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History of Eastern Europe

Essay One Beginning

According to Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz, borderlands are “spaces-in-between, where identities are often malleable and control of the territory and population is up to dispute”. I examine a specific case of this statement: when the identities in question are national identities and the control of the territory is by a nation. In the borderlands, it is justified to talk of national boundaries and territories, even if there is no legal distinction between two territories. For instance, in southern Bohemia, Judson describes how “frontier peasants acted as border guards for their nation” (Judson, 124) even though no map will show line of this supposed “border”. Further, I will interpret “up to dispute” as the ability of some entity to influence these specified identities and territories. So, I ask the question “To what extent can *national* identities be changed and the control of a territory by a *nation* be altered”? And, in this essay I will argue that states and governments have little influence on these national boundaries; instead, various nationalist movements are the primary powers that have an influence on national boundaries and identities. I will use the borderland cases of Poland and Bohemia to first argue the lack of influence of a state on national territory and secondly demonstrate the influence of national movements on national boundaries.

* First, States have difficulty influencing national identities.
  + Case of Poland.
    - Introduce partition situation
    - argue that the Polish Nation is still alive
      * “[the Polish Nation’s] body lieth in the grave, but its spirit hath descended from the earth” (CP Mickiewicz 510)
    - It is true that from “Books of Polish Nation”, the goals of the various leaders was not necessarily to alter nationalism. But even so, the various leaders are not looked upon fondly (so would have a hard time influencing national identity).
      * “[Frederick] was like Satan” (CP Mickiewicz 508)
      * “[Maria Theresa] was a proud she-devil” (CP Mickiewicz 508)
      * Similarly unflattering words for Catherine
    - Discuss difficulty of the state to influence religion?
  + Case of Czech
    - Palacky
      * “The whole union of the Czech lands . . . with the German confederation, was always a mere dynastic tie” (CP Palack 2)
      * The invitation itself, from the German government to an influential Czech politician, is a sign that the government needs nationalists in order to influence the minds of the people.
      * From “The German Parliament” (CP Palacky 1)
      * With the aim of “expand the power and strength of the German Reich” (CP Palacky 1)
    - Holek and newspapers?
* Secondly movements as a whole can have success in altering national identities
  + Language frontiers in southern Bohemia
    - “Their rhetoric constituted a strategy to *create* new social boundaries” (Judson, 125)
    - School Associations
      * “Nationalists used gifts of clothing, shoes, books, or even money to persuade families to send their children to one school or another” (Judson 124)
      * “Better presents at Christmas‘
      * “[teachers] training had taken them to Prague, Graz, Brünn, or Vienna where they had become exposed to nationalist movements” (Judson 128)
        + So it is nationalist movements specifically have an influence at the frontier.
    - Tourism Organizations
      * “Czech association funded trips to Prague for groups of school-age children or young adults” (Judson 130)
      * “German Nationalists focused on bringing urban dwellers to the region for rural vacations” (Judson 130)
        + BOTH with the purpose of spreading nationalism
    - Possible counter argument: national movements made little progress.
      * Possible rebuttal “Any national indifference on the part of the villagers might cause the nation to lose numbers and territory to the enemy” (Judson 124). There is a battle and it is nationalism that is the force at play. Implies that nationalism *could* influence it. Not an influence from the state.
  + Austroslavism?
  + Magyarization?
* Discuss possible counter argument of a government changing the religion/language of the people by force?
* Conclusion