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THE RISING IMPASSE BETWEEN TWO GREAT CIVILIZATIONS: THE  
FORMATION OF THE CZECH NATION, AND CZECH-GERMAN RELATIONS  
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1918-1939

Final Paper  
History 489: Research Seminar  
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October 17, 2006

*Abstract:*

*This paper details the formation of a distinct Czech identity since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, until 1918 when this people group became a nation in the form of Czechoslovakia. From 1918 this paper highlights the advancement and difficulties of Czech relations with the German minority in Czechoslovakia, and a look at how and why the great Western powers sold Czechoslovakia out with the signing of the Munich Agreement in 1939. Finally this paper will look at what has happened in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War regarding the German minority in Czechoslovakia.*

Much has been debated, discussed, and grieved over the infamous ‘Munich’ Agreement of September 1938 whereby Nazi Germany annexed the Sudetenland<sup>1</sup> with the approval of the Western democracies of France and England. This takeover, which weakened the Czechoslovakian state, was a precursor to the greater unjustified act: the fall of the remainder entire Czechoslovak state under the total Nazi auspices. It is vital to look at the formation of Czech nationalism in history, the rise of Czech national status in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and at what transpired during the interwar period in Czechoslovakia<sup>2</sup> between the relationship of Czechs and Germans in order to comprehend Nazi takeover of this young nation. The Allies in the Second World War brought an end to the German Reich Protectorate in Bohemia and Moravia (the geographical area where Czechoslovakia was located from 1918 to 1939). A new chapter opened in 1945 as Czechoslovakia became a state again and a non sympathetic policy towards the German minority was initiated.

During the First World War the Czech people, long under German and Hapsburg control, aspired to statehood. This Czech aspiration for statehood had a symbiotic relationship with America’s new foreign policy, a policy authored by Woodrow Wilson,

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<sup>1</sup> Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*, trans. Alena Sayer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) : 26 Sudetenland is the German word for the Western area in Czechoslovakia which ethnic Germans lived.

<sup>2</sup> Beginning with Czechoslovak independence in 1918 and ending with this nation’s demise in 1939.

which spelled trouble for Germans who lived in Bohemia, and was a precursor to political instability in the region. As the Czechoslovaks' first president, Tomas Masaryk, warned, "...it cannot be denied that thus far we have been more diverted from the present toward the past than what is good for us..."<sup>3</sup> It is this diversion towards the past which hindered beneficial progress in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period. It is therefore necessary to look into the history and people of Bohemia and Moravia<sup>4</sup> in the past thousand years in order to accurately view what has materialized since the advent of the Czechoslovak state.

### **Formation of Czech Nationalism in History**

Czechs share a history in which they take pride. The Czech state dates to 895 A.D. when the Czechs dominated the lands of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>5</sup> In the 9<sup>th</sup> century Rastislav, ruler of the Moravians, requested the Byzantine Emperor Michael to send missionaries to Moravia and evangelize the people. Cyril and Methodius<sup>6</sup> were chosen for this mission. Once there, Cyril developed a unique alphabet called Glagolitic.<sup>7</sup> This made possible the translation of the Bible and development of a liturgy for worship. This new written language strengthened Rastislav's rule by advanced social and juridical development.<sup>8</sup> More importantly it planted the seeds of separate religious and linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> Tomas Masaryk, *Ceska Otazka*, 80. Taken from Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia* 155

<sup>4</sup> Moravia was an area to the east of Bohemia where the Czechs were prominent since the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> Frantisek Kavka, *An Outline of Czechoslovak History*, trans. Jarmila and Ian Milner (Prague: Orbis, 1960) : 9 and 25

<sup>6</sup> These two were later separately canonized as Saints by the Eastern Orthodox Church and by the Roman Church.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Dvornik, "The Significance of the Missions of Cyril and Methodius," *Slavic Review* vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (1964) : 197 N The Cyrillic alphabet, from which the language families of Slavic dialects in Eastern Europe are based upon, is thought to have developed by the Orthodox Slavs after Cyril composed Glagolitic.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 197. Rastislav's motive for calling on Byzantium for ecclesiastical organization of Moravia was thought to be political. Rastislav was dependent on the Frankish empire and wanted to free himself from its influence. He therefore made overtures toward Byzantium.

identity from that of Western Christendom. Although Cyril and Methodius advanced Christianity in Moravia, Eastern Orthodoxy was not a lasting religious element in Czech society. In the twelfth and thirteen centuries, a few hundred years after Cyril developed a written language for the Czechs, Bohemian rulers had encouraged German colonists to settle there. Germans became predominant in the western border areas and brought their own language and customs.<sup>9</sup>

One of the early Czechs to spur national identity was Jan Hus. He laid the seeds of the early Protestant movement. His reform movement which promoted views contrary to the belief of the Catholic Church proliferated widely throughout Bohemia and Moravia. He was, at length, excommunicated by the Catholic Church and subsequently burned at the stake in 1415, only to become a martyr.<sup>10</sup> The movement that Hus began did not end with his death; the Czechs adopted Protestant attitudes, such as an awareness of independence and hard work ethic. Put to use, such traits had the tendency to stimulate industry within Bohemia and Moravia, which made this land, already rich in natural resources, increasingly prosperous.

In early 17<sup>th</sup> century Protestants in Bohemia challenged their Habsburg Catholic rulers after certain rights were threatened. The Thirty Years' War started in Bohemia with a Protestant revolt against their new Catholic King. This led to a Protestant defeat at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. "The crushing humiliation the Czechs suffered at the end of that time hovered over the whole course of Czech history until 1918. White Mountain lived in the minds and memories of the Czech emigrants as a symbol of

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans: A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938) : 4

<sup>10</sup> Harrison Thomas, *Czechoslovakia in European History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953) : 69 to 85 and 89

Hapsburg oppression while they wandered over Europe, exiles from their own land.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, after 200 years of defiance in Bohemia, the Habsburgs gained control. Czechs in Bohemia were forced to recant their Protestant faith and were subject to the forced German influences on their culture. Three-fourths of the Czech land were confiscated and distributed among immigrating Germans.<sup>12</sup> In due time, by the end of the eighteenth century Czech culture revived. This age of enlightenment began the advancement of poetry, architecture, writings, art and music, while Czech identity thrived.<sup>13</sup>

This German and Hapsburg rule in the lands of Bohemia and Moravia would influence future generations of great local thinkers. Josef Dobrovsky, a Bohemian nationalist in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, delivered a speech in the presence of Austria’s Emperor Leopold II. In his address Dobrovsky “emphasized the right of the usage of the Czech language, and took a cautious but firm stand against any form of forceful Germanization.”<sup>14</sup> Speaking about his country’s history, the great Bohemian historian Frantisek Palacky wrote in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that Bohemian was “an almost unbroken conflict of political, religious, and national antitheses, a struggle for freedom in the face of absolutism in state and church, an advance and retreat of overwhelming German influences on Slavic soil.”<sup>15</sup> Palacky, called “the father of the nation” inspired the Czechs to identify with their Hussite heritage and wrote a substantial history of the Czech

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 113 to 115.

<sup>12</sup> Josef Korbel, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia: The Meanings of Its History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) : 9, In addition, Czech currency was debased and devalued by 85 percent, over half of land holdings were abandoned, main towns were in ruins, population in the kingdom of Bohemia dropped from 3 million to 800,000, and Czech culture and tradition was suppressed.

<sup>13</sup> See Derek Sayers, *The Coasts of Bohemia*

<sup>14</sup> Francis S. Wagner, “Szechenyi and the Nationality Problem in the Habsburg Empire,” *The Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XX no. 3 (Oct 1960) : 290

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Zacek, “Palacky and His History of the Czech Nation,” *The Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XXIII no. 4 (Jan 1964) :413

people.<sup>16</sup> He was one of the creators of the Czech national movement, which gave the Czech people legitimacy as an “emerging political force,” in the eyes of Europe.<sup>17</sup>(See Appendix A) Palacky offers a contrast between the two great civilizations:

“The Germans (like the Romans...Mongols, and Turks) made their first appearance in history as rapacious predators and conquerors. The Slavs (like the Jews and Greeks) were peaceful, industrious, and unskilled in warfare.”<sup>18</sup>

Palacky went on to say that after the defeat at White Mountain in 1620 a “New Period,” in fact, began, with the country “Germanized, Catholicized, and subject to the hereditary absolutism of the Habsburgs.”<sup>19</sup> Concerned about promoting the political and cultural aspirations of the Czech people he demanded the monarch’s recognition of historical rights of Bohemia and Moravia. This demand became known as the “declaration,” and backed was by patriotic demonstrations and mass meetings by Czechs.<sup>20</sup>

From this point in the late nineteenth century, the Czech national movement developed into a powerful phenomenon. A movement called Young Czechs, represented by a younger generation of Czechs, pressed for democratic development and more of a progressive stance on nationality involving autonomy from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition, the Czech national movement led to the formation of political parties representing a diverse range of interest. Although these actions taken by the Czechs increased institutions of democracy in Bohemia and Moravia, it would take a World War for the Czechs to unite, and for an independent state to be realized.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia* 10

<sup>17</sup> Stanley Z. Peck, *The Czech Revolution of 1848* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969) 335 to 336

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 420.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 421.

<sup>20</sup> Otakar Odlozilik, “Russia and Czech National Aspirations,” *The Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XXII no. 4 (Jan 1963) : 408 and 411

<sup>21</sup> Gregory Campbell, *Confrontation in Central Europe: Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975) : 7 to 13

## The Rise of Czech National Status in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The Czech national movement was remarkable in that, although it could be considered a rebellion, it was completely non violent. The reason for this may be attributed to the Czechs reaction to the Battle of White Mountain. This battle marked the end of active resistance by the Czech people towards the empires that claimed hegemony over them.<sup>22</sup> The Czechs adopted a policy of passive resistance which lasted to the end of the First World War. This passive resistance is personified in The Good Soldier Svejk. The writer, Jaroslav Hasek, depicts a Czech soldier who was forcefully drafted into the Austria-Hungarian Army in World War I.<sup>23</sup> In a series of whimsical “accidents” Soldier Svejk is really injurious to the war effort. Such attitudes were the Czechs ingenious way of resisting the enemy that could not be beaten.

Czechs were not all Svejkian in character. In the First World War many Czechs declared their loyalty to the Hapsburg Empire and fought in the Austrian army. Others defected to the Russians or were captured by them. The Czechs captured by Russia were later formed into a fighting unit called the Czech Legion, which was created to support the Russians in their fight against Germany on the eastern front. With the downfall of the Russian Tsar in 1917, entities such as the Czechoslovak National Council pressed to have these prisoners incorporated into a Czechoslovak military force that could take part in the war on the side of the allies on the western front.<sup>24</sup>

After the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of 1918, which ended the war between the new Soviet state and the Germans, the Czech Legion sought, with support from the Allies, to

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<sup>22</sup> Empires in order of rule: Austrian monarchies, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union.  
<sup>23</sup> Jaroslav Hasek, *The Good Soldier Svejk: And His Fortunes in the World War*, trans. Cecil Parrott (London: Penguin Books, 2000)  
<sup>24</sup> George Kennan, “The Czechoslovak Legion,” *Russian Review* vol, 16, no.4 (1957) : 4 to 5

exit Russia via the Trans-Siberian railroad to the east Russian port of Vladivostok in order to be picked up from that port by ship, and ultimately take part in operations on the western front. Tomas Masaryk, spokesman for the Legion and future Czechoslovakian President, received permission from Russian authorities to have the Legion leave Russia via Trans-Siberian and join the Allied (or Entente) forces in France.<sup>25</sup> Fighting on the western front would identify a separate Czech fighting unit as a contributing factor in the war effort. A Czech Legion fighting with the Allies would also enhance the legitimization of an independent Czech state after the war. The Soviet government permitted this trek on the railroad, but in March of 1918 the Czech Legion was delayed on this journey, perhaps out of Soviet fear that they might join the White Russian forces, who were conducting operations against the Bolshevik government. The Soviet government agreed to the evacuation of the Legion only if they gave up most of their arms. The Legion gave up some of their weapons, but so as to not be at the mercy of the Soviets, they retained many of them.<sup>26</sup>

In the meantime the Allies thought that the Legion's advance to the railroad was too slow so they came up with a plan to split the Corps, with one half going to the port cities of Murmansk and Archangel in the Northern Russia, while the other half would continue east on the railroad. The Legion holding these important northern port areas would keep them out of the hands of the Germans.<sup>27</sup> The French and British governments also had their own designs on Russia. They thought that the other half of the Legion

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 8 to 9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 13.

could move on to Vladivostok and cooperate with White Russian forces in Siberia to undermine and overthrow the new Soviet government after the war was finished.<sup>28</sup>

The Czech Legion's railroad passage east through Siberia was an historic achievement by the Czech Legion. The Legion never made it in time to the western front because the war had ended. Yet, the Allies, recognizing a chance to depose the Soviet regime, opted to give the Czechs statehood if the Czech Legion fought with White Russian forces against the Bolsheviks, and furthermore maintained control of the trans-Siberian railroad. In addition, the Tsarist government originally authorized the formation of the Czech Legion, and the Czechs had had a warm relationship with the Tsar.<sup>29</sup> The Legion effectively fought against the Bolsheviks and was finally able to leave Russia after the anti-Bolshevik White forces were defeated.<sup>30</sup> The Czechs now had an independent state and with the possession of the Czech Legion, the ability to defend itself.

In the midst of the war between the anti-Bolshevik Whites and Soviet Reds a situation emerged with the creation of the Czechoslovak state that had international significance. It became a land of refugees because it had "inspired American ideals for democracy as reflected in her socio-economic institutions and constitutional

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<sup>28</sup> George F. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene: Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958) : 157 to 165

<sup>29</sup> Harrison, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 282 to 283 Tsar Nicholas was sympathetic to a deputation of Czechs in Moscow in August of 1918. A month later, a deputation of Czechs and Slovaks told the Czar in Petrograd that they looked forward to the day when the crown of St. Vaclav should be joined to the crown of the Romanovs.

<sup>30</sup> Radomir Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) : 18 to 21. It has been argued that the Czech Legion may have been involved with an attempt to save the Tsar who was being held by the Bolsheviks. Shay McNeal, *The Secret Plot to Save the Tsar: New Truths Behind the Romanov Mystery* (New York: Perennial, 2003) : 106 to 113

government.”<sup>31</sup> President Masaryk and the Czechoslovakian government extended democratic conditions to all immigrant minorities, including Russian, Ukrainian and German.<sup>32</sup>

Czechoslovakia aided refugees, but Czechoslovakia itself was assisted by Czech emigrants who had settled in United States. A large population of Czechs lived throughout America, particularly the Midwest. After Prague, Chicago was the second largest Czech town and the Czech center in America. Remembrance of their homeland was also evident. The first generation to settle in America never lost interest in their home country. They belonged to many organizations which reflected their social, religious, and national origins.<sup>33</sup> “Their natural Slav love of freedom had become more intense under the fostering protection of the American flag.” These Czech Americans gave generous support to aid the work of Masaryk, and for the liberation of their homeland. Their great concern for a future Czechoslovak state was a decisive factor in the crucial years that lay ahead.<sup>34</sup>

Masaryk elicited Czech political influence in the United States so that his authority would be enhanced thereby promoting American recognition of Czechoslovak independence. In May of 1918 Masaryk went on a speaking tour that was meant to show the enthusiasm of American Czechs for the Czechoslovak for independence. In Pittsburg during this tour, Masaryk signed the Pittsburgh agreement. The direct purpose of this

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<sup>31</sup> V.E. Andic, “The Economic Aspects of Aid to Russian and Ukrainian Refugee Scholars in Czechoslovakia,” *The Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XXI no. 2 (July 1961) : 176 Those who emigrated from Germany included Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein, both of whom taught for a short time at the German University in Prague.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 178.

<sup>33</sup> Zbynek Zeman, *The Masaryks: The Making of Czechoslovakia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976) : 109 to 110

<sup>34</sup> Harrison, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 282 There were a million and a half Czechs and Slovaks living in America in 1914.

agreement was to demonstrate the support of the American Czechs for the efforts of the Czechoslovak National Council to achieve complete national independence.<sup>35</sup> This Czech population in the United States was no doubt a small factor in the creation of the Czechoslovak state.

### **Czech National Status and Czech/German relations within Czechoslovakia**

While the allies recognized the existence of a Czechoslovak state, for Germany and Austria, Czech aspirations for independence and its dealings with the German population in Bohemia became a different kind of daunting task. The governments of Austria and Germany dealt cautiously with Czech national aspiration. German parties in Austria passed a resolution that “recognized the Slav nations,” formally under its control, to “organize their own national states, rejecting, however, ‘the subjugation of German territories by these national states.’”<sup>36</sup> At this point Hapsburg political power had been diminished due the war. Furthermore, ethnic people groups once part of the historic Hapsburg lands, were now forming political entities and declaring their own independence, while being recognized by the allied powers who won the war.

Because of these nationalistic developments that threatened past holdings, in late 1918, Germany attempted to form a close political and economic union, or *Anschluss*, with Austria. This close relationship sparked a movement for the “unification of all Germans living in the mid-European area.” “Realizing that *Anschluss*” with Germany “was their only salvation” against Czech aspirations for Nationhood, said Count Wedel,

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<sup>35</sup> Campbell, *Confrontation in Central Europe* 37 to 38

<sup>36</sup> Arthur G. Kogan, “Genesis of the Anschluss Problem: Germany and the Germans of the Hapsburg Monarchy in the Autumn of 1918,” *Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XX no. 1 (April 1960) : 25

the German Ambassador to Vienna, “the ground is prepared for a large-scale irredentist movement which could possibly sweep the whole German population.”<sup>37</sup>

The concept of a sweeping German irredentist movement may have been exaggerated. Even so, concern among the Bohemian German population fearing a newly independent Czechoslovakia asked for assistance from Germany. Subsequently, the Germans proposed to secretly supply Bohemian Germans with arms, ammunition, and food.<sup>38</sup> On this issue, the German Foreign Office decided that before “aid” could be provided to Bohemian Germans, “it was necessary for the German-Austrians to establish a strong state of their own.” This German-Austrian state would take the place of the defeated Austro-Hungarian Empire and include all the German speaking people in the areas of the former Empire. Creating a large and powerful German-Austria would ensure hegemony over former Slavic holdings. Then intervention in Bohemian affairs could be made by Austria itself, coming to the aid of their ethnic kinsmen who belonged to the former Empire.<sup>39</sup> Ambassador Wedel, expressing concern that “establishment of a Czech state would practically shut off the Bohemian Germans from the rest of the Austrian Germans...,” argued that action must be taken “in support of the Bohemian Germans.”<sup>40</sup> Wedel contended that Germany, along with a newly created German-Austria, step in the ring and do something for the Bohemian Germans before it was too late.

Wedel added a further justification for action. Northern Bohemia had rich coal resources, and Bohemia itself, a major industrial area since the mid eighteenth century,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 24 to 25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 26 to 27.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 27. Ethnic kinsmen meaning fellow Germans. Regarding the aid to Bohemian Germans, it was decided by the German Foreign Office that “initiative must be taken by the Austrian Germans themselves and not by the German Reich, since steps in that direction ‘would at once become known in Washington and London and would be exploited as evidence of imperialistic aspirations with respect to [Germany’s] ally’” (Austria).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 27.

was once called the Austrian monarchy's most important industrial area.<sup>41</sup> By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, over 67 percent of the Empire's mining and metallurgical industries were found in the Czech lands.<sup>42</sup> The "Incorporation of northern Bohemia with its rich coal resources would be a great gain for our fatherland," said Wedel. "Secession," of German Bohemia, Wedel concluded, "must be promoted directly," by Berlin.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly German leadership took a concentrated interest in events taking place in Bohemia. Military intervention and the annexation of territory was even considered.<sup>44</sup> Amongst German Military planners, there was a rising anti-Slav sentiment and regret that Anschluss between Germany and Austria had not come years earlier. Specifically, the 1867 compromise that formed the Dual Monarchy between the Austrians and Hungarians did not include a policy of alignment with Germany which would have included a domestic policy "aiming to strengthen the 'Germanic' element against the Slavs."<sup>45</sup>

At this juncture, an Anschluss between Germany and Austria, which could have happened years earlier, came too late. Otto Baur, the leading theoretician of the socialist left wing in Austria's government, still argued, however, that Austria could retain its territorial control over the Czech areas only with union with Germany.<sup>46</sup> Any hope to prevent the empire's disintegration was dashed by an official note sent from President

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<sup>41</sup> Herman Freudenberger, "Industrialization in Bohemia and Moravia in the Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XIX no. 4 (Jan 1960) : 347

<sup>42</sup> Harrison, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 340

<sup>43</sup> Kogan, "Genesis of the Anschluss Problem" 27 to 28

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 30. The Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy, fearing German irredentism, allowed the Czechs to rise at the expense of the Germans. This "disastrous policy" had produced the present conditions.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

Wilson which articulated his support for the nationalistic aspirations of the Czechs, and that “mere autonomy of these people as a basis for peace” was unacceptable.<sup>47</sup>

In October of 1918 a provisional government of German-Austria was formed. This new state lay claim to and encompassed areas of the former Habsburg lands settled by ethnic Germans.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1918, a new independent state of Czechoslovakia was declared,<sup>49</sup> and began the process of absorbing the German element into the Czech state. In early November a call from a German representative in Czechoslovakia to the German Foreign Office asked for “military help to protect the German population...against looters.”<sup>50</sup> Germany did not respond with troops for fear of war with Czechoslovakia. Since the end of the war was very close, the German government refused to take responsibility for an action that would undermine Germany’s ability to secure a favorable peace settlement.<sup>51</sup> A strong German policy in what they considered Bohemia was thereupon weakened.

New developments surfaced in Czechoslovakia. A province with an elected government was created by the Bohemian Germans called Sudetenland. German-Austria approved of this province and declared its jurisdiction over it. Two days before this “approval”, the Sudetenland area was claimed and annexed in the new Czechoslovak State.<sup>52</sup> The Germans in newly formed Czechoslovakia witnessed an ironical twist. It was

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>49</sup> The Czechs cited Wilson’s Fourteen Points, specifically, national self-determination. The formal State of Czechoslovakia was formed in Pittsburg on May 30<sup>th</sup> 1918. The tenth point states: ‘The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development.’

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 41 to 42.

<sup>52</sup> In 1918 after Czechoslovakia was declared a new state German leaders in the Sudetenland region refused to recognize it. The Treaty of Saint Germain broke up Austria-Hungary in 1919 and affirmed that Bohemia and Moravia should be apart of the new Czechoslovakian state. Czechoslovakia’s

permissible for the Czechs to declare independence, but when over three million Germans<sup>53</sup> called for self determination, they were denied by the very leaders who had championed the theory--President Wilson and the Allied victors of World War I.

The government of Germany, and Germans living in Czechoslovakia were now in a predicament. Peaceful coexistence between Germany and Czechoslovakia would reap “great economic and political opportunities.” Nevertheless, Ambassador Wedel suggested that support of the Bohemian Germans must be provided “if they request German help in resisting incorporation in Czechoslovakia.” Sailing much closer to the wind Wedel continued, “For we are and we shall be the leading people among the German tribes and less than ever can we now shirk our duty toward our national community.”<sup>54</sup>

Wedel’s remarks, are reminiscent of medieval German folklore which incorporated the idea and re-birth of German nationhood. His thoughts could also be considered as genuine concern for the German people. Uniting the German speaking areas was a concern for German-Austria, yet losing the war made this initiative not possible. Holding on to these territories, where Germans lived, by force was becoming an unrealistic policy.

Certainly, the saga of political actors and diplomats charged with relations with Bohemia and later Czechoslovakia is an important study. However, historiography on the political development and diplomatic fronts leading up to the formation of Czechoslovakia deciphers only a portion of the story. It is important to look at the Czechs and Germans – the people - who lived ordinary, yet fulfilling lives together in the same

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borders were made possible by the peace treaty of Versailles, Trianon, and Neuilly. The Sudetenland would also be apart of this new state.

<sup>53</sup> Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans* 124. 3,123,624 Germans, 1921 census results.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

land. Cultural interchange between the Czechs and Germans in Bohemia before the creation of the Czechoslovak state was strong. “Germans and Czechs had lived so closely together for many centuries that a kind of osmosis between literary, musical, artistic, and scholarly activities resulted.”<sup>55</sup> This cultural interchange, by 1918, “represented the end of an age. The unique interrelationship between” Czechs and Germans “declined in the different setting of the new state” (Czechoslovakia) “in which the primacy of Czech culture was firmly established.”<sup>56</sup>

A future in the new Czechoslovak state looked brighter for Bohemian Germans than they had expected; the plight of the Germans in Czechoslovakia took an optimistic course. Large-scale expulsion of German citizens was prevented and a promise was made by the Czech government to Consul Gebtsattel, Germanys official representative in Prague, that German citizens would be left undisturbed.<sup>57</sup> Government in Prague, the Czechoslovak capital, did not at first allow full political autonomy for minorities.<sup>58</sup> Conversely, in short time Tomas Masaryk, Czechoslovakia’s first president, worked “tirelessly” in reaching a mutual understanding with German minority.<sup>59</sup> The Constitution of 1920 afforded protection of minorities. Racial minorities were also protected by the guarantees of certain universal rights such as equal franchise with proportional representation.<sup>60</sup> (See Appendix B) Chapter VI of the Constitution was

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<sup>55</sup> Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire: 1526-1918* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1974) : 533

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 538. This relationship ceased entirely at the end of the interwar period.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 43 to 45.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Kraus and Allison Stanger, *Irreconcilable Difference: Explaining Czechoslovakia’s Dissolution* ( New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000) : Introduction

<sup>59</sup> Josef Korbel, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia*. Amnesty for resisters of the Czechoslovak state, protection of national, religious, and racial minorities, right of minorities to use their own language, land reform laws beneficial to German farmers, national and cultural identity in the area of education, and full political freedom.

<sup>60</sup> Bohemicus, *Czechoslovakia and the Sudete Germans* (Prague: Orbis Publishing Co., 1938) : 29

entitled 'Protection of National, Religious and Racial Minorities. This Chapter together with a language law insured rights of minorities on multiple levels. The Constitution also included a section which gave freedom of access to public employment and the free and general use of 'any language whatsoever.'<sup>61</sup> Masaryk said the German minority was 'an organic part of the State.'<sup>62</sup> Yet new language examinations legislated by the Czechoslovak government were purposely made too difficult to pass. The Czechoslovakian army officer corps, for example, was staffed almost exclusively by Czechs, who replaced German officers that failed the language exam. Many Germans thought that Czech, the established language, was an unnecessary intrusion on their lives. "They complained of such examples as the ordinance which required that the menus in all hotel restaurants, even in the most purely German areas, must contain 'Czechoslovak.'"<sup>63</sup> Official use of Czech was emplaced in public life.

From the beginning of the Czechoslovak State the Sudeten Germans insisted upon their right of self determination. "Not only had they lost their territorial identity, they also felt that their whole existence as an ethnic group was threatened."<sup>64</sup> They protested the Constitution that was 'forced' upon them. Their struggle in the early years of the Czechoslovak Republic, therefore, was against the government in Prague. Germans were also angry at the changing of "historical frontiers that enclosed...districts...wholly German in character which had for a thousand years been part and parcel of the Sudete lands." Believing that their heritage was in jeopardy, German cooperation with this new

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<sup>61</sup> Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans* 120 to 121

<sup>62</sup> Bohemicus, *Czechoslovakia and the Sudete Germans* 27

<sup>63</sup> Herman Kopecek, "Zusammenarbeit and Spoluprace: Sudeten German-Czech Cooperation in Interwar Czechoslovakia" *Nationalities Papers* vol. 24 no. 1 (1996) : 66

<sup>64</sup> Ronald M. Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formation of Nazi Foreign Policy* (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1975) : 42

Czechoslovak state was not forthcoming. “Czechoslovak leaders invited their German counterparts to work with them but insisted on proceeding from the premise of uniting the German areas to the new state. The Germans rebuffed this notion, figuring that Czechoslovakia was a transitory entity and that German areas of the new state could eventually be joined to either Austria or Germany.”<sup>65</sup> Attempts to separate German areas from Czechoslovakia failed.<sup>66</sup>

From 1918 to the late 1920s German representation in civil service was poor compared to their population. However, social equality and representation in government improved for the German minority. In 1926 the German minority parties finally “gave up their negativistic attitude toward the government and accepted post in the cabinet.”<sup>67</sup> A large section of the Germans population, from 1926 to 1935 “collaborated sincerely and effectively with the government.”<sup>68</sup> In the early 1930s, German activist gained political influence and joined the government, while Germans found employment in all branches of government.<sup>69</sup> Equality in education was remarkable. 95 percent of all Germans in elementary and secondary schools were instructed in German by German teachers. In fact, the government spent more money per German pupil than it did on Czech students.<sup>70</sup> There was a noticeable difference between Czechoslovakia German schools and German

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<sup>65</sup> Kopecek, “*Zusammenarbeit and Spoluprace*” 65

<sup>66</sup> German-Austria lost its claim to Sudetenland in the Peace Conference of the Treaty of Saint-Germain.

<sup>67</sup> Harrison, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 331

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 333.

<sup>69</sup> Victor S. Mamatey and Radomir Luza, ed., *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) : 183 to 184

<sup>70</sup> Harrison, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 345 to 346 In addition to this: there were more German schools per pupil than Czechoslovak.

schools in Germany.<sup>71</sup> This graph shows that German elementary students may have been better in Czechoslovakia than in Germany.

	Average Number of Pupils per elementary grade	Number of pupils per teacher
Germany	40.3	42.4
Czechoslovakia German Schools	34.3	34.2

In 1935 Edvard Benes was elected Czechoslovakia’s second president. It was his “firm intention” to establish the principle of absolute equality for all nationalities within the State.<sup>72</sup> He recognized that the German minority struggled for a due share in the conduct of the State policy.<sup>73</sup> The Germans recognized the State and its existing constitution.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, by 1933 national German parties in the Sudetenland pushed for greater autonomy and eventually resorted to violent action.

In the Early 1920s Adolf Hitler, born not too far from Bohemia, took control of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP) in Munich. Like the movement Hitler started in Germany, the Czechoslovak D.N.S.A.P. was anti-Semitic and anti-democratic. “It was racialist and Pan-German, desiring the union of all German-speaking people in one Reich, it even adopted the very same banners and uniforms of the Nazis in Germany.” During the 1920s Czechoslovak D.N.S.A.P. party increased its numbers in Parliament.<sup>75</sup>

Many younger Germans were negative towards Czechoslovakia and some were attracted to the Nazis. Many, however, found the Nazis too extreme and withdrew to less extreme youth movements where membership swelled. German youth societies, such as

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<sup>71</sup> Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* 184 Taken from: *Statistical yearbook of the Czechoslovak Republic 1938* (Prague, 1938)

<sup>72</sup> J.W. Bruegel, “German Diplomacy and the Sudeten Question before 1938” *International Affairs* vol. 37, no. 4 (1961) :329 to 330

<sup>73</sup> Bohemicus, *Czechoslovakia and the Sudete Germans* 27

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>75</sup> Wiskmann, *Czechs and Germans* 135

the *Volkspart*, *Kameradschaftbund*, and later the *Bereitschaft*, formed providing ideas of romantic German mysticism, and urged union with Germany. “The young men from Bohemia dreamed happily of Bohemia’s medieval traditions and the German mission to save it again.” Speakers who promoted ideas such as *das Bundische*, an organic binding together of all Germans, came from Germany, and a great deal of money was sent to Sudeten German associations from Germany. This had the effect of increasing Pan-German thinking.<sup>76</sup>

Another German movement developed parallel to the youth movement. This was the *Heimatbewegung*, a group which focused on literary and ethnographic studies. Its mission was to preserve the past: “Through research into the *Volk* institutions of the Sudeten homeland, a number of young scholars hoped to make their people aware and proud of their folk heritage. Once this pride and folk consciousness had been developed, it would be but a short step to proclaiming the necessity of unity as a means of preserving a threatened tradition.”<sup>77</sup>

In foreign policy Czechoslovakia showed promise of becoming a nation that could stand firm with strong European neighbors. International organizations strengthened Czechoslovakia. There existed the alliance of the Little Entente, a mutual defense pact formed in 1920 between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Also, the League of Nations, the international collective security organization formed after the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 134 to 139.

<sup>77</sup> Smelser, *The Sudeten Problem 1933-1938* 46 “Taken separately these various organizations and movements were relatively small and unimportant, but together they formed an extensive network of agencies that educated the masses of Sudeten Germans to their roles in the original settlement of the Historic Provinces and spread the ideas of unity ... as a solution to the contemporary problems of the German people in the new Czechoslovak state.

First World War. Furthermore, there was Czechoslovak Alliance with France<sup>78</sup> in 1924 assured the appearance of safety for Czechoslovakia years to come.<sup>79</sup>

This apparent blanket of safety was not to last long, however. The process that unraveled of Czechoslovak security began with the Locarno settlement. This settlement drew Germany's borders in the west, but ignored the eastern frontier with Poland and Czechoslovakia. It promised improved relations between Germany and its relationship with Western Europe while turning a nose to Eastern Europe. This border change reduced France's position on the Rhine and made military aid traveling from France to Czechoslovakia difficult. Hence, the French alliance system in Eastern Europe was effectively diluted. This and the relative weakness of the Little Entente made Czechoslovakia susceptible to a German power grab.<sup>80</sup>

By April of 1936 Hitler had big plans for Europe. German violation of the Versailles and Locarno Treaties were ignored by France and Britain when Hitler sent troops into the Rhineland in March of 1936. Western Germany was now properly defensible, and Hitler, encouraged by this aggressive step having gone unchecked "could now turn east."<sup>81</sup> Hitler began negotiation with Czechoslovakia by appearing to negotiate a peace settlement. Albrecht Haushofer, an adviser in Joachim von Ribbentrop's foreign ministry,<sup>82</sup> took a leading role in policy initiatives regarding German relations with Czechoslovakia. Specifically, Haushofer looked for ways that "Germany might take

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<sup>78</sup> France, worried about future German aggression, sought to check Germany power in the East by the formation of Alliances with Poland and Czechoslovakia.

<sup>79</sup> Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* 216 to 224

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 225. The Little Entente was economically weak, had a division of interest, and was undermined by the signing of the Rome protocols by Italy, Austria, and Hungary.

<sup>81</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Secret Hitler-Benes Negotiations in 1936-1937" *The Journal of Central European Affairs* vol. XIX no. 4 (Jan 1960) : 366

<sup>82</sup> Ribbentrop was a sort of independent foreign adviser to Hitler and held his own office. Ibid, 367.

advantage of her new position.” The frontier between the Sudetenland and the rest of Bohemia and Moravia had been indistinct since Germans settled in Sudetenland in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>83</sup> Haushofer suggested a German-Czech Compromise, which entailed German agreement to not raise the boundary question “for an appropriate period of time” and in return, the Sudeten Germans would have complete cultural autonomy and economic equality. Aside from the Sudeten German question, negotiation to increase trade between Germany and Czechoslovakia was also an option.<sup>84</sup>

Haushofer’s suggested policy soon bore fruit. He was able to negotiate with the Czechoslovak minister to Berlin, Vojtech Mastny along these lines. Mastny was favorable towards the idea that an understanding could be reached regarding Sudeten German autonomy and on the increase of trade. Subsequently, Haushofer met with President Benes. Benes favored improved relations with Germany. He was ready and willing to open negotiations with Germany and sign a comprehensive treaty, even without the Western powers involved. Benes was excited about increasing German-Czech trade. On the issue of Sudeten Germans, “Benes expressed his wish that Germans in Czechoslovakia be satisfied.” This paved the way for future talks about the Sudeten Germans.<sup>85</sup>

The Czech government expected a quick conclusion of the negotiated terms. Yet things looked different on the German side. Improving the condition of the Germans in Czechoslovakia was of no interest to Hitler. He wanted Germany to be ready for war by 1940 and had no desire to settle a peace treaty with Czechoslovakia, even if it meant

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<sup>83</sup> Vojtech Mastny, *The Czechs Under Nazi Rule: The Failure of National Resistance, 1939-1941* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971)

<sup>84</sup> Weinberg, “Secret Hitler-Benes Negotiations in 1936-1937” 367

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 369 to 370.

improving the lot of the Sudeten Germans. A treaty “would hinder, not help his plans.” This motivation was clarified when Hitler wrote the German minister in Prague. “The fact must not be lost sight of that, if complications should arise between Germany and Czechoslovakia, the arbitration treaty may prove an inconvenient restriction on our freedom of action.”<sup>86</sup> This shows that Hitler was never seriously interested in a settlement with the Czech government. “As for the Sudeten Germans, the man to whom most of them looked for help was interested only in the help they might give him.”<sup>87</sup>

During the Munich Agreement Hitler represented the Germans of Sudetenland as victims. He made the argument that the 3.5 million Germans should have self determination. At the time of this agreement there was a general feeling in Europe that the Germans had not been dealt correctly in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Hitler catered to their doubts. Another phenomenon which fed appeasement of the Nazis was the Oxford Oath. The Oxford Union Society is a private debating society located at Oxford University in England. Michael Foot, an influential speaker in the Union demanded the immediate withdrawal of Great Britain in European entanglements. This was part of the pacifist movement of young statesmen of the time.<sup>88</sup> In 1933 in a famous debate at the Union a motion was passed stating “That the House will under no circumstance fight for King and Country.” This became the infamous ‘Oxford Oath’ which became well known in England and which prompted Winston Churchill to call it “that abject, squalid, shameless avowal.” Later this motion was blamed for encouraging Hitler to start the Second World War knowing that Britain would not fight.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 373 to 374.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 374.

<sup>88</sup> David Walter, *The Oxford Union: Playground of Power* (London & Sidney: Macdonald & Co Ltd, 1984) 78-82 I would like to thank Dr. Lazda on valuable information he provided me concerning the Oxford Oath.

Czechoslovakia was also threatened internally. Konrad Henlein was a German politician in the Czechoslovak government, who was initially thought to be pro-Czechoslovak and not sympathetic with the Nazi cause. In 1933 Henlein became leader of a movement called the Sudeten Homeland Front. This group formed because there was support to unite all Germans in a united front, and because of German discontent with government policies. Henlein's movement gained huge support in the parliamentary elections of 1935. Berlin paid for the entire expense of Henlein's costly election campaign.<sup>89</sup> His party, renamed (SdP), garnered two-thirds of all German votes. The remaining German parties formed a coalition with Henlein's SdP, or were eventually dissolved.<sup>90</sup> On December 9<sup>th</sup> 1935 Henlein spoke in front of English intellectuals at Chatham House in London.<sup>91</sup> In his speech he advocated an amicable political relationship between the Czechs and Germans involving the minority issue. He stressed that the problems the two sides face could be worked out within the framework of the Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>92</sup> Henlein displayed some disappointment with the Czechoslovak government policy on the Germans, but he made this statement:

After the horrors of bloodshed in 1914 to 1918 no responsible statesmen should ever again think of employing war as an implement of politics. Should a war be waged between Germany and Czechoslovakia arising out of disputes over Sudetendeutsche problems, it could bring nothing but nameless misery to my native country, since the latter must of necessity then become the seat of war. Nor could such a trial of arms obtain for the Czech nation any lasting advantages.<sup>93</sup>

The well informed British intellectuals, in a question and answer session after the speech, pressed Henlein on the nature of his apparent relations with Hitler. The dangers of Nazis

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<sup>89</sup> Bruegel, "German Diplomacy and the Sudeten Question before 1938" 329

<sup>90</sup> Herman, "*Zusammenarbeit and Spoluprace*" 72 to 74

<sup>91</sup> Konrad Henlein, "The German Minority in Czechoslovakia," *International Affairs* vol. 14, no. 4. (1936) : 561-572.

<sup>92</sup> Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 378

<sup>93</sup> Henlein, "The German Minority in Czechoslovakia" 566

anti-Semitism and the undemocratic nature of this regime were already known. They also expressed concern about Henlein's Sudeten German Party (SdP), which was known to be a thinly camouflaged Nazi party,<sup>94</sup> and how, if it obtained power and influence, it would undermine the status and welfare of Czechoslovakia. Henlein defended himself by indicating he had no relations with Hitler and that he was a loyal Czechoslovak statesman. Henlein continued to officially deny ties to the Nazi party in Germany.<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, at the time of this speech Henlein received a regular salary from the Nazi party in the Reich.<sup>96</sup> The intellectuals turned out to be right. "With the growing aggressiveness of Hitler's foreign policy, Henlein abandoned one democratic pretense after another. Until the last possible moment, however, he denied striving for union of the German-inhabited parts of Czechoslovakia with Germany."<sup>97</sup>

In 1937, after Henlein's SdP party won the majority of German votes, it became a radical separatist Party while Henlein became the most important pro-Nazi politician in Czechoslovakia. Henlein's party, instead of working with the Czechoslovak government to increase equality and autonomy for Germans, stepped up demands so as to make an agreement impossible. He issued vague demands for complete Sudetian autonomy. This was exactly how Hitler wanted Henlein to act towards the Czechoslovak government. In March of 1938 Hitler ordered that 'demands should be made by the Sudeten German which are unacceptable to the Czech Government.'<sup>98</sup> This shows that once again, Hitler cared nothing for the betterment and longevity of Germans who had peacefully worked in

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<sup>94</sup> Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* 182

<sup>95</sup> "NAZI TIES DENIED BY 'CZECH HITLER' *The New York Times*, 25 April 1936.

<sup>96</sup> Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History* 378

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 182 to 183. "German Diplomacy and the Sudeten Question before 1938" 327 "It is still widely believed that Henlein was originally not an agent of Hitler, but that he tried independently to achieve Sudeten German autonomy inside Czechoslovakia and only came under the tutelage of the Third Reich later."

<sup>98</sup> "German Diplomacy and the Sudeten Question before 1938" 331

the framework of the Czechoslovak state. Instead, his own designs upon Czechoslovakia called for the use of radical German elements to offer a false legitimacy for future annexation.

Henlein was finally undeniably caught with his hand on the till, revealing his true colors, when in September 1938, at the order of Hitler, he “suddenly threw off the mask, fled to Germany and proclaimed his adherence to a full-fledged separatist program.”<sup>99</sup> Later, after Czechoslovakia was illegally annexed by Hitler, Henlein became Sudeten Gauleiter.<sup>100</sup> He “ruthlessly denied to the large Czech minority many rights which he had claimed from the Czechs.”<sup>101</sup>

The Czechs no doubt felt betrayed by Henlein and the German population. With the takeover of Sudetenland by Germany, 750,000 Czechs were forcibly expelled. Before Adolf Hitler, Neville Chamberlain, and Benito Mussolini signed the Munich Agreement on September 9<sup>th</sup> 1938. The next day President Benes broadcasted an appeal.<sup>102</sup> (See Appendix C) “Abandoned by the West, isolated by the enmity of neighboring states, powerless, Benes and Czechoslovakia bowed to the diplomatic formula of Munich, which meant the end of the first Czechoslovak Republic.”<sup>103</sup> The big powers that negotiated the Munich Agreement, which signed over Sudetenland to Germany, did not consult the Czechoslovak government. The remainder of Bohemia was taken over by Nazi Germany within a few months, and by March 1939 Czechoslovakia no longer existed.

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<sup>99</sup> R. W. Seton –Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965) : 394

<sup>100</sup> He was the political head of the Sudeten district in Nazi Germany.

<sup>101</sup> Seton –Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* 394

<sup>102</sup> Luza, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* 187

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

One of the contributing factors in Czechoslovakia's demise was its reliance on the League of Nations. The mission of the League of Nations, as stated in its covenant, was "to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security."<sup>104</sup> The Nazi takeover of Sudetenland demonstrated the League of Nations was ineffective in dissuading Germany from taking aggressive action. With or without the League, neighboring European states were unprepared and unwilling to stand up to Germany and use force if necessary. This put extra weight on the balance of power in favor of Germany. Nazi Germany could act aggressively knowing that the big powers would not act with military force. After annexing what was known as Czechoslovakia, Nazi Germany made a pact with the Soviet Union that split half of Poland between the two powers. All nations in Europe would soon be in jeopardy.

The First World War was the beginning of the decline of the German people as a great political force. Minorities in the German and Austrian lands were finally given a chance at independence. The Czechs seizing the moment insured a successful transition to nationhood. Political conditions may have given the Czech a state of their own. However, the Czechs from the beginning of their history have been a nation. This nation is not one that required boundaries that had to be recognized by other powers in order to gain statehood, it was not one that was sold to Nazi Germany for appeasement, rather it was a nation wrought in the life blood of the people. Elements of this nation can be heard in the music of the Czech composer Bedrich Smetana, it can be seen in the artwork of Alfons Mucha, and it can be found in the hearts of Czechs and Germans in Bohemia and

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<sup>104</sup> *Research Guide to the League of Nations Documents and Publication* (League of Nations Statistical and Disarmament Documents, Northwestern University) <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/league/background.html> (Date last accessed 11/18/06).

Moravia, Czechoslovakia, and the Czech Republic. This kind of nation will never be defeated.

### **Post War Developments**

The Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia gave the Czechs an argument for the forced removal of most Germans after World War II. After the war, feelings of betrayal were instituted in state policy. “The Benes Decrees” were a series of laws issued by the Czechoslovak government in exile during World War II.<sup>105</sup> These decrees directly affected the German minority of post World War II Czechoslovakia. The decrees took property and citizenship away from most ethnic Germans within Czechoslovakia, dissolved all German institutions of higher education, and forced the deportation of a large majority of ethnic Germans. By August 1945, 600,000 Germans were driven out of Czechoslovakia. A more orderly “transfer” was achieved by October 1946 when a further 2,165,135 Germans were deported to Germany. There were atrocities during this expulsion. German sources name about 19,000 people who died, over 5,500 of them violently. Unnamed casualties would raise the number to possibly 50,000.<sup>106</sup> Witnesses say that along with many forms of violence, countless women were raped.<sup>107</sup>

The Soviet Union, the occupier of Czechoslovakia, encouraged mass deportation of Germans. In 1946 the Communist Party won 38 percent of the vote in Czechoslovakia and slowly took control of the government through non-democratic measures. The

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<sup>105</sup> *Decree of President Dr. Benes concerning the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors, and their accomplices, and concerning the special peoples court. Decree number 16.* (Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten German Survivors Speak Out, original documents from June 19, 1945). <http://www.wintersonnenwende.com/scriptorium/english/archives/whitebook/desg88.html> (Date last accessed 11/16/06). During the Second World War the Czechoslovak government in exile was located in Moscow.

<sup>106</sup> Sayer, *The Coast of Bohemia* 242

<sup>107</sup> *Benes Decrees, A spectre over Central Europe* (The Economist, 15 August 2002) [http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=1284252](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=1284252) (Date last accessed 10/20/06)

bittersweet relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union began with a positive twist with the Soviet liberation of the country. Ludvik Svoboda, later the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, praised the Soviet Union as liberators and Czechoslovakia's greatest friend.<sup>108</sup>

After the German removal, groups such as the Sudeten German National Union were formed. These groups, claiming to have 350,000 members around the world, worked for elaborate concessions and the desire to regain their homeland. Eventually, however, these ambitions faded and during the 1950s and 60s when these exile groups were filled with moderate individuals "ready to effect a real reconciliation" with Czechoslovakia "and explore new solutions."<sup>109</sup>

With the breakup of Soviet control in East Europe in 1989 the Czechoslovak government initiated a number of policies on minority status. In 1992 Germany and the Czech Republic signed a treaty of "Good-neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation" which provided a detailed account of rights of the German minority. In 1997 this friendly cooperation was reaffirmed in the German-Czech Declaration on Mutual Relations and their Future Development. This was a good-will treaty. Both sides expressed regret for their role in the injustices of the past and both looked forward to better relationships in the future.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Unbreakable Friendship* (Prague, Moscow: Rude Pravo-Pravda-APN, 1970) 19-24 In May 1945 General Patton's third Army liberated Pilsen Czechoslovakia. Patton was poised to take Prague before the Soviet Army arrived. Because of an agreement made between General Eisenhower and General Antonov, acting chief of the Soviet staff, to halt Americans along the Karlsbad-Buweis line, Eisenhower ordered Patton to go no further. Prague was liberated by the Soviets. See Martin Blumenson, vol. 2, *The Patton Papers: 1940- 1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974) 696 to 697, and also Luza's A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948 318.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>110</sup> *German-Czech Declaration on Mutual Relations and their Future Development* <http://www/lib.byu.edu/~rdh/eurodocs/germ/czecheng.html> (Date last accessed 11/4/05).

The precedent of friendship continued in 2001 when the Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities was implemented.<sup>111</sup> The legal status of minorities already existed within Czech legal framework and this Act was a compilation of these laws. In accordance with this Act the Government Council for National Minorities was also established in 2001. This is the main government institution which deals with the German minority.<sup>112</sup> This council has 18 representatives. Each minority is afforded one to three representatives. The German minority has two representatives on this council.<sup>113</sup>

In the area of education the German minority has been well represented. An example of this is the Czech-German grammar school, the Thomas Mann Gymnasium, in Prague, established in 1995. This school is private but with state subsidies and support from a few German-based foundations. Eva Maresova, a teacher at the school explains: “The German minority has the idea of offering their children the chance to revive their language and culture, but they soon found out that the idea of a minority school in Prague couldn’t be realized as there simply weren’t enough German-speaking children. So they opened a school to all children, whether they were Czech or German. Most pupils are Czech.”<sup>114</sup> This school and the Czech policy on minority education is a positive step even though not many Germans remain to take full advantage of these constructive educational measures.

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<sup>111</sup> *Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities* (Migration Online-Focus on Central and Eastern Europe, 2001) [http://www.migrationonline.cz/law\\_f.shtml?x=182450](http://www.migrationonline.cz/law_f.shtml?x=182450) (Date last accessed 11/4/05). This act deals with the right of education in their own language, the right to use their own language when dealing with government authorities, and the right to take part in resolving issues related to national minorities.

<sup>112</sup> *Germans in the Czech Republic* (The Euromosaic study, 2005) <http://europa.eu.int/comm> (Date last accessed 11/4/05).

<sup>113</sup> *The Charter of the Council of the Government for National Minorities* (The Government of the Czech Republic, 2001) [http://www.vlada.cz/1250/vrk/rady/rnr/statut/statut\\_rnr\\_eng.pdf](http://www.vlada.cz/1250/vrk/rady/rnr/statut/statut_rnr_eng.pdf) (Date last accessed 11/4/05)

<sup>114</sup> David Vaughan, *Ethnic German Minorities in the Czech Republic* (Radio Prague-the international service of Czech Radio) <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/27184> (Date last accessed 11/4/05).

There may be improved and friendly relations between the Czech government and the German minority living in the Czech Republic. Czech relations with expelled Germans living in Germany could be a different story. Today, it is not difficult to find internet sites dedicated to the plight of the expelled Sudeten German population. One such site is called the Sudeten German Inferno<sup>115</sup> This site tells of the mistreatment of Germans living in Czechoslovakia and the horrors of the expulsion that began in 1945. The recent memorial to former President Benes sparked controversy amongst the Germans who were expelled after the war. Benes had a big part in causing the German minority to emigrate. President Benes has been criticized for signing the decrees that resulted in deporting 2.5 million Germans. A few prominent Czechs maintain that this expulsion was necessary.<sup>116</sup> Many Czechs feel an affinity with Benes, who was a respected leader during times of trouble.

Some expelled Sudetenland Germans also want property compensation. It seems, however, that the current relationships between the Czech government and both emigrated Germans and minority Germans have been calm. It is possible that the Czech Republic desired to appease Germany with a sympathetic minority policy so that they could gain entrance into the European Union. Germany, as a condition of membership, made sure that its minority in the Czech Republic would be given full rights. Whatever the Czechs' ulterior motive may have been the two countries, it appears, have formed a mutually beneficial relationship.

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<sup>115</sup> Igomar Pust, *Sudeten German Inferno: the hushed u- tragedy of the ethnic Germans in Czechoslovakia*, trans. Victor Diodon <http://www.wintersonnenwende.com/scriptorium/english/archives/sginferno/sgi00.html> (Date last accessed 11/19/06).

<sup>116</sup> Martin Mikule, *Memorial to President Benes sparks controversy* (Czech Radio-the international service of Czech Radio) <http://radio.cz/en/article/66600> (date last accessed 11/4/05).

The German minority in the Czech Republic have come far in insuring an unprecedented protection for their people. Some have removal of Germans was, perhaps, to a great degree helpful with ending the tensions between Germans and Czechs. The remaining Germans have lost some of their own ethnic identity and have assimilated peacefully into Czech society. For the Czechs, lessons from their own history under minority status must be remembered in order to equitably protect other minorities their new country.

With the German minority not only limited in number but ageing, the Czechs policy towards minorities appears relatively good. Some old differences, still present, may dissipate. It is important for the future welfare between the Czechs and the Germans that differences are healed. Sudeten German Deputy Hans Krebs envisioned the possibility of reconciliation when he spoke before the Soviet People's Court in 1947.

The Czech Nation will now, at the last, live alone in its national State.... Three million Germans have been transferred.... They are leaving behind their homes, what they once called their property, their past and their dead.... It is hard for anyone who has not gone through it to measure the moral and spiritual burden we are bearing now....From this time on you will have no more nationality disputes in your country. I only wish that the great sacrifices we are making may not be without profit, but that from them may at last be born a peaceful fellowship between us—which, alas, we did not succeed in establishing in one State—namely, the fellowship of the German State and the Czech State...

May the separation of Germans and Czechs finally bring peace to both! May the sufferings of our time end our sufferings for all time! Only so will all these immeasurable sacrifices have any meaning which we Sudeten Germans must now make and which the Czechs also have had to make in so great a measure. They will have served the highest ideal of mankind—a lasting and honorable peace.<sup>117</sup>

It can be argued that “profit” has come out of the German removal. Will this reasoning which justifies the expulsion of the Germans, but ignores morality heal old

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<sup>117</sup> Radomir Luza, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962* 321-322

wounds? Old wounds may never be healed, but life will continue for Czechs and the small minority of Germans living in the Czech Republic. One day there may be a mixture of Czech and German culture in the Czech Republic, where both people will live side by side, as they once did, in mutual welfare. This impasse between two great civilizations can be applied to the future welfare of nations. For where one clash of civilization ends, somewhere else in the world another may begin.

## Appendix A

In 1948 the “Czech national movement was transformed from a cultural...movement into a full-fledged political one; and the Czechs, through their leaders, compelled others to listen to their catalogue of frustrations, grievances, and ambitions. Above all, they compelled others to accept them as a nationality that had had its own past and that would not be deprived of its own future. As William H. Stiles, the United States charge d’affaires in Vienna at the time put it: ‘Previous to that period,’ the Czechs...possessed ‘no proper individuality, their political nationality was unacknowledged, and for centuries, consequently, they exercised no influence in the political councils in Europe. The storms of 1848 and 1849 raised them to consideration, and even power.’”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Stanley Z. Peck, *The Czech Revolution of 1948* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969) 336 Stiles quote taken by W.H. Stiles, *Austria in 1848-1849* (New York, 1852), I, 388

## **Appendix B**

The preamble of the Constitution:

“We, the Czechoslovak nation, desiring to consolidate the perfect unity of our people, to establish the reign of justice in the Republic, to assure the peaceful development of our native Czechoslovak land, to contribute to the common welfare of all citizens of this State and to secure the blessings of freedom to coming generations, have in our National Assembly this 29<sup>th</sup> day of February 1920 adopt the following Constitution for the Czechoslovak Republic; and in doing so we declare that it will be our endeavor to see that this Constitution together with all the laws of our land be carried out in the spirit of our history as well as in the spirit of those modern principles embodied in the idea of self-determination, for we desire to take our place in the Family of Nations as a member at once culture, peace loving, democratic and progressive.”

## Appendix C

Benes broadcast appeal of September 10, 1938:<sup>119</sup>

For fully twenty years the development of our Republic has been peaceful and progressive. Her liberal democratic policy, her advance in economic and cultural spheres, in religious toleration and in social justice have been achieved step by step by means of peaceful evolution and without crises, *putsches*, or revolts. Situations which elsewhere have caused dangerous disturbances, and indeed revolutions, have been dealt with in this country in a reasonably practical manner without blind passion. We have had, and still have, one problem: a problem fraught with difficulty, now as for centuries past on our territory, a problem which calls for ever new forms of solution—the problem of the nationalities.

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<sup>119</sup> *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* 187 Taken from Royal Institute of International Affairs, Documents on International Affairs 1938 (2 vols., London, 1943)

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