected to no less than five biennial terms of office. One reason the society could be so bold about recording its extralegal activities was that its minutes were still kept in German.⁵⁹ In this part of Texas, both Germans and Czechs appear to have supported a third party movement of "Big Jim" Ferguson and his wife and successor, and this despite its antiwar undertone of the movement that was presumably overshadowed by their anti-prohibition and anti-Klan stance.⁶⁰

Ironically, while Texas Germans were being targeted by the Klan, in the Northeast, where the presence of the "New Immigration" from Eastern and

⁵⁷ W.D. Kamphoefner, 'The Handwriting on the Wall...', 62–64.

⁵⁸ *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, 1 Dec. 1923; 16 Sept. 1922. An article of 11 Feb. 1922 claimed that Lee County (a Wendish-German area) was "full of stills".

⁵⁹ W.D. Kamphoefner, 'The Handwriting on the Wall...', 60–62.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 64–65. An Austin German paper, *Das Wochenblatt*, 4 Nov. 1920, remarked in an election analysis (translation mine): "The counties with a predominantly German and Czech population appear to have all given majorities for the "American Party" ticket, thus Gillespie, Kendall, Comal, Fayette, Austin, Guadalupe, and probably also Lavaca and DeWitt. In Fayette County apparently all their candidates for local office were elected." Fayette, Austin, and Lavaca counties appear in Table 1 with significant Czech populations; in Lavaca, Czechs outnumbered Germans.

Southern Europe was much more pronounced, Protestant German-Americans, especially the more prosperous ones, were increasingly identifying themselves as “Old Stock” in order to distance themselves from such newcomers, and were quite at home in such nativist circles. In Philadelphia, the rolls of the Patriotic Order of the Sons of America was “peppered with German surnames,” and setting themselves up as “real Americans,” they argued that if their parents were immigrants, “They are the kind of immigrants we want … and in just one generation, all assimilated,” whereas “God save us from what we are getting now—close the gates.”⁶¹ In Buffalo, a third or more of the names on one Klan chapter’s rolls were German, and their presence was especially pronounced in the East Side neighborhoods where Poles were becoming an increasingly noticeable element in what had previously been a heavily German quarter of the city, which nativists in the 1850s had denounced as being “as little American as the duchy of Hesse Cassel.”⁶² Buffalo Germans were, however, split along confessional lines. Mayor Frank Xaviar Schwab, a name that screams German-American Catholicism, accused the Klan of “conducting guerilla warfare against the Catholic church.” Waging a bitter campaign against the Klan, he succeeded in reducing it to the point of “utter insignificance” on the way to his landslide re-election against a “strong prohibition advocate.”⁶³

Local context is important. In Texas, some of the affinity of Germans with other central Europeans, and their antipathy toward Anglos, goes back to the Civil War era. German reservations toward slavery and secession were shared by most other Continental Europeans in the state. One sees very similar patterns with Czechs, Poles, Wends, and the Alsatians around Castroville. Only a small, atypical, well assimilated elite, often at the fringes of the ethnic community, embraced slavery and unreservedly supported the Confederacy. Farther down on the social scale where most immigrants were concentrated, attitudes ranged from indifference to hostility. Some were able to evade the draft, gain exemption as teamsters, or restrict their service to local militias; others served reluctantly as Confederate troops. Even before the war, Czechs as well as Germans were harassed for their association with “abolitionist” foreign-language newspapers. In Bastrop County, Germans combined with Wends to vote down the ordinance of secession. Not only Germans but also Poles from Victoria and Karnes County went over together to the Union cause after being taken prisoner. The First

⁶¹ R.A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German American Identity*, Princeton 2004, pp. 234–45, quote 237.

⁶² S. Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo*, New York, New York 1995, pp. 88, 106–7. Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, 12 June 1857.

⁶³ S. Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara*..., 118–42; quotes 119, 139, 140.

Texas Cavalry (United States), included a scattering of Wends, Poles and Czechs among the hundreds of Germans. In Austin County, Germans and Czechs had constituted the bulk of the deserter lists during the war, and in 1865 joined in a Fourth of July celebration affirming Union victory, some of the few whites to do so. During Reconstruction, Poles in Karnes County were harassed by ex-Confederates just as Germans were elsewhere.⁶⁴

This heritage of dissent from Anglo Texas also manifested itself in relatively friendly relations with black Texans. There is photographic evidence for this in the work of a second generation Czech in Granger, Texas, John Paul Trlica, in whose studio all races were truly "Equal before the Lens," the title of a handsome coffee table book published by my university's press.⁶⁵ There is reliable evidence of black Texans who were fluent in Czech or German as a result of growing up among them and working with them.

The story is told of a Chicago Czech, Mr. Precechtel, traveling on business in Texas, who got off train at some godforsaken little town on the railroad line between Houston and San Antonio. He thought he heard someone speaking Czech, in fact his local Moravian dialect, but all he saw on the platform were two black men. Fearing that the Texas sun had cooked his brain, he walked over and without much thinking, he asked one of these men (in Czech of course), excuse me, but are you Czech? The black guy answered him, "Ne, ja su Moravec: No, I'm Moravian." Although this sounds like a joke, since the salesman was identified by name, it probably has a basis in fact. It illustrates both how much this group dominated some areas of Texas, and how strong their Moravian regional identity was. There was only one Mr. Precechtel in the U.S., Constantine Precechtel of Chicago, who immigrated in 1919.⁶⁶

The evidence on blacks who spoke German is even more firmly grounded. Back in the early nineties, I mentored a Bavarian woman who wrote a master's thesis on the relation of Texas Germans to slavery and blacks. She actually interviewed an elderly black man in Industry, Texas, the oldest German settlement in the state, who spoke fluent German. And not just any German; it had the accent of northwest Germany where the founders of Industry originated. Reportedly

⁶⁴ W.D. Kamphoefner, 'New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy', *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* Vol. 102 (1999), pp. 454–55; Gallup, *Czech-Moravian Texas*, 5, 105.

⁶⁵ B. McCandless, *Equal before the Lens: Jno. Trlica's Photographs of Granger, Texas*, College Station, TX 1992.

⁶⁶ K. Hannan, 'Ethnic Identity...' 14; U.S. Census information on C. Precechtel via Ancestry.com.

he spoke some Czech besides, although my student was in no position to say how well. He passed away in 2010, probably the last of his kind.⁶⁷

In the long run the Melting Pot always wins out, though it often took longer than it appears in romanticized hindsight. As an ethnic historian, I'm always on the lookout for ethnic names and family histories, and my students are among my best sources. As late as the 1990s I had a student tell me her mother and aunt from Snook, Texas, knew only Czech when they started grade school, and another whose father grew up in Muenster, Texas, who spoke only German till he started school.⁶⁸ More recently, in fall 2009, I had an agricultural major in my class who had put off his required U.S. history till his last semester. As part of the Livestock Judging Team that took second place in the National Championships, he missed an exam and had to come in for a makeup. His family name jumped out at me not just because it was Polish, but also because he shared it with the priest who founded Panna Maria, the first Polish settlement in Texas or the U.S.: Moczygembra: Billy Bob Moczygembra, to be precise. Never fear, there wasn't any monkey business going on with the priest and his housekeeper; he had recruited several of his brothers to Panna Maria. Although the stereotypical cowboy given names of Billy Bob might indicate Texas assimilation, I asked him how long the Polish language had held on in his family. He replied that he had a great-aunt who had never learned English. In his grandfather's 2013 obituary, there are still nothing but Polish family names to be found among the spouses of children and grandchildren, and even pallbearers.⁶⁹ But even in a family and a community like this, the melting pot was at work, at least the triple melting pot: when I last talked to Billy Bob, he was dating a Texas German Catholic co-ed from New Braunfels. And it only took six generations!

⁶⁷ C. Küffner, ‘Texas-Germans’ Attitudes Toward Slavery’, ms. M.A. Thesis, University of Houston, 1994, pp. 8–9.

⁶⁸ Both were homogeneous ethnic communities founded before 1890. Mark Odintz, „SNOOK, TX,” Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hls61>), June 15, 2010; R.W. McDaniel, “MUENSTER, TX,” Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hjm19>), June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

⁶⁹ Animal Science Weekly, 7 December 2009, agrilifeecdn.tamu.edu/animalscience/files/2012/04/09-december07.pdf. Alfred Anton Moczygembra, February 5, 1934 – July 16, 2013, [Http://www.rhodesfuneralhomeinc.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1035288](http://www.rhodesfuneralhomeinc.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1035288); note the “mainstream” given names of descendants.