

The National Association of Northern Bohemia – A Few Remarks Concerning its Foundation, Organization, and Activities

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The paper deals with the foundation, organization and activity of the national protective association, which existed in the northern border regions of Bohemia in the period of 1885–1948. It was the National Association of Northern Bohemia (NANB) and it protected the so-called “border guards” against the growing German population. The association performed economic, social and cultural activities. For instance, the members of the association participated in the censuses, helped with the organization of elections and financially supported the Czech industry. Among other things, the association provided various types of loans, was involved in education and cultural lives of the people who lived in the border regions. During the Nazi occupation, the association became part of a single organization, the so-called National Association. Even though it was possible to renew the National Association of Northern Bohemia after the war, the new situation in the country were not favourable to its work and that was why its activities were completely terminated after the Communist coup in February 1948.

[Czech minority; Germans; protective associations; National Association of Northern Bohemia]

Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, the issue concerning the Czech minority living in the border regions with population of different nationalities was becoming significant in the Habsburg Monarchy. The coexistence of the Czechs and Germans was becoming more complicated at that time. The Germans, owing to their better economic position, had gradually managed to force the Czech minority onto the defensive in these regions.

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The Germans were significantly ahead of the Czech in founding various institutions.¹ There were also several corporations whose main interest was to strengthen the positions of the Germans in the regions with population of different nationalities. The leaders of the Czech society realized that they had to fight for their positions not only with honest national work during censuses and elections, but it was becoming more important to protect the Czechs from the growing German population. That was why in the 1880s several protective associations whose main purpose was undoubtedly the protection of the Czech minority from the Germans, who prevailed considerably in these regions. The Czech minority consisted of miners, glass-makers, textile industry workers and also, in lower numbers, of sole traders and the intelligentsia, who were arriving in the northern border region.

Protective associations (national associations) founded in the Czech regions were mainly involved in the economic and cultural spheres. One of them was the National Association of Northern Bohemia. It was a protective national association founded in the first half of 1885, which was supposed to be a counterpart to the already existing Alliance of Germans (Bund der Deutschen). The Alliance of Germans was involved in many provinces such as Elbe-Gau, Gau Nordböhmen, Jeschen-Iser-Gau, Gau Ostböhmen and in several others.²

The main objective of the Czech protective national associations was an effort to liberate the Czech minority which lived in the border regions of the country from being dependent on German businessmen. The work of the Central School Association, which was founded already in 1880 and which focused its support mainly on the foundation of Czech schools in the border regions with population of different nationalities. It was not a proper protective association, though. The German hostility towards the Czech minority grew and mostly the Czech schools were subjected to their attacks. Among other things, the

¹ For instance, some of them were the influential Allgemeiner deutscher Schulverein, Deutscher Böhmerwaldbund, Nordmark, etc. J. PAVLÍČEK, *Národní jednota severočeská a její podíl na prosazování českých národních zájmů v národnostně smíšených oblastech (1885–1948)*, in: *České národní aktivity v pohraničních oblastech první Československé republiky*, Olomouc 2003, p. 174.

² J. BALCAROVÁ, *„Jeden za všechny, všichni za jednoho!“ Bund der Deutschen a jeho předchůdci v procesu utváření „sudetoněmecké identity“*, Praha 2013, p. 132.

Germans tried to halt the arrival of more Czech-speaking people into the regions with population of different nationalities.

The result of the German activity in the 1880s was supposed to be the establishment of a closed and German-only area, where the Czech people would lose all rights. The German population felt constantly the necessity to protect the purity of their lands in Deutsch-Böhmen and that was why they founded a belligerent nationalist association Böhmerwaldbund.³ The members of the association were supposed to protect German positions in the southern and southwestern Bohemia regions, especially in the area surrounding the city of České Budějovice, where the Czech minority was very active at that time. We may conclude that the Czech minority demanded the foundation of a protective association that would “protect” it against the German population, which was growing stronger, and that would be a response to the establishment of Böhmerwaldbund.

Therefore in June 1884 the first protective unit in the Czech regions was established in Prague – the National Association of Southern Bohemia.⁴ As it is apparent from its name, the association had authority over the region of Šumava and its surrounding areas, i. e. southern and southwestern Bohemia. It had been apparent for some time that the issue of schools, which was dealt with by the Central School Association, was not the only problem of the Czech minority. It had become necessary to establish similar organizations whose authority would be wider than that of the Central School Association to deal with other problems.

The Czech society agreed with the establishment and subsequent activity of the National Association of Southern Bohemia, supported it publicly and shortly after that started to demand the foundation of similar protective associations in the northwestern, northern and northeastern regions of Bohemia – that is in all the regions where the lives of the Czechs were more and more influenced by the growing German population. The National Association of Southern Bohemia was active in agriculture activities, but the situation in the North of

³ F. ČENSKÝ, *Národní jednota severočeská 1885–1948. Inventář k fondu 699. Národní archiv, Litoměřice 1969*, p. 2.

⁴ More in *Národní jednota pošumavská. Kronika Národní jednoty pošumavské. Kout na Šumavě. 1884–1901*, http://www.portafontium.eu/iipimage/30160498/soap-do_00852_jednota-posumavska-kout-na-sumave-1884-1901-0050 [2016-01-19].

Bohemia, which is rather an industrial area, required a different approach to the establishment and organization of the association. Moreover, the establishment of the protective association in the North of Bohemia was accelerated by events which signaled possible repeated aggression towards the Czech minority.

At the beginning of 1885, purely Czech schools were attacked by the Germans in the Northern Bohemian towns of Liberec and Trutnov, and in the town of Duchcov the building of the Czech association Česká Beseda was attacked.⁵ Leading Czech politicians, especially František Ladislav Rieger, the chairman of the Central School Association, and Antonín Pravoslav Trojan founded a preparatory committee whose main objective was the foundation of the Czech protective association which would be involved northern Bohemia.

The work of the preparatory committee consisted of drafting of the first charter and issuing a proclamation about the foundation of the National Association of Northern Bohemia.⁶ Dr. Alfréd Slavík, an associate professor at the Czech Polytechnic Institute, presented the news about the committee's work and about the approval of the charter by the governor's office during the first general meeting on 22 March 1885 in the building of the association Měšťanská Beseda in Prague.⁷ At the same time, Prague became the seat of the association's office (Václavské náměstí 34).⁸

The general meeting was attended by 150 people, 130 of them were the founding members and 20 were delegates from individual associations in northern Bohemia. The administrative committee of the newly founded association was elected and the first chairman, A. P. Trojan, was appointed.⁹ The representatives learned about the election

⁵ ČENSKÝ, p. 3.

⁶ The proclamation was published in many Czech bulletins, for instance in *Podřipan*, which was a weekly bulletin published by the National Liberal Party in the town of Roudnice. More in *Podřipan*, <http://www.soapraha.cz/?archiv=7&page=archivni-knihovna> [2016-01-19]. Even the most prominent Czech newspaper, i. e. *Národní listy*, referred about the foundation of the association. For instance on 23 March 1885 in issue 81 an article titled "The National Association of Northern Bohemia."

⁷ Národní archiv, Praha (hereinafter NA), fond Národní jednota severočeská (hereinafter NJS), kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Zpráva NJS v Praze.

⁸ J. LAUBE, Z činnosti Národní jednoty severočeské, in: *Národní listy*, 75, 151, p. 3.

⁹ NA, fond NJS, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Zápis ze schůze ÚV z 22. března 1885.

results in the evening of the same day and the results were announced at a social event, where several salutatory letters and telegrams from Czech border guards were read.

Not long after that the information about the foundation of the National Association of Northern Bohemia also appeared in the press. The proclamation about the foundation of the association also stated its objectives. The main purpose of the association was supposed to be “education of fellow citizens and protection of national rights in the regions where our nationality is threatened by the disfavor of some elements which do not recognize equal rights guaranteed by the law to both nationalities in the country”.¹⁰ On the basis of previous negotiations with the National Association of Southern Bohemia, the new association became the authority over the region ranging from Mariánské Lázně in the West, the whole northern Bohemia, to the towns of Lanškroun and Polička in the East of Bohemia. The association was supposed to conduct its activities in the former regions of Prague, Žatec, Litoměřice, Boleslav, Jičín and Hradec Králové.

In the first year the association had already 3,782 members and the number was growing constantly. The association was managed by the central committee (then it was the administrative committee). During the first meeting on 26 March 1885 the association’s members appointed the board (presidium), chairman, vice-chairman, two executives, treasurer, clerk and accountant. In addition, three account controllers were also selected.¹¹ A. P. Trojan, editors J. Kumer and A. Srb, P. F. Dusil, archive clerk F. Dvorský, bookseller M. Knapp, physician A. Slavík and several others became the first members of the central committee.¹²

In the following years neither the central committee, nor the board itself changed in any significant way, only a second vice-chairman and a secretary were added to the committee. The secretary became the manager of the office of the National Association of Northern Bohemia. A new charter was issued, according to which the board consisted of seven members – chairman, two vice-chairmen, two executives, treasurer and secretary.

¹⁰ PAVLÍČEK, p. 175.

¹¹ ČENSKÝ, p. 4.

¹² PAVLÍČEK, p. 175.

According to the new charter the number of members of the central committee was increased to 36 people, they met regularly once a month and the members were elected every three years. One of the powers of the central committee was publishing annual reports. Since the establishment of the association, the members were selected into various working committees, which were often called divisions. After the new charter was issued (1907), these committees, such as the lecture committee or the library committee, were established as the organizational, editorial,¹³ Christmas or financial¹⁴ divisions. The central committee was also responsible for supervising the activities of local divisions. Another of its responsibilities was summoning the general meeting.

The biggest administrative body of the association was the general meeting, which took place once a year. At least thirty members had to be present for the meeting to be able to make decisions. The enrolment fee for new members was debated and new members of the board were elected. The general meeting also assessed the activity of the central committee, checked the annual accounts and had the power to change the association's charter. The charter had not been changed until 1932, when the general meeting was renamed the general convention and at the same time the convention ceased being the controlling body of the annual accounts. The central committee gained the power over the annual revenues and expenses.¹⁵

In 1907, the so-call government of the association was temporarily established. All the members of the central committee, account controllers, representatives of individual groups were members of the new body, which also included a representative of each local division.¹⁶ The main activity of this body was debating and agreeing on the work progress on the national level. Moreover, the members of the government were supposed to suggest candidates for the election to the central committee. The government's time of existence is debatable. However, what is certain is that the new charter from 1932 contained no mention of the government.¹⁷

¹³ The editorial division was in charge of the bulletin *Věštník*, founded in 1900.

¹⁴ NA, fond NJS, kart. 8, inv. č. 6, Materiál k 50. výročí NJS 1885–1935.

¹⁵ Ibidem, kart. 8, inv. č. 5, Resoluce valného sjezdu 1932.

¹⁶ One representative of each local division with more than 1,000 members became a member of the government.

Based on the new charter from 1932, the number of members of the central committee was changed by an increase to 40 members elected for four years. In addition, they were joined by a representative of Prague, the capital city, the administrator of the Prague House, a construction clerk and five other members of the central committee.¹⁸ It is also important to note that during the First Czechoslovak Republic, the accountant became a member of the board and the position of the secretary was filled with the director of the office of the National Association of Northern Bohemia.¹⁹ At the same time the number of working committees was increased because the land committee was established, which dealt with the assigning of plots of lands after the land reform had been implemented, to Czech applicants living in the border regions.²⁰

During the first years of the national association, all the organizational activities were performed by the central bodies (the central committee and the board). However, several local divisions were soon founded, which dealt with frequent problems with the German population in both the mixed and interior regions, which certainly affected their activities in a negative way.²¹

Since it soon became apparent that the central bodies had too much responsibilities, in 1896 the establishment of boards of regional secretaries was proposed. These secretaries were supposed to become intermediaries between the central bodies and local divisions of the association. This new institution was supposed to assume a part of tasks from the central bodies. The boards of regional secretaries were divided into three groups: boards in the Germanized areas, border areas and Czech areas. However, it soon transpired that the establishment of the boards of regional secretaries had not fulfilled its original requirements because their operation was successful in several localities.

¹⁷ Ibidem, kart. 6, inv. č. 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústředního výboru a předsednictva (rok 1932).

¹⁸ ČENSKÝ, p. 5.

¹⁹ NA, fond NJS, kart. 8, inv. č. 3, Ústředí 1919–1938.

²⁰ More about the land committee in: ibidem, kart. 7, inv. č. 2, Zápisy ze zasedání pozemkové komise 1925–1936.

²¹ PAVLÍČEK, p. 175.

The Secretary of the National Association of Northern Bohemia, Dr. Václav Štumpf, drafted and subsequently presented a new proposal concerning the establishment of boards of secretaries, but the foundations from 1896 were supposed to be used. The new proposal included the establishment of nine boards. These were the Board of Rakovník–Louny, Podkrušnohoří, Roudnice–Mělník, Jičín–Jilemnice, Hranice–Náchod, Boleslav–Turnov, Polabí, Litomyšl–Rychnov and Prague.²²

The change from the previous proposal was in uniting border and interior areas into one board. Organizational conventions and advisory meetings were organized to ensure a proper function of the boards.²³ At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the central committee decided to establish divisional boards, i. e. boards and also lower level units within the boards – districts. Three members of the central committee, Dr. Matys, Dr. Štumpf and JUC Kaizl created a system of boards and districts which was accepted during the central committee meeting on 2 May 1901 and thus became binding.

On the basis of the system the first 12 boards were created: Rakovník–Louny, Podkrušnohoří, Roudnice–Mělník, Mladá Boleslav–Turnov, Semily–Železný Brod, Jilemnice–Jičín, Hradec Králové–Trutnov, Náchod–Police, Žamberk–Lanškroun, Litomyšl–Polička, Polabí, and Prague. The division of the regions into individual boards was considered temporary and changes were expected on the basis of the needs of the central bodies.²⁴ The first boards were established in the autumn of 1901, others in the following year, and the tenth board, Litomyšl–Polička, was not established until May 1904.²⁵

The main activity of the 12 mentioned boards was to record of the national life in the assigned region. Among other things, the boards organized the activities of local divisions and at the same time they tried to mediate a contact with the central bodies. They also created districts in the region of the given board if it was necessary. Each new board was managed by a secretary, who was also a clerk of the cen-

²² NA, fond NJS, kart. 8, inv. č. 6, Materiál k 50. výročí NJS 1885–1935.

²³ Organizational conventions in 1898–1899 took place in Jičín, Náchod, Žamberk and Litomyšl, in the following year in Mladá Boleslav, and advisory meetings took place in Turnov, Kolín, Louny and Mělník.

²⁴ Ibidem, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Zpráva o činnosti NJS za rok 1900–1901.

²⁵ More about the overview of the boards in *Věstník NJS*, 2, 1902 and 3, 1903.

tral committee. Apart from that, each board was also managed by a chairman and a vice-chairman. The same organization was also in the individual districts. Clerks from governing authorities, factories and financial institutions were also becoming members of the boards.²⁶ In 1911 there were already 14 boards and this system remained almost unchanged during the First Czechoslovak Republic.²⁷ The individual boards were involved in districts which were geographically limited and together included not only northern Bohemia, but also northwestern and eastern Bohemia.

Between 1911 and 1938 the division of the area where the National Association of Northern Bohemia was involved was as follows: the 1st Board-District of Cheb, Karlovy Vary, Falknov; the 2nd Board-District of Jesenice–Žlutice, Pomořany, Rakovník, Žatec, Chomutov, Kadaň; the 3rd Board-District of Most, Bílina–Duchcov, Teplice, Postoloprty, Louny; the 4th Board-District of Roudnice, Libochovice, Litoměřice, Lovosice, Mělník, Ústí, Děčín–Podmokly, Dubá; the 5th Board-District of Boleslav, Mnichovo Hradiště, Česká Lípa, Bor, Rumburk–Vansdorf; the 6th Board-District of Český Dub, Turnov, Liberec, Frýdlant, Jablonec, Železný Brod, Tanvald.²⁸

The 7th Board was comprised of the Districts of Semily, Vysoká,²⁹ Vrchlabí–Jilemnice, Jičín–Libáň, Nová Paka–Bydžov, Hořice; the 8th Board-District of Trutnov, Úpice, Dvůr Králové, Hronov, Police, Náchod, Nové Město, Jaroměř, Opočno, Česká Skalice; the 9th Board-District of Rychnov, Kostelec, Žamberk, Hradec Králové, Lanškroun, Ústí–Česká Třebová; the 10th Board-District of Litomyšl, Polička, Pardubice–Chrudim; the 11th Board-District of Český Brod and Čáslav–Kolín; the 12th Board-District of Poděbrady, Brandýs, Chlumeck; the 13th Board-District of Beroun, Kladno, Říčany; and the 14th Board-District of Prague I and Prague II.³⁰

The mentioned territorial division was disrupted shortly after the Munich Agreement was signed in September 1938. Since the beginning of October 1938 an organized annexation took place of the border regions of Czechoslovakia inhabited by Germans and the National

²⁶ ČENSKÝ, p. 7.

²⁷ NA, fond NJS, kart. 8, inv. č. 6, Materiál k 50. výročí NJS 1885–1935.

²⁸ PAVLÍČEK, p. 176.

²⁹ The Board of Vysoká was named after the town of Vysoká nad Jizerou.

³⁰ PAVLÍČEK, p. 176.

Association of Northern Bohemia lost a vast network of districts and boards which it had been building. Out of the association's 70 districts which were being built since 1911, only 35 remained in the Czechoslovak territory after the annexation of the Sudetenland.³¹

The National Association of Northern Bohemia established the so-called local divisions in the minority regions but also in the interior regions. The requests for the establishment of the first local divisions were submitted already during the founding meeting of the central committee in March 1885. These were supposed to be Chomutov, Bohdaneč, Žatec, Louny, Lenešice, Postoloprty and Holešovice. Two specific divisions, labour and academic, were established in Prague at that time. We may claim that divisions were founded much easier and with no major problems in the Czech territory. The only "obstacle" when establishing individual local divisions in prevailing Czech regions was a large amount of various associations which did not respect the National Association of Northern Bohemia.

During the establishment of local divisions, problems occurred more frequently in border regions (e. g., Třebenicko), where it was not possible to rely only on the effort of the Czech locals, but the help of the central bodies was required. The most complicated situation arose in the mixed regions, where from the very beginning many of the local divisions had to deal with serious problems. For instance, in a village or a town there was not a single hall owner who would dare to lease the hall to the local division on the National Association of Northern Bohemia.³²

Many local division, from their very beginning or during their activities, were threatened with constant oppression from the Germans and in many cases with economic repression because a large majority of the inhabitants were fully dependent on German businessmen.³³ The main condition for the establishment of a local division was the support of at least 20 people from the locality or its surroundings where a local division was supposed to be founded. When a division was founded, it was led by committee comprised of five mem-

³¹ The segmentation of the divisions of NANB into individual boards in: Výroční zpráva NJS 1937–1939. NA, fond NJS, kart. 7, inv. č. 1, Zápisy ze schůzí 1937, 1938, 1939.

³² ČENSKÝ, p. 8.

³³ NA, fond NJS, kart. 8, inv. č. 6, Materiál k 50. výročí NJS 1885–1935.

bers and two replacements were also available. All of the above mentioned were elected for a year. The officials of such a division were the chairman, vice-chairman, executive and treasurer. Some divisions also included a clerk and librarian, usually associations with a higher number of members.

The person responsible for the association before the public, authorities and the central committee was the chairman, or the vice-chairman and the executive. They signed all important letters and documents written by the association. Financial matters were also dealt with by the treasurer. All important documents signed by one official only could not be considered an official act of the association and therefore could be returned by the central committee to be signed by a second official.³⁴

The most important official was undoubtedly the chairman. His work consisted of summoning meetings of the committee and the general meeting, which occurred always after a previous agreement with the executive. He also presided over the committee's meetings and over the general meeting. As has been previously stated, his and the executive's signatures were necessary on all important documents. He always represented the division before the public and made sure that the division was highly regarded in the community where it was involved.³⁵ The vice-chairman position became important if the chairman resigned, was ill or absent for whatever reason.

The executive was entrusted with receiving all of the division's correspondence. He recorded every piece of all the incoming correspondence in a list of delivered documents, assigned a number to it and gave it to the chairman to read. In case a clerk was not elected, the minutes of the committee's meetings and the general meeting were taken by executive. He also ensured that the division was in constant contact with the central committee. The executive could deputize for the chairman or the vice-chairman to represent the division when the two were otherwise engaged. In case the executive was no longer capable of performing his work because of severe reasons, he had to find an adequate replacement before resigning.³⁶

³⁴ Ibidem, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Návod jednací a řád odborů, p. 12.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 13.

³⁶ Ibidem.

The treasurer was responsible for the cash and also valuable items belonging to the division, and he entrusted to record everything important in the cash book. He also paid bills, but under the strict supervision and consent of the central committee. Apart from that, he also compiled a list of the members of the association based on the amount of their contribution.³⁷

If the clerk was elected, he was entrusted to take minutes of the committee's meetings, the members' meetings and the general meeting as well. He then always handed the minutes shortly after any meeting to the division's executive, who implemented the resolutions approved during the meeting. The minutes were usually read during the following meeting to determine whether all previous resolutions had already been adopted.³⁸

In case a division owned a library, either its own or borrowed from the central committee, a librarian was usually elected from the committee, who was fully responsible for the books. His work mainly consisted of keeping a list of the books, recording loans and made sure that the books were spread among the people. He also updated the book lists by adding book titles which the division obtained on its own and which were borrowed from the central committee. The librarian also wrote an annual statement about the use of the library. Moreover, he was in charge of the association's printed materials. He made sure that bulletins were being collected in individual villages in the Czech regions and sent to the villages threatened by a German minority.³⁹

It was necessary to organize regular meetings to ensure a proper function of the divisions. These meetings took place quarterly, which was based on a previous agreement. We also need to mention how the divisions were divided. The most common form was a mixed division (for both men and women). But there were also divisions which were for women only, the most prominent one was a woman club in Prague, and others which were limited to men. In addition, divisions for the youth were not unusual, and the most important one was the academic division.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 13–14.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 14.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, kart. 8, inv. č. 6, Materiál k 50. výročí NJS 1885–1935.

In 1907 the National Association of Northern Bohemia had a total of 751 local divisions and their number continued to grow until the formation of the independent Czechoslovakia. During the early existence of the independent state, many members shared the opinion that the formation of Czechoslovakia made the National Association of Northern Bohemia, which was a protective association, a useless and purposeless organization.⁴¹ Therefore, it is no surprise that in the early years of the independent state, the number of members of the National Association of Northern Bohemia decreased. For instance, in 1913 there were 665 local divisions with more than 51,000 members, whereas in 1918 there were only 250 local divisions with approximately 20,000 members.⁴² However, in the following years the number of members started increasing very slowly.

In 1922 the situation was the same as before the formation of independent Czechoslovakia. Possibly, this was because the issue concerning nationality could not be resolved because of the actual situation in the country.⁴³ When people realized that the position of the Czech minority in the border region in northern Bohemia was still endangered, the association experienced another upturn in its activities and at the same time more local divisions were established. For instance, in 1926 the association had more than 96,000 members in 859 local divisions.⁴⁴

The place where the founding meeting of the national association took place, the association Měšťanská Beseda in Prague, became the centre for the association's further activities. As the association's amount of administrative work grew, the number of workers also increased. All correspondence was firstly dealt with by executives, and then during the meeting of the committee the documents were read and discussed. One clerk, a Mr. Bohdan, was not very keen on such organization and therefore decided to present a proposal during the meeting in April 1885. In the proposal he suggested that a book of "letters

⁴¹ PAVLÍČEK, p. 176.

⁴² ČENSKÝ, p. 9.

⁴³ Cf. more in detail: J. KUKLÍK – J. NĚMEČEK, *Od národního státu ke státu národnosti?. Národnostní statut a snahy o řešení menšinové otázky v Československu v roce 1938*, Praha 2013; A. TÓTH – L. NOVOTNÝ – M. STEHLÍK, *Národnostní menšiny v Československu 1918–1938. Od státu národního ke státu národnostnímu?*, Praha 2012.

⁴⁴ NA, fond NJS, kart. 4, inv. č. 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústředního výboru 1925–1926.

which were delivered and dealt with" was created. However, based on the record form that time, he was probably unsuccessful in his effort and therefore he presented his proposal repeatedly, each time without success.⁴⁵ Because of the growing amount of administrative work, Professor Ježek was appointed the director of the office one year after the establishment of the association and shortly after that the secretary position in the office of the National Association of Northern Bohemia was created.⁴⁶

The number of workers could not be increased for financial reasons at the end of 1900, when the amount of administrative work grew because of the establishment of the bulletin *Věstník of the National Association of Northern Bohemia*. Until then the association published its various articles in the bulletin *Český sever*, which was issued in the town of Terezín. The establishment of the journal was a logical step made by the association's workers, because it was the press that could become the basic means of getting supporters.

The first issue of the bulletin *Věstník of the National Association of Northern Bohemia* was published in October 1900. Subsequently, the bulletin was published regularly once a month in Prague. The first editor and publisher of the bulletin was Václav Hübner. Since the second year, Dr. Štumpf, previously the secretary of the association, assumed his position.

The bulletin was sent to all people interested for free to gain wider publicity. Apart from various organizational news, the readers could find in the bulletin short essays about the issue of minorities and education system, news about the arts and reviews of monographs on minorities. The bulletin also regularly included annual reports and records of the association's general meeting.⁴⁷ It is important to mention that the bulletin was only a printed material of the association and it was not supposed to fully replace minority newspapers such as

⁴⁵ Ibidem, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Zápisy ze schůzí ústředního výboru 1885–1889.

⁴⁶ According to the annual report for 1903–1904, a new registry was established in the period concerning mainly the association's correspondence. In 1903 more than 11,000 letters were delivered, nearly 5,000 sent, and approximately 66,000 packets were sent, while the number of workers in the office remained the same. On a few occasions several workers were temporarily hired. Ibidem, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Výroční zpráva NJS 1903–1904.

⁴⁷ PAVLÍČEK, p. 179.

Vyšehrad, which was published by Jan Klecanda, *Trutnovský Věštník* or *Český sever* in Libochovice.⁴⁸

In 1907 a change concerning the bulletin of the National Association of Northern Bohemia took place – the title *Věštník* was changed to *Stráž severu* and the publication frequency increased – a monthly bulletin became a weekly bulletin. Since 1911 *Stráž severu* was published only once every two weeks and later it became again a monthly bulletin.⁴⁹ During the first year of the war, 1914, the publication was partially limited and therefore only two issues of *Stráž severu* (vol. 14) were published. The publication was completely halted because of the war since mid-1914 until March 1919. In 1923 *Hraničář*, which united three border guard bulletins – *Stráž severu*, *Hraničář* in Ústí nad Labem and *Karlovarské listy*, was published for the first time. The activity of *Hraničář* was finally stopped by order of the Nazis in March 1939.

During the First Republic, the amount of work of the association increased considerably. This was undoubtedly caused by an extraordinary amount of correspondence from border guards. This correspondence was delivered to the National Association of Northern Bohemia mainly because of the ongoing land reform. The border guards were trying to reach a just settlement of their demands with the help of the National Association of Northern Bohemia. The increase in correspondence was also caused by the upturn on minority movements and the establishment of new local divisions.

In 1925 the National Association of Northern Bohemia received approximately 14,000 letters, which resulted in the need to increase the number of the workers in the office. The office started to be referred to as the central office of the National Association of Northern Bohemia. It employed two editors (Alois Sojka-Sokolovič and František Korynta), an accountant, cashier, assistant and another six officials.⁵⁰ It was also necessary that regional offices whose management was in the powers of the National Association of Northern Bohemia took over a part of the administrative work (e. g., in Hradec Králové or in Karlovy Vary). The member of the central committee, and later even the members of the academic division, helped with work of the office.⁵¹

⁴⁸ The bulletin *Vyšehrad* ceased to exist in 1902 and was replaced with small-scale, regional bulletins such as *Trutnovský Věštník* and *Stráž severu*.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ NA, fond NJS, kart. 4, inv. č. 1, Výroční zpráva NJS 1925.

From the beginning the association accepted both natural and legal persons. The members were divided into groups based on their contribution. The members were labelled as executive, active, real, founding and honorary. Whereas the founding members paid only once the sum of 200 crowns, the other groups paid annually a sum ranging between 1 and 10 crowns. In the first period of the association, i. e. until 1918, the following people were appointed honorary members: Václav Pařík z Třebenic,⁵² Karolína Světlá, Dr. Alois Pravoslav Trojan, Václav Strejcovský, Václav Šamánek z Liberce⁵³ and others.⁵⁴

After the formation of independent Czechoslovakia, the membership hierarchy became simpler and the members of the association were divided into active, founding and honorary members of the association. During the period of the First Republic, T.G. Masaryk, the then president, Gustav Habrman, Alois Jirásek, Karel Kramář and Jiří Stříbrný were some of honorary members.⁵⁵ When the new charter was published in 1932, the last change took place which led to the establishment of a category of contributing members who paid the enrolment fee but also contributions in a fixed amount set by the cen-

⁵¹ The members of the academic division published a bulletin titled *To the friends of the Czech minorities in the North*, which was managed by the editor PhC. E. Čeliš.

⁵² A national activist, Václav Pařík z Třebenic (1839–1901), was very active in the foundation of various educational and economic association in the course of the 19th century and he was also involved in the establishment of a school for boys in Třebenice. He was also involved in several organizations which supported the objectives of the Czech minority in the North of Bohemia. <http://www.mesto-trebenice.cz/mudr-vaclav-parik/d-11149/p1=4722> [2016–01–19].

⁵³ Václav Šamánek (1846–1916) was highly involved in the public life in the Liberec region. His political influence (he was a representative for the Young Czech Party in the Bohemian Assembly and the Reichsrat) enabled him to found Czech elementary schools in the northern border region of Bohemia. In 1907 he had an idea of establishing a Czech comprehensive high school in Liberec, which would lead to the arrival of the intelligentsia and strengthening of the position of the Czech minority in this region. Among other things, Šamánek was the chairman of many associations in Liberec (Dobročín, Sokol, etc.) and he also led the local division of the National Association of Northern Bohemia. At the end of the 19th century he founded a financial institution, which was very important for the Czech people living in Liberec and its surroundings – they were no longer dependent on German money, which resulted in an economic upturn of the Czech minority in the North of Bohemia. <http://www.jizerky.cz/dr-cs/17582-samane-vaclav.html> [2016–02–01].

⁵⁴ NA, fond NJS, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Stanovy NJS.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, kart. 8, inv. č. 4, Memoranda a resolute 1919–1938.

tral committee.⁵⁶ The members' contributions were used as the association's annual budget during the first years. Later, the association stopped collecting the enrollment fees and had to pay for the budget from voluntary contributions and inheritance, collections which were officially permitted, and revenues of events organized by the association (such as balls and lectures).

According to the charter, the association's main objective was "to contribute to the national, mental and material improvement of the regions in the North of the Bohemia".⁵⁷ It was necessary to learn in detail about the national and material conditions of the Czech minority so that the set objectives could be fulfilled successfully. According to the charter, anything that could result in the Czech people retaining, acknowledging and increasing their influence was supposed to be supported. The charter excluded dealing with political issues, which were not in the powers of the association. Even though the association was not politically engaged, its activities were rather strongly influenced by several political organizations, firstly, for instance, by the National Liberal Party, later by the Czech Constitutional Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party. During the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the national association cooperated mainly with the parties which leaned towards Czech nationalism.⁵⁸

The activities of the national association from the political-geographic perspective were aimed at "the fight in the Germanized areas and organization of help for the border regions".⁵⁹ The activities in the Germanized areas were the most difficult but also the most important. During the whole period of its activity in the all its regions, the National Association of Northern Bohemia was focused on cultural and social activities, it was also in charge of the Czech schools, organized various lecture series and public reading with the aim to support education. It was also considerably involved in issues concerning the economy, including the purchase of land, and the association was also active in charities.

The association's workers were tasked to first locate the members of the Czech minority and then to try to make contact with existing asso-

⁵⁶ Ibidem, kart. 8, inv. č. 6, Materiál k 50. výročí NJS 1885–1935.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, kart. 1, inv. č. 1, Stanovy NJS.

⁵⁸ ČENSKÝ, p. 16.

⁵⁹ PAVLÍČEK, p. 180.

ciations in a given locality as soon as possible. This national political activity gradually prepared the Czech regions for a census and elections to local authorities and the Bohemian Assembly. The first census which surveyed the so-called colloquial language (but not nationality) took place in 1880. It was a sort of "key" which was later used to determine the nationalities of the people in the monarchy. The results of the census were skewed because many Czechs were forced by German authorities and employers not to acknowledge the Czech colloquial language.⁶⁰

According to the charter the association could not directly participate in the election campaign; nevertheless, it was quite intensely involved in the events during the elections, especially during the elections to the local authorities at the language border through its local divisions.⁶¹ The Czech minority was subjected to frequent violent attacks in connection to the election campaign.

The association devoted considerable effort to the activities in the national economy even when the Austro-Hungarian Empire still existed. It helped to Czech sole traders, craftsmen and the working people in the threatened areas. It also helped to finance the Czech weaving and glass industry and brush and basket manufacturing. The association enabled individual border guards and local divisions to obtain favourable loans.⁶² Therefore it is not surprising to learn that the association decided to support the foundation of credit unions in villages and saving banks in towns.

The national association supported the growth in the amount of Czech property in the border and Germanized regions. It tried to stop the selling to Germans and it also bought property from Germans with the help of the so-called land fund, especially when there was no other buyer or when it considered the piece of property necessary for the border guard operations. The association bought even tenement blocks for the needs of the border guards, various estates and buildings where schools could be founded. The activities in the national economy were closely connected with social work. However, social

⁶⁰ NA, fond NJS, kart. 9, inv. č. 8, Národnostní statistika 1880–1930.

⁶¹ More about the election results in: *ibidem*, kart. 10–11, inv. č. 27, Volby do obecních zastupitelstev.

⁶² *Ibidem*, kart. 43–44, inv. č. 40, Půjčky poskytované NJS (odborům NJS 1929–1938, jednotlivcům 1885–1938).

work could be developed only when the association was in a good financial situation. The most common way of helping was by providing financial support to individual border guards. The majority of the people in the Germanized areas were workers, small-scale craftsmen, sole traders and poor farmers and workers in agriculture, who needed financial aid.

The National Association of Northern Bohemia usually paid repeatedly to miners, for instance as compensation for strikes and to their families in case the miners died in a mining disaster.⁶³ In addition, people directly persecuted by Germans also needed financial aid. These people were usually deprived of their home and work and they became entirely dependent on the association's assistance.

Social work was closely related to the preparation of the so-called Christmas events, which were organized in cooperation with the Central School Association. The events took place fairly frequently since 1893 and their main objective was to collect the essential clothes and shoes for children from families of poor border guards and also to make it possible for them to attend school regularly. The Christmas events were organized by a special Christmas committee which was supervised by the association's central committee.⁶⁴ Social work became much more important during WWI when the association tried to help both financial and psychically to the families whose providers had to leave for the war. The association proceeded in the same way after the events in Munich in 1938. The association, together with others, for instance Sokol, The Red Cross and so on, founded the Committee for Refugees which helped to find temporary accommodation for the people who had to leave their homes after the annexations of the border regions.

The National Association of Northern Bohemia also dealt with cultural issues. There were many of such activities. They were related to the foundation of schools and libraries, and the organization of specialized lectures. The association, with the assistance of other associations, tried to support the foundation of minority schools, help them financially and legally because the Germans tried to halt the establishment on minority schools. Books written in the Czech language

⁶³ Ibidem, kart. 45, inv. č. 41, Podpory poskytované NJS 1919–1938.

⁶⁴ PAVLÍČEK, p. 186.

were used to foster national awareness of the minority and therefore a great number of libraries were also established. The central committee even had the library division which was in charge of the management of individual libraries. The libraries were divided into public, students', theatre, and economic.⁶⁵

The lecture division was founded soon after the establishment of the association to be in charge of lecture organization. Many of the lecturers had a pedagogical education. The lectures organized in the interior regions were mostly informational and persuasive and they informed the listeners about the work of the minorities. The lectures organized in the border and Germanized regions were focused on popular topics, especially Czech history and literature. Other lectures were concerned with topical issues, such as elections or censuses.⁶⁶

Conclusion

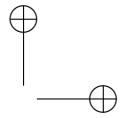
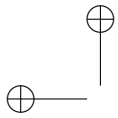
The National Association of Northern Bohemia was a significant protective association which performed its activities in the northern Bohemian regions since the mid-1890s. The association supported the Czech minority in the regions of Žatec, Hradec Králové, Litoměřice, Boleslav and Jičín, and was involved in economic, political, social and cultural activities. The members of the association were active during censuses, helped with the organization of elections and also bought manor estates and tenement blocks, which served for various purposes. The association also tried to support Czech industry. Among other things it also provided legal advice, financial support and various types of loans. It was very active in the education as well; it established libraries and organized specialized lectures.

The association was highly active during WWI, when it supported socially disadvantaged families and orphans. It continued the work during the First Czechoslovak Republic. At that time the association focused its activities in the border regions and protected the interests of the so-called border guards.⁶⁷ The National Association of Northern Bohemia helped the refugees from the border region in the period following the Munich Agreement, as did other similar organizations

⁶⁵ ČENSKÝ, p. 32.

⁶⁶ PAVLÍČEK, p. 188.

⁶⁷ They were the inhabitants of border regions who needed protection against the growing and strengthening German majority.



(e. g., the National Association of Southern Bohemia and the Central School Association).

Shortly after the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939 the association became part of the so-called National Association and as an individually working organization ceased to exist. The activities of the National Association were halted in 1943 and its property was later confiscated by the Nazis. The association renewed its activities soon after the liberation in May 1945, the new situation was not very favourable to its work. The association got back its former property after long and difficult negotiations, but its activities related to associations and education were not appreciated. After the Communist coup in February 1948, the activities of the National Association of Northern Bohemia were completely terminated.

