Europa's Bane Ethnic Conflict and Economics on the Czechoslovak Path From Nationalism to Communism, 1848-1948

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EUROPA’S BANE

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND ECONOMICS ON THE CZECHOSLOVAK PATH FROM
NATIONALISM TO COMMUNISM, 1848-1948

by

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ABSTRACT

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by

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Nationalism has appropriately been a much studied, as well disparaged, phenomenon. However, little work has been done on the specific ways in which nationalists thought about the nature of history and the effect of economics in the formation of nationalist identity. In the case of Central Europe and the lands that now comprise the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Czech and German nationalists had very specific notions of the history of the area and how that history bolstered their claims to be the sole true inhabitants. These claims were created in part due to the effect of economic modernization and job competition. As nationalist notions took hold of the population, ethnic conflict grew between Czechs and Germans in the Habsburg empire. This ethnic conflict helped to fragment the empire and hasten its collapse after World War One. The course of World War Two and the Nazi occupation and breakup of Czechoslovakia was influenced by these nationalist notions. With the progression of World War Two and the
Nazi occupation, Czechoslovaks came to believe that they had an affinity with Russia and that the cause of communism was linked with an explicitly “Slavic” identity. After the war approximately three million Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia, a major act of ethnic cleansing and seen by the Czechoslovaks as the culmination of their perceived age long conflict with the Germans. Communism became hugely popular, seen as the victorious ideology proving Slavic superiority over the Germans. Communist sympathy and party participation grew to enormous levels. When Communist politicians used a political disagreement in February 1948 to call for a mobilization of the population to institute communist rule, the population responded enthusiastically and ushered in a communist majority government.

(202 pages)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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Mathias J. Fuelling

Ethnic conflict and its relationship with economics is a difficult subject to understand, both for moral and historical reasons. This thesis was written with a mind to the effects of these forces on the functioning of political systems. Through study of the Habsburg empire it was discovered that industrialization and competition over economic opportunities drove speakers of different languages to establish themselves as distinct ethnic communities who held conflict between each other as a virtue. This conflict and the creation of a nationalist narrative by communities of Czechs and Germans contributed to the breakup of the Habsburg empire. Conceptions of an age old conflict between the two communities where also centered on ideas of a pan ethnic identity, such that all speakers of Slavic languages and all speakers of the German language were juxtaposed against each other as enemies in a struggle for domination of Europe. For the Czechoslovaks these ideas created sympathy for Russia and the idea of Russia as the leader of Slavic peoples. As communism came to power and developed in the Soviet Union, it became to be seen as an inherently Slavic ideology. World War Two accelerated these ideas. After the war the German population of Czechoslovakia was
expelled in a final act of ethnic conflict and communism grew in popularity and came to power as the victory in the eyes of the population of Slavdom and Czechoslovak identity.
This thesis could never have been completed without the help and support of so many. Particular thanks are due however. To Jake Bury and Nina Cavazos for the gift of friendship through thick and thin, as well as the constant reminder to not take myself too seriously. To my advisor Tammy Proctor for her steadfast faith in my abilities and the course of my thoughts as my research and writing developed. To my committee members, Jonathan Brunstedt and Evelyn Funda. Jon for his good humor and razor sharp wit and Evelyn for being willing to work with me even though she was on sabbatical. To Leonard Rosenband for words of wisdom, encouragement when needed, and the reminders to focus on something else besides this thesis from time to time. To my fellow students in the USU history graduate program for their companionship. To the archivists at the USU library for their help in navigating the Masaryk papers and collection, as well as for their patience with my constant presence over two semesters. And last, but certainly not least, to my parents for never doubting that I was on the right path. As goes without saying, all mistakes and errors of judgment in this thesis are mine alone.
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Europa’s Bane

Ethnic Conflict and Economics on the Czechoslovak Path from Nationalism to Communism, 1848-1948
Preface

In late February 1948 a political takeover in Czechoslovakia put the Communist Party in power. Why the Czechs? Why communism? Why 1948? This thesis attempts to provide some answers to these questions by taking a long view of Czechoslovak history, beginning roughly around 1848, seventy years before the Czechoslovak state actually came into existence. Czechoslovak ethnic nationalism, which developed in the 19th century under the conditions of Habsburg rule, was radicalized by the experience of the two world wars and in turn created the preconditions for the post 1945 Communist resurgence. It attempts to tell a story, a story that proves true an old Latin proverb. *Homo homini lupus est*. Man is wolf to man.

The story in its basic outline runs thus: The Bohemian lands had been a bountiful economic area within the Habsburg empire since the 18th century, and were composed of predominantly German and Czech speaking peoples, the Czech speakers living mostly in the rural countryside and German speakers living mostly in the towns and cities. As industrialization took off in the Bohemian lands, Czech speakers began to move into previously majority German speaking towns and cities, setting off linguistic and ethnic conflict. This industrialization took place at the same time as the rise within the Czech speaking community of nationalism, under the leadership of a group of intellectuals called the *buditele*, which literally means revivalists or awakeners. Nationalism also rose among the German speaking community. After the failure of the 1848 revolutions, these two nationalist groups fought each other within the Habsburg empire. As education and urban living rose, so did nationalism among these two communities, leading to a
separation of the two. Both nationalisms developed pan-ethnic wings that emphasized supposedly ancient racial essences and political characteristics, Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism. Czech nationalism particularly took a long view of history, weaving events starting from at least the 15th century into a historical narrative that justified their claims. Czech nationalism also subordinated the Slovak people to its narrative, making them part of their claims of a national community.

With the crisis of World War I a group of idealistic Czechs negotiated with the Allied Powers to establish the state of Czechoslovakia. A large minority of German speakers were left within the boundaries of the new state. The conflicts between Czech speakers and German speakers begun by the nationalists under the Habsburgs had by this point hardened into mutual hostility. These Germans gradually began to identify themselves as “Sudeten Germans.” Czech and German conflicts pushed the Germans towards separatism and support of Nazism. The Nazi ideology itself was in part shaped by the pan-ethnic German nationalism born in the 19th century. Throughout these conflicts, Czechoslovakia had become a first class industrial power with an exceptionally large and skilled workforce. Nazi Germany pushed for the annexation of the Sudeten Germans and in turn invaded Czechoslovakia, with the Slovaks splitting off to form a separate state. Under Nazi occupation the Czechs and their industrial infrastructure were used to power the Nazi economy and war machine. Traditional hostility against the Germans bled together with the old pan-ethnic nationalism of Pan-Slavism under extreme conditions. This resulted in sympathy for the Soviet Union and left-wing politics more generally. When Czechoslovakia was liberated largely by the Red Army, the three
A million large German population was expelled and a coalition government with a large communist influence was set up. Membership in the Communist Party exploded immediately after the war and won large majorities in elections. After disputes with other parties in the government in late 1947 and early 1948, an opening occurred and the Party took it, mobilizing its members and workers. In late February 1948 and the Communist Party came to power with large backing of the population and with Soviet support.

A note on terminology. Central Europe has been highly contested between various nationalities, languages, and kingdoms, such that now many places have multiple names depending on the perspective of the time and people in question. To limit confusion and to maintain a degree of objectivity, I will refer to Bohemia, Moravia, and southern Silesia as the “Bohemian lands” and the area that is now the nation of Slovakia as “Slovakia.” I borrow this distinction from Tara Zahra and Pieter Judson and their work on nationality in these areas. The Czechs and Slovaks themselves call the Bohemian lands Česke zeme, literally the Czech lands. Some scholars prefer this usage and refer to Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia as the Czech provinces.

Introduction

Czechoslovaki was a country partial to diminutives and grand statements. “Male, ale, nase.” (Little, but ours.)³ “By virtue of its geographical position this country is destined for heroism.”⁴ “…a patchwork quilt sewn together by an impatient ‘Hausfrau.’”⁵ “Our politics must be cosmopolitan, with an international orientation… we are necessarily the crossroads of Europe.”⁶ “…the best among all Slavs.”⁷ “Perhaps it is the fate of that country: to be the last victim…”⁸ All of these are, in one sense or another, both true and false, depending on who said them and when.

The last line is part of the closing paragraph of an analysis by Ferdinand Peroutka on the guilt or lack thereof of the serving President, Edvard Beneš, at the time of the Communist takeover in February 1948. This paper is concerned with the nature and perception of Czechoslovakia’s victimhood in relation to Communism. Going by the then and the when, Peroutka was justified in his claim. A high powered journalist and writer with connections to the political, social, and intellectual elite, he ran multiple newspapers throughout his career and was a staunch anti-communist. He was also a survivor of six

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⁸ Ferdinand Peroutka, *Was Eduard Benes Guilty?* (1950), 35, manuscript, folder 6, box 11, Tomáš G. Masaryk Papers, collection 233, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University (hereafter Masaryk papers).
years in Dachau and Buchenwald.\textsuperscript{9} By his own account, within three days after the official takeover by the Communists on February 25 his passport was suspended, his newspapers shut down and he was barred from all employment.\textsuperscript{10} He went into exile in America, where he worked for Radio Free Europe in New York. His story in outline is similar to that of many other emigres who were also luminaries in Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{11} Most prominently is that of Petr Zenkl, mayor of Prague before the war, who also spent years in the camps, after which he headed the anti-communist National Socialist party until the takeover (not to be confused with the infamous German party of similar name).\textsuperscript{12} He, too, went into exile in America, where he headed the Council for a Free Czechoslovakia until his death in 1974.\textsuperscript{13} These emigres had substantial pull in America and Western Europe, where they were influential in forming a Czech, “…mythology for the Cold War…”\textsuperscript{14} This mythology of victimhood, of a proud nation falling prey to the nefarious political machinations of a demonic Red agenda, exacerbated by the Soviet invasion in response to the Prague Spring in 1968, has largely determined the interpretation of Czech history, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Have Czech and Slovak Exiles Collaborated With Communism? Second part of the answer to the Memorandum of the Slovak Liberation Committee}, 6–8, manuscript, folder 14, box 10, Masaryk papers.
\textsuperscript{14} Orzoff, \textit{Battle for the Castle}, 216.
Yet Communism did not suddenly appear in the immediate postwar Czechoslovak political and social scene, a hungry totalitarian ghost out to smash the Czechs and Slovaks under a black boot. There is a chain of historical causation that must be seen and told. The crux is not the reality of Czechoslovakia under communism, but what the people of Czechoslovakia thought about communism, from the formation of the country up to the takeover. The reality of Czechoslovakia under communism is well known, its cruelty, its hypocrisy, its subsuming of everyday life to propaganda and lies.\textsuperscript{15} The dichotomy between promise and reality also characterizes the other great ideology of the times, fascism. Petr Zenkl was astute in a postwar observation that:

\begin{quote}
The justice that reached me twice and which I had twice escaped, is the same kind of justice – the totalitarian justice. The men watching me at Buchenwald wore small badges with black swastikas. The men guarding me in Prague wore badges also – with the symbol of the hammer and sickle…These analogies are, in my belief, more than coincidences. They are symptomatic of the fateful process which the world is now experiencing. People who in Europe were bad from the German point of view, are again bad men from the Soviet point of view, and a great many people who devotedly served the Nazis have been found useful to the Communists.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Zenkl, who attempted to make sense of the post-war reality of Czechoslovakia, appears at various times throughout the thesis, a kind of lodestone as to the direction of developments. He himself was one of those who were seen as bad by both Communists and Nazis. But what Zenkl did not see is that his own nationalist views and Communism were not necessarily opposed, indeed that the nationalism of Zenkl and others of his kind


\textsuperscript{16} Petr Zenkl, \textit{The Plague of Communism} (nd), 1, manuscript, folder 1, box 11, Masaryk papers.
played directly into the development of particular kind of support for Communism in Czechoslovakia.

To trace this process of development between nationalism and Communism, this thesis will rely heavily on primary source material from the Tomáš G. Masaryk Collection and Papers at the Special Collections and Archives at Utah State University, particularly political pamphlets, as well as a variety of memoirs and autobiographies. The pamphlets range in date from the early 1900s up to 1948. Printed on cheap paper, often times with the pages still needing to be cut apart in order to read them, and costing a bare handful of crowns, the Czechoslovak currency, they represent the common political reading material available in most Czechoslovak cities of the time. They were likely bought and read by the working classes primarily, contributing much to the overall political attitude of a significant portion of the Czechoslovak population. Reading Czechoslovak history through the lens of the pamphlets brings to the fore the nationalist narrative that many Czechoslovaks believed, and which the pamphlets propagated.

A great number of secondary sources have also been consulted in order to provide the necessary background for the wide ranging time frame of the thesis. How the historiography of Czechoslovak history up to 1948 sits today can be broadly separated into two groups. The first group is older, having been written during the Cold War period. It obviously tends to be very critical of communism, and focuses upon communist crimes and perfidy, with little discussion of cultural issues. It also tends to take nationalism very seriously as a force that shaped the development of Czechoslovakia, taking it as a given that Czech/German hostility was widespread. The second group is younger, having been
written after the Cold War. It tends to focus on cultural issues and the contingent
development of Czech/German conflict. The political influence of communism is little
touched, with nationalism denigrated as an artificial development of history. This thesis
attempts to straddle both of these groups, on the one hand by taking nationalism seriously
as a driving force, and on the other while showing how cultural forces led to the
development of nationalism via the Czech/German conflict. Through it all the argument
is that nationalism and culture worked together to, so to speak, create a fertile ideological
field for the rise of communism after WWII.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the nature and components of the Czech
nationalist narrative up through the interwar period and also traces the history of the
Communist Party in Czechoslovakia and its support up through the interwar period.
Chapter 2 gives a history of the development of Czech nationalism through the growing
conflict between Czech and German speakers under the Habsburgs up to the eve of
WWII. Chapter 3 first relates the influence of Pan-Slavism on Czechoslovak attitudes and
policies and the political relations set up by the Czechoslovak government with the
Soviet Union in response to Nazi aggression. The main focus of the chapter is the history
of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and its effects on the Czechoslovak
economy. Chapter 4 discusses the expulsion of the German population from
Czechoslovakia immediately after WWII and then the rise of communist influence and
sympathy in Czechoslovakia, culminating in the takeover of February 1948.
CHAPTER 1

CZECH NATIONALISM IN A NOT SO BRIEF NUTSHELL

The Bohemian lands were the industrial powerhouse of the late Habsburg empire. They were rich in coal, timber forests, industrial ores, volcanic soil, and productive farmland. In the eighteenth century textile and cotton mills were established there, alongside a rapidly growing peasant cottage industry sector. There was also widespread temporary inflation in the empire during the Napoleonic wars due to its efforts to finance the military, while taxes were at a fixed rate not adjusted for inflation. Many peasants in the Bohemian lands used this inflation as an opportunity to accumulate capital and become independent farmers, while artisans and manufacturers accumulated capital in order to break into the industrial market. The Bohemian lands were perfectly situated for the takeoff of the Industrial Revolution.

Iron and cotton factories were already active in Bohemia by the late 1830s and early 1840s. The Habsburgs recognized this bounty and by the reign of Maria Theresa from the mid to late eighteenth century the Bohemian lands were the most taxed dominion in the empire. The lands were integrated fully into the empire via railway in the mid-nineteenth century, after which an explosion in coal mining occurred. In 1867

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17 For a detailed account of the geographical and geological bounties of the Czech lands, see Julie Moscheles, “Natural Regions of Czechoslovakia,” Geographical Review 14 (1924).
20 Mamatey, Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 113.
just over a million tons of coal was extracted that year from northern Bohemia. Between 1870 and 1900, coal extraction increased to 15 million tons per year. On the eve of WWI, coal extraction in northern Bohemia had hit 23 million tons per year. Over 30,000 people did work directly related to the mines and the regional population grew to a peak of 380,000. In Bohemia as a whole, lignite extraction, “increased twenty-fourfold between 1860 and 1899…” Stunningly, by 1914 Bohemia was responsible within the empire for 56 percent of all industrial production, 57 percent of iron, 60 percent of the textile industry, and up to 90 percent of sugar production. In agriculture, centered on wheat, barley, rye, potatoes, beets, and hops, average yields per hectare doubled between 1870 and 1913. There were also deposits of quartz and feldspar in southern Bohemia that gave rise to a regional glass and porcelain industry, famed for its quality and rich colors, the products of which were fashionable among the fin de siècle bourgeoisie and nouveau riche. A trade magazine of 1884 maintained: “The glass ware of Bohemia, in delicacy, variety, and picturesqueness has long been unrivaled. No one thinks of disputing the right

The next paragraph of the article is worth quoting in full: “In the Austrian Empire as a whole, by monetary value, 51.5 percent of mining production and 30 percent of the smelting industry originated in Bohemia. Bohemia alone accounted for 44 to 46 percent of the combined industries, and Bohemia combined with its neighboring provinces of Moravia and Silesia accounted for 70 percent of total mining and smelting, by value. After a coal-mining industry developed in the region of Ostrava-Karvina in Moravia and the eastern part of Silesia, pig-iron production increased sixfold between 1860 and 1899.”
25 Sayer, Coasts of Bohemia, 84.
of Bohemian ware to the first rank among artistic manufactures; it is remarkable in color, ornamentation, and all things that serve to make objects in glass praiseworthy to refined and critical people.”

All of these figures and statistics are to buttress two observations: Firstly, the roughly sixty years between the completion of the connected railway system to the outbreak of World War One were a period of frantic industrial energy and development in the Bohemian lands that is difficult to fully comprehend. A man born in 1830 in the rural Bohemian countryside who lived to 1910 would have seen his world change from a roughly medieval feudal system little distinguishable from any time before it for hundreds of years to one with electricity, railways, automobiles, and heavy industry; all the trappings of modernity. Rapid and extreme change materially breeds rapid and extreme change socially.

Secondly, the Bohemian lands were and are exceptionally blessed with natural resources and industrial productivity. They were one of, if not the, driving force behind the Habsburg empire from the mid-nineteenth century to World War One. Without the Bohemian lands’ economic power, the empire most likely could not have sustained itself into the twentieth century. This economic power was recognized by another empire, or more properly an aspiring empire, in the late 1930s.

In tandem with the development was an increase in class tension, not only in the sense of psychological and emotional conflict but in de facto wealth and power.

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disparities. In Bohemia in 1900, out of a total population of 6,318,697, 2,718,536 labored in agriculture, forestry, trade, and industry. This breaks down to 43 percent of the population as members of the working class and lower middle class. The official abolition of the feudal seigneurial system and the emancipation of the peasants in Bohemia took place in 1848, but the noble elite retained their hold on land ownership.

In the late nineteenth century the terms “noble” and “great estate owner” were used interchangeably in the Bohemian lands.

At the beginning of the 20th century, “362 families owned 36 percent of the surface area” of Bohemia. At the highest echelons of the social hierarchy, “Only 38 families owned 946,000 hectares, or 18 per cent of the land in Bohemia.” Needless to say, those who owned the land tended to also own what was in the land and what was on the land. In the 1870s noble-owned foundries produced 41 percent of Bohemia’s total iron output and in 1886 the nobility owned 80 of Bohemia’s 120 sugar processing factories. In the early 1870s the nobility also owned “43 per cent of the breweries, 65 per cent of the sugar factories and 60 per cent of the distilleries…” throughout the Czech lands as a whole. Considering their total market ownership of Bohemian industry in

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34 Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848–1875 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975), 188.
relation to the empire’s dependency on Bohemian industry, some of these nobles had near monopolies. It also meant that they became fantastically wealthy.\(^3^5\)

A working class of millions in the employ of a wealthy elite of thousands is not a condition well suited to long term stability. An off-the-cuff assessment would lean towards thinking that in the first years of the twentieth century social conflict was rife in the Bohemian lands, with strong support for revolutionary Communism among the working-class population. This would not be correct, however. Mediating between the tensions of class was a robust Czech nationalism focused on ethnic and linguistic solidarity. Before this nationalism took root, however, there were hints of revolutionary potential in the eighteenth century. The Bohemian estates had defected from the empire when Bavaria and France invaded it during the War of Austrian Succession in 1741 and had to be forcibly taken back. A peasant revolt had also broken out in Bohemia in 1775 that was put down by the army.\(^3^6\) Nationalism arrived just in time to channel social energy into another direction.

Under the influence of a heady mix of French Revolutionary ideology and the philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder, various intellectuals in Eastern and Central Europe in the early nineteenth century began to formulate ideas of an ethnic unity between all Slavic peoples that would lead to an enlightened nation which transcended the need for hereditary dynasties. According to the analysis of Vaclav Beneš, “His

\(^{3^5}\) Hobsbawm notes that it was roughly eighty estates of 25,000 acres or over in *The Age of Revolution*, 15.

[Herder’s] idealized and romantic concept of the Czechs and Slovaks […] became a powerful instrument of the growing national consciousness of the Czechs and Slovaks.”

This process of nation-building began with the 1848 revolutions and grew to become influential during the economic boom in the Bohemian lands in the 1860s. The identification of the people as a dynamic essence provided and necessitated the solidarity and community needed to keep the nation together. A loose group of Czech intellectuals identified with this way of thinking and set about shaping a Czech national consciousness. They thought of themselves as awakening a dormant national consciousness, not creating one. To the present day they retain a position in the Czech Republic roughly similar to that of the Founding Fathers in America. The Czech term for this group of intellectuals is unambiguous in its ideological conceptions, the *buditele* or awakeners. Their numbers belied their later influence. The nineteenth century Czech historian František Palacký exaggerated but hit at an important point when he claimed in the late 1860s that the Czech nation would have perished if the roof had fallen on a gathering of the *buditele* forty years earlier.

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39 1848 would loom over all native Czech ideas of their nation and nationalism over the next century. It was seen as a glorious moment in which all of Europe’s peoples had risen together against tyranny and feudalism, carrying on the radical promise of the French Revolution. For Czech nationalists and the later consensus on the nationalist narrative, 1848 was especially important in that it was the year when the Czechs regained their sense of community and honor from the Habsburgs after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. For a great example of the Czech nationalist interpretation of 1848 see, Arnošt Klima, *Rok 1848 v Čechách* (Prague: Svoboda, 1948), folder 67, box 9, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
As Benedict Anderson noted, the greatest trick of nationalism is to rewrite the past under the guise of refining it so that fiction becomes discovery.\(^{41}\) Either way, the people of the Bohemian lands over the course of the nineteenth century came to think of themselves as a distinct ethnic community and culture with a traditional essence of independence and free thought. This sense of national selfhood developed quickly, within a broader imperial context. When the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* or Compromise was passed in 1867, which provided Hungary control over its internal affairs while having finances, foreign policy, and military in common with Austria, the Czechs unsuccessfully pushed for the Bohemian lands to have its own compromise along the same lines.\(^{42}\)

The promotion of the Czech language and Czech culture, real or imagined, were integral to this process. Czech had been considered a working-class language of the rural people for close to two hundred years in the Bohemian lands before the mid-nineteenth century. Before that time German was the language of the educated and elite within the empire.\(^{43}\) Until the late eighteenth century, only peasants in Bohemia spoke Czech.\(^{44}\) This was a phenomenon exacerbated under the reign of Joseph II (1780-1790), when he made German the official language of instruction in secondary schools and universities as part of his campaign to centralize and consolidate state power and identity.\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 50.
\(^{44}\) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 73.
A Professor at the German University in Prague wrote in 1892 that “decades ago […] only the lowest classes of the population dared express themselves in Czech…”46 However, this was not a matter of lack of language ability. A Czech newspaper estimated in 1865 that up to 60 percent of people living in Bohemia were bilingual to a degree in both Czech and German.47 This number is surely an overestimate but even downgrading it by as much as twenty percent still leaves a very sizeable population that was bilingual. It was the prestige of language in what were considered higher levels of cultural discourse that mattered.

The promotion of the Czech language via language schools, newspapers, and novels was then a key platform of the buditele.48 To understand their reframing of Czech identity, the growth in the number of Czech language newspapers speaks volumes. According to historian Chad Bryant, “From 1863 to 1895 the number of specialized Czech-language periodicals rose from 17 to 120.”49 This focus on language would live on once Czechoslovakia was established. Kamil Krofta, a Czech politician, in a speech in 1936 said that “We are accustomed to regard as a nation not all the inhabitants or subjects of a State, but an entity of people speaking the same mother tongue, people who have inherited that tongue from their forefathers and have continued faithful to it.”50 This

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47 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 3.
campaign did much work to consolidate the Czech language as it is known today. Through the nineteenth century there were intense differences in the dialect of Czech from region to region, such as to make it almost incomprehensible to speakers from different regions.\textsuperscript{51} The promotion of Czech in the public sphere through written material held up a standard model of the language for all to follow.

There are other examples of growing Czech nationalism. In 1867 the crown jewels of the old Bohemian crown were returned to Prague from Vienna, where they had been kept for roughly a year since the Austro-Prussian war in 1866. The return was supposed to be kept secret, apparently to prevent nationalist fervor on the part of the Czechs, but word got out and the return of the crown-jewels was “greeted with great rejoicing.”\textsuperscript{52} There was held in 1895 a Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition which purported to “depict in a wide variety of appropriate ways, strictly in accordance with the reality and truth, the life and state of the Czech nation at the close of the nineteenth century, as well as its historical development.”\textsuperscript{53} Revisionist romanticism is the more succinct way of putting it. As a further example, earlier in the century Czech scholars had purported to find ancient Czech manuscripts from the ninth century that related the ancestral legends of the Czech people. One of these manuscripts even contained an inscription that called Germans barbarians. These manuscripts were sophisticated hoaxes.

\textsuperscript{51} King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 17.
\textsuperscript{53} Sayer, \textit{Coasts of Bohemia}, 125.
however. Before these manuscripts were revealed as hoaxes the Czech intelligentsia had bought into them hook, line, and sinker. A visitor to Prague can still see statues based on the characters in the purported legends in the grounds of the cemetery complex called Vyšehrad.

The emphasis on the promotion of the Czech language grew into a chauvinism that was haughty in its humility. Czechoslovakia’s first president, Thomas Masaryk, held that “…if you study our literature, you will find that all our poets are men of the people. There is no literature that could be more democratic than ours. […] Furthermore, in our literature you will not find ‘Faustism,’ an air of superiority and haughtiness, such as is presented in Goethe’s Faust, Byron’s Manfred, and Nietzsche’s Ubermensch.” Note the implicit opposition against German literature, implying that the Germans are arrogant while the Czechs are humble.

Also at play was a gymnastic society founded in late 1861, called the Sokol (Falcon), which was an explicitly Czech patriotic and pan-Slavist organization, whose membership was limited to Slavs. It had originated out of a split between the Czech and German gymnasts in Prague, as through the 1840s and 1850s one society had served both groups. The origins of this prior gymnastics movement were in large scale gymnastics drills held throughout the German territories and Central Europe in the very early

54 Vladimír Macura, The Mystifications of a Nation: The “Potato Bug” and Other Essays on Czech Culture (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 8–12.
nineteenth century as part of resistance movements against the occupying armies of Napoleon, and as a response by Prussia to train its citizens after the Napoleonic wars. Called the Turnverein movement, it was a part of the German Romantic movement and played a role in the development of German nationalism. The military origins of the gymnastic movement shed light on the essence of what the Sokol ultimately was.

When a German contingent of gymnasts founded a new society with German as its sole official language, a group of Czechs founded the Sokol in opposition. Members wore a falcon feather in their hats. Beginning in the late 1860s, the Sokol began to take part in large gatherings they called tábory, the same word used for the religious gatherings of the followers of Jan Hus in the pre-reformation period in the Bohemian lands in the fifteenth century, explicitly linking themselves with the Czech nationalist narrative of a common heritage with Hussite tradition. It was roughly at this time that the Hussite wars came to be seen by a base of Czech nationalists as not just a religious movement but also as a revolt by the righteous Czech people against oppressive German Catholics and landlords.

Hussite imagery was very important to the movement. They commonly invoked Jan Žižka, the undefeated Hussite military leader, as an example to follow and were given the field where Žižka allegedly died to use as a training ground as a gift from a wealthy Czech nationalist supporter. Starting in 1882, they held intermittent celebratory festival

57 King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, 35 and Nolte, The Sokol in the Czech Lands, 187n12.
58 Nolte, The Sokol in the Czech Lands, 5–19.
60 Nolte, The Sokol in the Czech Lands, 31.
61 Nolte, The Sokol in the Czech Lands, 63, 97, 101.
gatherings of all Sokol clubs called *slets*, derived from the Czech word for a flocking of birds, at which Pan-Slavism was a key theme. Under the influence of fervent Pan-Slavism, the Sokol established clubs in America among Czech emigres, and in Croatia, Poland, and Russia.

The Sokol was inspired in part by the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi, and they made the trademark red shirt of Garibaldi and his followers part of their uniform. The rest of their uniform reflected their Pan-Slavic sympathies. Their jackets were based on the design of those worn by Polish revolutionaries and their hats were hard and circular in the style of the Montenegrin cap. During the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 there were plans, never executed, to change the uniform to look similar to the French army uniform to show solidarity with France against Prussia.

Its program was “the physical and in part also the moral education and improvement of all the nation, its nurturing for the enhancement of its strength, bravery, refinement, and defense.” It straddled the knife’s edge between ethnic nationalism, para-militarism, and wholesome physicality. Its motto was “Every Czech a Sokol,” literally “Every Czech a falcon.” The aggressive implications of calling on every Czech to become a bird of prey are obvious. Divided into regional clubs, its immediate prewar membership peaked at 194,321 in 1914. Importantly, from 1870 on, the majority of the

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64 Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands*, 48–9, 199n43.
65 Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 106.
66 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 67.
67 Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 106.
members of Sokol were workers. The Sokol’s founder, Miroslav Tyrš, ominously predicted in 1870 that there would be an inevitable war between the Germans and the Czechs in which the Sokol would play a major role.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnic national identity held stronger than the appeal of class identity and the revolutionary Communist doctrine of the time. Social democracy, based on implementing Marxist thought through gradual reform as opposed to revolution, was popular and influential in the Habsburg empire from the 1870s on. An Austrian Social Democratic Party was founded in 1874, with sections for the Bohemian lands within it. In 1896 an independent Czech Social Democratic Party was founded, rising out of a disagreement with the German Social Democratic Party over how centralized the Austrian party should be. Social Democratic unions under the supervision of an All-Austrian union center became widespread in the Bohemian lands in the 80s and 90s. But were the Czech unions to be under the aegis of the empire as a whole or were they going to be completely independent? This was a hard debate given the popularity of Czech nationalism and the importance of the Bohemian workers and industries to the empire. The question increasingly became one of choosing between, “nationalist decentralization” or “internationalist centralization.” There was also the Czech National Socialist Party, founded in 1898, itself being born out of a disagreement with the Social Democrats. Nancy Wingfield describes their politics as “Believing that class and national issues could not be separated, the party rejected Marxist socialism,

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70 Wingfield, Flag Wars and Stone Saints, 62.
71 McDermott, The Czech Red Unions, 3.
specifically the doctrines of class struggle and internationalism, which were not central to its goals.”\textsuperscript{72}

There was a conflict over language within the unions, as many Czech workers resisted the All-Austrian union movement due to the dominance of German within the movement.\textsuperscript{73} For the Czechs, the fundamental problem was whether joining the All-Austrian union movement entailed giving up their Czech language and identity or not. This was not a light issue for the Czechs and the Czech trade unions made up a large portion of the worker population and socialist worker culture in Austria. According to Tomáš Masaryk, analyzing the situation in 1902, “Today socialism in Austria means mainly Czech socialism, and that is true even in Vienna, where there are at least 200,000 Czech workers if not more. If you come to Vienna, a German city, you will hear Czech as well as German spoken at every meeting of workers. The Czech workers there are organized and have their own magazines. Socialism in Austria is Czech because the majority of the workers are Czech.”\textsuperscript{74}

Conflicts between the Austrian union center and the Czech unions over this question were ongoing from the late 1880’s until World War One rendered it moot. The Bohemian lands became part of a new nation, Czechoslovakia, retaining all of their industrial/economic power, worker population, and social democratic unions. But there was another new player on the ideological scene, the Soviet Union and its organ the Third

\textsuperscript{72} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 86.
\textsuperscript{73} Eric Hobsbawm, \textit{The Age of Empire, 1875–1914} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 120.
\textsuperscript{74} Shillinglaw, \textit{The Lectures of Professor T.G. Masaryk at the University of Chicago}, 96–7, Masaryk collection.
International, also known as the Communist International or the Comintern. With these galvanizing the left wings of the Czech Social Democratic Party and the unions, a split occurred, with the left wings going on to form in October of 1921 the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunisticka strana Ceskoslovenska, hereafter abbreviated as KSČ).  

Twenty-six years and eight months separate the founding of the party from its takeover. At one extreme is a new minority party with limited worker support that is largely concerned with its opposition to the Social Democratic Party and the social democratic unions. At the other is a party of millions with massive populist support, to such a degree that it can bring all work in the country to a standstill if desired. What happened in the interim? How did the underdog become a giant?

In the immediate years after the foundation of Czechoslovakia there was reported to be worker discontent and strong leftwing tendencies. In a tantalizing incident, when the Soviet Union and Poland went to war in 1920, workers, presumably munitions and armaments workers, “refused to produce weapons for Poland and to transport them.” The first Finance Minister of Czechoslovakia, in a book published in 1923 on financial policy, said that in 1919, “Among the working classes the opinion was openly expressed that the moment had come for them to seize the mastery—but by no means the leadership—that they were now the masters and that their former masters would now

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76 Peroutka, Was Eduard Benes Guilty? (1950), 3, Masaryk papers.
become their servants.” This upswelling however died out in second half of 1920 due to the defeat of the Soviet Union in its war against Poland and gains in the economy and living standards. President Masaryk also worked quickly to pass into law social reforms such as an eight hour working day, unemployment benefits, and social insurance policies. These measures satisfied much of the working class, contributing to the quick dying out of revolutionary sentiment. In tandem with this shift, socialist parties won 47.5 percent of the first parliamentary vote in 1920. This is predicated on including the National Socialists in the socialist party category. The National Socialists were explicitly non- and even anti-Marxist, but considered themselves within the socialist camp. Their policies were essentially that of a market positive social liberalism. To provide a more concrete idea of what they stood for, in an American context their ideas were similar to those advocated by John Dewey and the policies implemented in the New Deal.

This was not a unified movement however. Many pamphlets were published during this time by varying socialist parties, full of accusations against each other. One in particular, put out by the Progressive Socialist Party in Prague in 1919 and titled “Czech Social Democracy During the War,” featured a cover with a caricature of Franz Joseph blessing a kneeling fat Social Democrat holding a white flag. The pamphlet accused the Social Democrats of betraying the nation during the war by their promotion of pacifism and support of the Bolsheviks while the Czech Legion was marching across Russia. This

78 Rašín, Financial Policy of Czecho-Slovakia During the First Year of Its History, 76, Masaryk collection. 
80 Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 10.
alleged activity was purported to have helped the Habsburgs and weakened the cause of Czechoslovak nationalism. The implication was that the Social Democrats were neither true socialists nor true nationalists. A successful left wing party had to be both.81

Per this ideological infighting within the left, the Communist party underwent continuous and bitter ideological battles with the Social Democratic party and its associated unions through the 1920s82, but had gained enough initial membership in the above mentioned split and was variegated enough in its activities to rise above to a degree. In the 1925 national elections, the KSČ was the second largest party with 933,000 votes or 13.2 percent of the vote. In comparison it received 753,000 votes in 1929 and 849,000 in 1935, staying roughly around 10 percent for the entirety of the interwar period, “one of the strongest political parties throughout the first republic83 It was also the only Communist Party in Central and Eastern Europe that remained legal throughout the entire interwar period.84 The Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal was exaggerating, but not by much as far as the numbers go when he wrote in a letter late in his life that, “…most of the population has in its genes an inclination for Bolsheviks, Communists, Marxists, because, Dubenka, when voting was secret in the First Republic, behind a screen, the Communists got something over a million votes…”85 At the same time secularism was on the rise, as from 1910 to 1921 the Catholic Church lost 1,259,655 members. By 1927

81 Čestmír Stehlik, Česka sociální demokracie za války (Prague: E. Geistlich, 1919), folder 172, box 24, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
83 Sayer, Coasts of Bohemia, 166.
only 20 percent of the members of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia were also members of the working class.\textsuperscript{86} This growing separation of the Czechs, particularly working-class Czechs, from religious identity left them amenable to other forms of totalizing ideologies and is a sign of deep changes in their communal relationships.

Throughout the interwar period the Soviet Union saw possibilities in Czechoslovakia. Soviet sponsored organizations focused on canvassing Czechoslovak working communities in the 1920s in order to recruit workers to join and work on co-operatives/communes in Central Asia, where they would supposedly advance the cause of socialism. It is hard to judge the success of these worker recruit drives but Alexander Dubček’s father at least was convinced and moved his family out to Bishkek in what is now Kyrgyzstan. Dubček was later Secretary of the Communist Party and known for his involvement in the Prague Spring of 1968. Many of these workers would eventually move back to Czechoslovakia, either on their own initiative or under pressure in 1938 when the Soviet government ordered all foreigners in the USSR either to renounce their former citizenship and become Soviet citizens or leave the USSR.\textsuperscript{87} It would be reasonable to conclude that these workers played a role in increasing socialist and communist sympathy in Czechoslovakia due to their own socialist credentials and experience in the USSR.

The KSČ had particularly high support in Prague itself. In the three working class districts of Prague it regularly polled close to 30 percent of the vote, only once getting below 20 percent in 1931. In the last elections before the Nazi occupation in 1938 it polled 18.42 percent of all votes in Prague.\textsuperscript{88} A strong minority seems to be the appropriate description, if only on its voter strength.

However, the overwhelming majority of the working classes and Czechoslovaks in general did not join the Party. In 1930 there were approximately 2,040,500 wage-earning members of the working classes; when put together with their families they comprised roughly a third of the country’s entire population.\textsuperscript{89} By contrast, in 1930 the Party had only 37,998 members. The Party’s highest membership levels were in its first year, 1921, at 350,000. It declined almost every year after.\textsuperscript{90} The contrast between trade union membership in general and communist union membership in particular drives home the disparity even more. In 1937, the high point of union membership before the war, membership in non-communist trade unions was 2,250,886. Communist trade union membership was a mere 136,204.\textsuperscript{91}

The greater number of Czechoslovaks found that the creation of the country merely furthered or initiated their nationalist fervor. Drawing upon a narrative created by the \textit{buditele}, many saw or came to see Czechoslovakia as the culmination of a struggle for self-determination and cultural survival. It started with the mythological origin story

\textsuperscript{88} Sayer, \textit{Coasts of Bohemia}, 167.
\textsuperscript{90} Zinner, \textit{Communist Strategy and Tactics}, 250.
\textsuperscript{91} Zinner, \textit{Communist Strategy and Tactics}, 251.
of a wandering Slavic tribe led by a man named Čech (the supposed source of the name of the people and country) that settled the Bohemian lands during the collapse of the Roman Empire. Then came the proselytization of the Orthodox missionaries Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century in Bohemia, giving the Czechs claim to a unique religious identity which was reaffirmed in Jan Hus and the Hussite wars. Tomaš Masaryk mentioned in conversation in the 1920s that “Anyone unversed in what Christianity stands for is a stranger to our cultural soil.”

While Cyril and Methodius were Orthodox Christians and Hus and the Hussites closer to the theology of Luther, the Czech nationalist narrative laid emphasis on the “true” essence of Christianity, above and beyond particular creeds and sects, which could supposedly be manifest in all these figures and their activities in the Bohemian lands.

The revolt of the Bohemian estates against Habsburg rule in 1618, the defeat of the Bohemian estates at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, the ensuing Thirty Years Wars, and rule by the Habsburgs and German speaking nobility were all seen as parts of the victimization of a righteous people. The foundation of the nation in 1918 served then as historical vindication. Through it all there ran a thread of rise and decline until the Czechs finally stood triumphant. In reality however, the revolt of the Bohemian estates

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93 During World War II, the narrative also emphasized a supposed traditional German hostility to this Czech religious identity. Vlado Clementis, a Slovak politician and Communist, while in exile in London during the war wrote a pamphlet on Pan-Slavism in which he accused German priests in 863 A.D. of denouncing the Czechs as heretics to the Pope because they had accepted the Orthodox Christianity of Cyril and Methodius. See Vlado Clementis, *PanSlavism: Past and Present* (London: Czechoslovak Committee for Slav Reciprocity in London, 1943), 16, folder 634, box 78, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
was led by a mixture of both German and Czech speaking nobles over perceived threats to their freedom to practice Protestantism and no attempts were made to gain the support of the peasantry. The forces of the Bohemian estates at the Battle of White Mountain largely consisted of mercenaries and a group of sympathizers from Transylvania.\(^95\)

The nationalist narrative is expressed well by Kamil Krofta, a Czech politician, in a speech he gave in 1936.

“\begin{quote}
The events which brought this State into the field of world history where it won no mean place, that is, the great religious movement which fills the history of the Bohemian lands from the days of Hus down to the victory of the Habsburg dynasty over the rebellion of the Bohemian nobility at the Battle of the White Mountain—this despite numerous alien and also German influences, is the work of the Czech nation and the fruit of its spiritual and moral aspirations.\end{quote}\(^96\)

A common Czech phrase that characterized the time between the Thirty Years War, and the accompanying loss of Czech autonomy, to the end of the nineteenth century and the interwar period was “we suffered for three hundred years.”\(^97\) In Czech this period was called the Temno, literally meaning “the dark” or “darkness.”\(^98\) The destruction and darkness brought on by the Thirty Years’ War as understood by the nationalists was real enough, in contrast to the nature of the Bohemian revolt and the Battle of White Mountain. Between 1618 and 1654 it is estimated that the population of the Bohemian lands decreased from approximately 3 million to 800,000 due to either death or flight.


\(^{96}\) Krofta, *The Germans in the Czechoslovak Republic*, 9, Masaryk collection.


\(^{98}\) Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914*, 191n2.
Most towns and villages were destroyed and Catholicism was declared the sole legal religion of the area in 1627. As a result an emigration of the highly educated Protestant nobility and upper class proto-bourgeoisie town dwellers occurred, an example of the phenomenon now colloquially known as brain drain or human capital flight.\footnote{Mamatey, \textit{Rise of the Habsburg Empire}, 61–3.}

Whether the Czechs ever actually had autonomy outside of being parts of larger political units before 1918 is another question, but what is important in this context is that the Czechs themselves believed that they had had autonomy.\footnote{As an example, a Czech nationalist historian published in 1885 a small book of three annotated maps of the claimed areas that the Czechs had had under their sovereignty during their times of independence before Habsburg rule. The implication being that the Czechs had a claim to the areas that once belonged to them, and that those areas would be theirs again someday. Josef Kalousek, \textit{Tři Historické Mapy k Dějinám Českým} (Praze: Nákladem Fr. Řivnáče, 1885), folder 21, box 3, BC 45, Masaryk collection.} The above sentiment was rife throughout Czech nationalism. At the end of an introduction to a collection of Czech fairy tales no less, published in 1917, the author declared “May their Austrian oppressors be brought to the ground, and may Bohemia regain the freedom for which she has longed for three centuries!”\footnote{Josef Baudis, \textit{Czech Folk Tales} (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1917), xvi, folder 898, box 107, BC 45, Masaryk collection.} A 1929 yearbook said that “Finally on the 28th of October, 1918, the nation itself snapped by a bloodless revolution, the chains of centuries which had been imposed on it by the Hapsburg dynasty.”\footnote{The \textit{Year-Book of the Czechoslovak Republic}, 1929, ed. Bohuslav Horak (Prague: Orbis, 1929), 36. folder 1235, box 402, BC 45, Masaryk collection.} And a political pamphlet published in 1928 said that, referring to the Czechs and Slovaks, “…there were obvious attempts on the part of the ruling German-Magyar minority to hold back their cultural and economic
development.”

They had created a story for themselves, with an invented past, and the existence of the country itself confirmed this immutable identity.

As the perceived culmination of the national ideal, the Sokol continued to be active into the interwar period. A 1929 yearbook claimed that it “…unites all classes of society irrespective of their profession, religion and political adherence.” It put emphasis on recruiting youth, resulting in a growth boom that put it at 818,188 in 1938. There was pressure on its members to avoid loan-words from other languages and it promoted Czech literature and Czech language education as much as ever. Sokol rhetoric characterizing its members as being in the line of the Hussites put it dangerously close to militaristic overtones. A sympathetic academic explained, “The Sokol was to serve the Czech National Revival in a spirit of truth, in the true tradition of the Hussites, in that positive patriotism which works for the increase of the powers of one’s nation, but avoids anything like blind Chauvinism.”

Tomáš Masaryk said in 1926 that “The Sokol represents the cultivation of the nation’s manly strength for defense, if it is necessary.”

A journalist visiting the Bohemian lands in 1912 observed, “These are not gymnasts, they are an army.” The latter observation held true. In 1918 Sokol members acted as gendarmes in Prague during the transition from Habsburg power and formed
themselves into the core of the new Czechoslovak army after 1918.\textsuperscript{109} They took part in the Czech resistance during World War Two, when it was outlawed under the Nazi regime, and also aided the British trained Czechoslovak parachutists who assassinated Reinhard Heydrich.\textsuperscript{110} George F. Kennan, the famous American statesman, and stationed in Czechoslovakia just before the outbreak of World War Two, called a para-military Ruthenian organization in 1939 a, “…parallel to the Slav Sokol.”\textsuperscript{111} Between the wars the Sokol rejected Communism and banned fascists from joining, although its own activities in retrospect can be seen to be eerily similar to fascism. Tomáš Masaryk recognized the danger and the potential of Sokol early on and took an active role in its workings, taking part in the daily exercises it promoted, as mentioned earlier, attending the annual Sokol meeting or \textit{slet}, and moderating its extremist tendencies by cultivating relationships with the Sokol leadership.\textsuperscript{112} He even continued to perform the daily Sokol drill into his old age.\textsuperscript{113}

The figure of Masaryk himself brings together many of the aspects of interwar Czechoslovak nationalism. The main founder of the country, an accomplished statesman and academic, and its first president, he was a figure of overwhelming popular support and veneration. The people called him \textit{tatiček}, literally “little father” but having a connotation similar to the English papa or daddy. In 1990 a majority of Czechs still

\textsuperscript{109} King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 156.
\textsuperscript{110} Dimond, “The Sokol and Czech Nationalism,” 189, 194.
\textsuperscript{112} Dimond, “The Sokol and Czech Nationalism,” 190.
\textsuperscript{113} Čapek, \textit{Talks With T.G. Masaryk}, 91.
considered him to be the national figure in which they had the most pride.\textsuperscript{114} During the interwar period his popularity bordered on the cultish. Poems were written about him. His photograph graced all public institutions and almost all private homes and businesses. Schoolchildren celebrated state holidays that featured a play with a cameo of Masaryk as a character. Dozens of hagiographic biographies were written about him. He received hundreds of gifts from citizens on his birthdays and national holidays, perhaps the same thing in the public’s eyes, which included violins, wood carved busts, a portrait of him made out of hair (sent by a barber), a miniature cake in a bottle, collages, etc... In the 1930s a museum was set up to house them all. Streets, squares, buildings, schools, boats, and military units were named after him. Photo albums of him were bestsellers.\textsuperscript{115} He was often called the “President-Liberator.”\textsuperscript{116} When he died, a newspaper claimed that “Masaryk is Czechoslovakia,” and an estimated 700,000 people came to see him lying in state.\textsuperscript{117}

Kamil Krofta’s eulogy for Masaryk captures the remarkable sentiment that the Czechs held for him.

“On the 14\textsuperscript{th} of September 1937 our great President-Liberator passed away from us for ever. The very remarkable echo which that event aroused throughout practically the whole world would of itself justify me speaking of it here; for that echo is a proof that not only in our own country but also far and wide beyond the frontiers of our State the great significance of Masaryk’s personality and his life’s work no merely for his own nation and State but also for all mankind is understood and appreciated, and that in him is rightly seen one of the greatest

\textsuperscript{114} Andrew Roberts, \textit{From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Svejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture}, (New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 102.
\textsuperscript{115} Orzoff, \textit{Battle for the Castle}, 119–32
\textsuperscript{116} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 192.
\textsuperscript{117} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 194.
figures in the history of our nation and State, one of the greatest figures of modern history altogether.”

All of this is symptomatic of Masaryk being seen as the living embodiment of the nation, or an avatar of Czechoslovakia and all that was good and just about it. Masaryk was the nation and the nation was Masaryk. This was complicated by Czechoslovakia being a democratic nation, because Masaryk was also seen as being representative of democratic politics itself. The irony of a nationalist leader cult which is predicated upon the leader being a liberal democrat is obvious. It would not be an empty claim to say that this Masaryk cult prepared the psychological ground among the Czechoslovaks for the later imported Stalin cult after 1948. Broadening this argument, the Bohemian lands and Slovakia were under the rule of Franz Joseph from 1848 until 1916, another strong male figure with all the trappings of official imperial majesty behind him. From 1848 until the Communist takeover then, the Bohemian lands and Slovakia were under the influence of the image of a powerful centralized male figure, celebrated in semi-official state cults. The transition to the cult of Stalin was perhaps not too difficult given this cultural norm.

“Daddy” Masaryk consolidated Czechoslovak patriotism and nationalism and lent it moral accountability. The Communist party nor any others could not compete against the power of Masaryk’s image and the pull of the national mythology. After World War Two, an immense ideological scramble ensued as factions competed to carry out Masaryk’s legacy. This was no light issue, given Masaryk’s stature and reputation.

Masaryk’s Czechoslovakia was also not a bad place to live and work, materially speaking. All along it continued the pace of frantic industrial energy begun in the nineteenth century. It had inherited approximately 70 percent of the entire industrial production capacity of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The standard pillars of coal, iron, and steel continued apace. Czechoslovakia became home to one of the largest shoe manufacturers in the world, Bata. On the eve of World War Two Bata was putting out two hundred thousand pairs of shoes a day. Aussiger Verein was, “the fourth largest chemical firm in Europe.” Czechoslovakia was ranked in 1937 as the third largest producer of radium in the world. The Škoda Works, a massive industrial conglomerate, was involved in everything from cars, trains, electronics, industrial engineering, and, infamously, to munitions and armaments. One Czech in September 1937 claimed that “…the Škoda Works is the best arms factory in the world.” The Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production was the largest chemical company in Central Europe behind IG Farben. The list could go on for several paragraphs.

According to historian Chad Bryant, “Interwar Czechoslovakia was the world’s tenth largest per capita producer of industrial goods,” and it was also the world’s tenth largest economy. The average annual GNP growth was 3 percent from 1920 to 1937.

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121 Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia*, 200.
even after factoring in the effects of the Depression.\textsuperscript{127} By the time the Depression struck in 1929 the average annual wage was, “nine times higher than in 1913.” Czechoslovakia was indeed hit hard by the Depression, with unemployment reaching 30 percent at one point.\textsuperscript{128} However, Czechoslovakia recovered quicker than most by passing monetary and fiscal reforms along Keynesian lines, and saw its GNP grow by 18 percent between 1935 and 1937.\textsuperscript{129} On the whole life was good for the Czechoslovaks economically. The country gave proof that it was, in euphemistic terms, the factory of Europe. This did not go unnoticed.

The nationalist rhetorical narrative of Czechoslovakia’s struggle for freedom and its perceived apotheosis during the interwar period was best exemplified in the postwar writings of Petr Zenkl. For Zenkl, 1918 to 1938 was a “golden era” and an “island of freedom,” with Masaryk at its heart. Zenkl’s writings make this adulation clear: “The presidency of Thomas G. Masaryk approached the realization of Plato’s ideal of a philosopher-ruler…”\textsuperscript{130} For Zenkl, the Czechs had finally won their struggle:

\begin{quote}
“The over 1,000 year-old history of the Czech and Slovak nations is a history of fight against religious or nation oppression, history of struggle for freedom and political self-determination. It was always a fight of the weak against the strong, whether it was the fight of the Czechs against the Germans, or the struggle of the Hussites against Catholic crusaders. Very often it was also a struggle between the small Czech and Slovak man against German capital and Hungarian land owners who owned in Czechoslovakia unquestionably too much, as a remainder of the time when the nation had been held under strict domination.”\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{128} Teichova, \textit{The Czechoslovak Economy}, 14.
\textsuperscript{129} Pryor, “Czechoslovak Fiscal Policies,” 239.
\textsuperscript{130} Petr Zenkl, \textit{Communist Seizure of Power and the Press: Czechoslovakia, 1945–1948} (1962), 1, manuscript, folder 1, box 11, Masaryk papers.
\textsuperscript{131} Petr Zenkl, \textit{How They Did It?} (nd), 8, manuscript, folder 15, box 10, folder 15, Masaryk papers.
This quote of Zenkl’s is apt in capturing the final element in understanding Czechoslovakia’s interwar history, that of land reform. There were still in the interwar period huge tracts of land owned by a tiny minority of aristocrats, holdovers from the Habsburg empire, mostly identifying as German in Bohemia and Moravia, and as Hungarian in the area of Slovakia. Among the poor there was land hunger and a sense that land reform was needed. The government did enact land reform redistribution policies starting in 1919, appropriating mostly old noble and German owned land. A major motivation of the land reform campaign was anti-German prejudice.\textsuperscript{132} However, of the land that was eligible for redistribution in 1936, 49 percent of it had been returned to the original large-scale land owners. The hunger for land reform was only satisfied by the Communist influenced government after the war, which figured as no small factor in their support.\textsuperscript{133} The claim of a 1929 Czechoslovak yearbook that due to land reform, “…a great number of country people were enabled to raise their standard of living and to increase their consumption, not to make mention of those who, by this means, were rendered permanently immune to the destructive influences of Bolshevist propaganda,” was nothing but wishful thinking.\textsuperscript{134} A contributing cause of the failure of the interwar land reform was that it was dominated by the right wing Agrarian party, who had large influence in village politics, and who caused the land reform to be skewed towards

\textsuperscript{133} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 26–7.
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{The Year-Book of the Czechoslovak Republic}, 1929, 142, Masaryk collection.
benefiting already comparatively wealthy peasants and giving nothing to landless workers.\textsuperscript{135}

The Czechs were prone to conceive of this disproportionate land ownership in terms of hostility to Germans and Germany. Zenkl and other Czech elites accused Germans of oppressing the Czechs economically through land and capital ownership. In the opinion of Thomas Masaryk in 1902, “Today the situation in the Czech lands is as follows: the aristocracy is not nationalist; it is either German or feudal Catholic. Until 1860-1870 the capitalism there was German.”\textsuperscript{136} A Czech politician in 1906 said that, “Most of our Germans […] are degenerate. They are afflicted by the curse of wealth.”\textsuperscript{137} This latent grudge was exacerbated by the experience of World War II and most likely contributed much to the brutality of the postwar expulsion of the Germans.

The Czechs then had a robust nationalist narrative built upon equal parts myth and history, refracting true events through an at times almost theological lens of Czech destiny and spirit. The interwar period was a time of tremendous growth and energy, shooting Czechoslovakia into a spot as one of the great economic powers of Europe. This economic power was noticed particularly by the malign forces at work in Germany at the time. The Czech nationalist narrative, while undeniably inspiring at times, had its dark side. As with most inspiring narratives, it was predicated on a Manichean dualistic conflict of good and evil, us vs. them. The rise and development of this conflict, both in

\textsuperscript{135} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 9.
\textsuperscript{136} Shillinglaw, \textit{The Lectures of Professor T.G. Masaryk at the University of Chicago}, 96, Masaryk collection.
\textsuperscript{137} King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 132.
reality and in idea, and the way in which the idea in turn shaped reality, is what will now be explored.
CHAPTER 2
FROM NEIGHBORS TO ENEMIES - THE CZECH AND GERMAN CONFLICT

A tourist manual printed in Prague in 1932 characterized a widespread Czech perception. In its section on the history of Slovakia it grandly declared that “The young enlightened Slovaks recognized two means of saving the nation from becoming completely Magyarized. They sought to improve the material condition of the masses of the people, and they attached themselves to their kinsmen, the Czechs, in order to secure political freedom with their aid.” Reasoning with this anti-Hungarian logic, many Czech elites saw themselves as the top rung in a hierarchy of subject peoples who needed awakening. Czech nationalist histories also credited the Slovaks with preserving a supposed common Czechoslovak culture from destruction during and after the Thirty Years War, thus bringing Slovakia in line with the nationalist narrative and implying a national essence shared by both. “The great duty of caring for the preservation of the tradition of Czechoslovak culture rested for one and a half centuries on what is today Slovakia.”

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138 Slovakia (Bratislava: Tourist Bureau of Slovakia, 1932), 8, folder 953, box 117, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
139 It is important to emphasize that the Czechs were not the only people who lived in Czechoslovakia. There were Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians, and, last but not least, Jews. A large population of anti-Bolshevik(White) émigré Russians added to the mix as well. A census taken in 1930 recorded the overall population at approximately 14.7 million. Breaking down the population by its native languages, there were 9.69 million Czechoslovaks, 3.23 million Germans, 692,000 Magyars or Hungarians, 549,000 Ruthenians, 82,000 Poles, and 187,000 speakers of Yiddish and Hebrew who were presumably Jews. Benjamin Frommer, National Cleansing, 11n25.
poor ethnic relations in Czechoslovakia with the Slovaks and others, while it created ideal conditions for the reception of radical far right ideologies among the German speaking population of the Sudetenland.

Tomáš Masaryk and other foundational figures, along with the Czech populace at large, saw the Slovaks as a “sister” people who had suffered from inadequate development and culture. The Slovaks merely spoke a dialect of Czech, not a separate language. Slovakia during the Austro-Hungarian Empire was considered a part of Hungary by the Imperial government and was actually referred to as Northern Hungary. Ethnic conflict between the Slovaks and the Magyars was widespread and increasingly nasty in the 1920s. Czech leaders planned to teach the Slovaks, free them from the Magyars, and bring them up from their perceived vulgar peasantry.

Many Slovaks did not see things this way and the Czech attitude meant friction with the Slovaks from the beginning of the country’s existence. Conflicting interpretations of a promise Masaryk made in a speech in Pittsburgh in 1918 about the nature of Slovak autonomy poisoned matters further. Masaryk and the Czechs said that this statement granted the Slovaks full standing with the Czechs in one nation, while the Slovak interpretation focused on the creation of Czecho-Slovakia (never Czechoslovakia), a dual state. Following a line of continuity with the politics of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, it seems that the Slovaks desired a political system that mirrored the Dual System or Dual Monarchy, under which the Czech lands and Slovakia

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would have separate governments and internal management but an in common foreign policy and military.

The main Slovak opposition group, already advocating for Slovak autonomy from the Habsburg empire since 1905, and variously known as the Slovak People’s Party and Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, was led by Andrej Hlinka. Hlinka was a fiery Catholic priest and a fierce politician, a recipe for extremist politics. He gave lectures in Prague on political oppression by the Habsburgs in Slovakia as early as 1907. He led the party until his death in 1938, after which his protégé Josef Tiso, another extremist Catholic priest, succeeded him in leadership. After the Munich Agreement, but before the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, the Slovak leadership was belligerent toward the government in Prague and spent exorbitant amounts of government money on petty and useless projects. During this interim period Tiso and Slovak leaders begged Germany for support but it was only on the eve of the Germany invasion of the Bohemian lands that this support was granted. Tiso finally struck a deal with Adolf Hitler in March 1939 and separated Slovakia from Czechoslovakia, setting up a client state under Nazi Germany which allowed the SS and others to do what they wished with its Jewish population.

143 For details of the party’s actions and origins in Czechoslovakia, particularly its involvement with the Polish minority, see Thomas V. Gromada, “Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists,” *Slavic Review* 28 (1969).
144 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, xix.
Slovakia’s pact with Germany emerged after Hitler summoned Tiso to meet him on March 12, 1939, immediately prior to the invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia outside of the Sudetenland. At this meeting he urged Tiso to declare Slovakia an independent state allied with Germany. Blood and shame were the price for Slovakian independence. Some units of Slovak troops actually took part in the invasion of Poland under the aegis of Germany in the hopes of Slovakia being granted bits of Polish territory. Slovakia was also used as a German staging area for the invasion.

Paramilitary units called the Hlinka guards were created, described by one Czech observer as “…their own S.S. formations….“ During the war, Slovakia formed an integral part of the transport system of Jews to the eastern concentration and death camps, because it was a stop-over point for trains carrying deported Jews from the rest of Europe. Reinhard Heydrich, on a visit to Slovakia on April 10, 1942, told the Minister-President of Slovakia, Vojtech Tuka, that Slovakia was “one part of the programme.” Between 1941 and 1945 virtually the entire native Slovakian population of Jews was killed. By all standards, independent Slovakia was the ideal Nazi satellite state, despite the fact that the dreams of Slovak autonomy dissolved after the war. As George F.

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150 Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 273.
151 Some of the leaders and supporters of the independent Slovak state during the war were declared war criminals afterwards and fled to Argentina, where they set up an organization called the Slovak Liberation Committee. It was led by Ferdinand Šurčanský, an assistant to Tiso before the war and the Minister of the Interior of the wartime Slovak state, which position he used to further Slovak ties with Nazi Germany and to produce anti-Semitic propaganda. The Slovak Liberation Committee produced a memorandum sent to Radio Free Europe in the early 1950s, which defamed various Czech exiles as oppressors of the Slovaks and collaborators with Communism and offered the support of the Slovak Liberation Committee to the efforts of Radio Free Europe. Radio Free Europe categorically rejected the Memorandum and the Slovak Liberation Committee, concluding its report on the matter that “In this fight former fascists would represent
Kennan astutely concluded as early as late 1938, “They are momentarily happy in a false autonomy which is rapidly destroying every possibility of a real national self-determination for decades to come.”  

Tiso was executed in March 1947.

In addition to the Slovaks, the Poles and the Hungarians caused headaches for the Czechoslovak leadership throughout the interwar period. Neither had strong separatist parties such as the Slovaks had, but Poland and Hungary regularly engaged in diplomatic sparring via requests for small pieces of land to be granted to their respective countries in order to protect their claimed ethnic brothers and sisters within Czechoslovakia from claimed Czechoslovak brutality. Pamphlets were published back and forth. There are many examples from the Czechoslovak side. As early as 1927 Orbis, a prominent Czechoslovak publishing house, put out a pamphlet negatively comparing the treatment of minorities in Hungary to Czechoslovakia, asserting that Hungarians in Czechoslovakia were better treated than they were in Hungary itself. There was a pamphlet by Kamil Krofta, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1936 until just after the Munich Agreement, published in 1934 and titled “The Substance of Hungarian Revisionism.” In it Krofta accuses the Hungarian leadership of promoting anti-Slav sentiments, portraying Pan-Slavism as dangerous, and of campaigning against France. Krofta holds that the real

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153 Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 158.
danger is a resurgent Hungary that would seek to take land from Czechoslovakia and 
establish a Greater Hungary allied with Germany.\textsuperscript{156} Beyond this pamphleteering and 
rhetoric however neither rose above the level of annoyance until WWII.

The true conflict was with the Germans. According to a 1930 survey there were 
approximately 3,230,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia, a sizeable minority.\textsuperscript{157} This 
conflict was not new. The Bohemian lands had been the site of cultural, national, and 
ethnic conflict between German and Czech speakers for a century as each vied for 
dominance of the region under the Habsburg Empire. In 1848 the spokesman for Czech 
liberals refused to go to a parliament of German liberals in Frankfurt on the grounds that 
the Czechs were not Germans.\textsuperscript{158} Further, the Czech political left supported the Habsburg 
monarchy in the revolutions of 1848 as they regarded the stability of the Empire as 
protection against being absorbed into a nationally resurgent greater Germany.\textsuperscript{159} They 
had reason for doing so. A German writer named Johann Georg Kohl from Bremen in 
northern Germany traveled through Bohemia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 
early 1840s and published a book about it called \textit{Austria}. In it he said that “as ancient and 
modern lords we have the most perfect right on our side; so we shall continue to call 
Bohemia a German land, on right of our sword, our civilization, and our industry—a 
German land, in which the intruding Tshekhs are condemned to plough our fields.”\textsuperscript{160}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[156] Kamil Krofta, \textit{The Substance of Hungarian Revisionism} (Orbis: Prague, 1934), folder 240, box 33, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
\item[158] Hobsbawm, \textit{The Age of Capital}, 87.
\item[159] Hobsbawm, \textit{The Age of Capital}, 17.
\item[160] Quoted in King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 19.
\end{footnotes}
The animosity worked both ways. A leading *buditele*, František Palacký, had called the Germans “a nation of predators”, and in an 1868 work said that “The essential content of Czech history is a perpetual struggle between the German and Slav elements.” He was also the liberal Czech spokesman who had refused to attend the Frankfurt liberal parliament in 1848 on the grounds that the Czechs were not Germans. He supported the Habsburg monarchy in the 1848 revolutions due to the conviction that only a strong Habsburg state could prevent the Germans from eventually annexing the Bohemian lands into a German state. In his statement of refusal to attend the Frankfurt parliament he said that, “If the State of Austria had not already been in existence for centuries, we should be forced, in the interests of Europe and even of humanity, to create it.” His magnum opus was a ten volume *History of Bohemia*, in which he held that the essence of Czech history was its struggle for survival against German aggression and dominance. He served as the de facto leader of the Czech nationalist movement from 1848 until his death in 1876.

The broader background to this conflict was the Habsburg empire. The origins of many horrors of twentieth-century Europe can be found in the decline of the Habsburg empire in the nineteenth century due to nationalism. As regards the Czechs and Germans the problems started in the 1830s. Both the Czechs and Germans were influenced by the popular nationalism and the general revolutionary fervor of Europe throughout the next

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163 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 27.
two decades and took part in the revolutions of 1848, which split them into multiple competing factions. There were the German Liberals, committed to a progressive view of mankind and society moving away from monarchy and feudalism toward a parliamentary government by vote. Within the empire they were opposed to the Habsburgs, but emphasized a common German culture as the proper and best way to achieve progressive ends. Non-German peoples in the empire would have to take up aspects of German culture for this reason.\textsuperscript{166} There were the Czech Liberals, equally opposed to the Habsburgs, but also hostile to a perceived subsuming of the Czechs under German culture. Just because they were both opposed to Habsburg monarchical rule did not mean that they were friends. The Czech Liberals wanted the same form of government as the German Liberals, but one that was specifically for the Czechs.

When neither side got what they wanted after 1848, they shifted to a power jockeying within the half of empire under Austrian sovereignty, called Cisleithania.\textsuperscript{167} If the German Liberals in the empire could not break free of it, they would take it over culturally and linguistically for the ends of progress. The Czech Liberals strived for the same thing but for the smaller goal of taking over the Bohemian lands and what is now Slovakia. Thus both camps moderately supported the Habsburg imperial identity each for their own liberal ends. The Czechs particularly conceived of support for the Habsburgs at the time as the best means to prevent the German dominance in the Bohemian lands.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{166} For an excellent description of the German Liberal worldview see, Carl E. Schorske, \textit{Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture} (New York: Vintage, 1981), 117.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{167} Transleithania in turn designates the half of the empire under Hungarian sovereignty. The terms reference the river Leitha, a tributary of the Danube, which marked the boundary between the two. Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, xi.}
These camps split over time into radical wings on both the Czech and German side, with moderate wings working to benefit their ethnic communities through designated government channels and ethnic ultra-nationalists on the other hand who advocated secession and pan-ethnic identities, the Pan-German volkische German groups and the Pan-Slavic Czech groups. This shift was particularly intense among the German Liberals, as many shifted from a conception of advancing German cultural dominance within the Empire as a way of establishing greater progress and civilization toward a conception of Germans and German culture as a particular group in the Empire that had to be defended and whose dominance had to be asserted.\textsuperscript{168}

Thus there was political fighting between the German and Czech liberals, the German and Czech ethnic national extremists, and fighting between the wings in their own groups. Between all of them were those who were committed to a genuine Habsburg imperial identity for its own sake, disavowing identifying as either Czech or German, and trying to mediate between all sides and support the monarchy and the government. Particularly important in this groups were the nobles of the empire, seeing their survival as dependent on that of the empire’s.\textsuperscript{169} Then there were the Habsburg imperial government officials themselves trying to run the state and enact policies that would prevent the groups’ fighting from breaking down into disorder and violence. And finally, there was the populace at large which was the site of contestation for all these groups, most of whom neither cared nor knew about what was happening. Their sense of identity

\textsuperscript{168} Judson, \textit{Guardians of the Nation}, 25–6.
\textsuperscript{169} Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, 10–1.
was predominantly local, rooted in their town, region, or city, not in a national or even imperial identity.

It is useful to think of society in the Habsburg empire as a tottering stack of loosely gelled layers. Nominally presiding over the whole was the Emperor and the royal family, embodiments of a supranational identity and ancient dynastic legacy. Just beneath was a strata of nobility, well connected throughout the empire via staff in the government and their landholdings, loyal to the monarchy. On roughly the same level, but existing in a different social habitat, was the Liberal bourgeoisie, committed to rational politics and an expansion of liberal policies while maintaining the monarchy as a figurehead. Beneath these were the urban and town dwelling business class, a site of bitter political contestation among all political groups. Nervous and ambitious, they were liable to blow to whatever political position they perceived to be of the best advantage to themselves. Spread throughout them though were the most hardline nationalists of the various nationalities, spurring on and funding radical efforts. Then the urban and rural workers, the largest of all and the grand prize of political opinion but also the least politicized. Running from top to bottom in this layered whole, like veins in a mine transecting an entire mountain, were the special interests and isms; conservative Catholicism, liberal Protestantism, socialism, temperance movements, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, communism, Zionism, followers of Rudolf Steiner, various nationalisms, and anarchism. The only real glue holding them all together was the military and the bureaucracy. The result was a deeply unstable entity.
Politically, many of these conflicts broadened out into the question of whether the main policy of the empire would be either federalism or centralism. The Czechs in general supported a federated state which would give them greater autonomy while the Germans in general supported a centralized state in which they could consolidate and retain their power in the government. The Czechs usually tried to portray federalism as a policy that would strengthen all supposed nationalities in the Empire, including the Germans, not just the minority nations.\textsuperscript{170} There were flips and flops from members of both sides however and the centralism/federalism divide served more as a rubric for determining short term gain than any long term sensible policy.

The Habsburg were also nebulous about their exact identity as well. The ruling family had its earliest origins in the medieval period in lands that are now part of southern Germany, where Old German and Middle High German would have been spoken, and through its historical relationship with the Holy Roman Empire had at least a foot within the camp of German culture. But did this make the Habsburgs themselves German? This question was of great importance for the various nationalist and Liberal political camps across the Empire, and it only gained in the importance as the century progressed. If the Habsburgs were German, then the pan-German nationalists and German Liberals had the advantage of royal imprimatur, yet also paradoxically the Czech nationalist and Czech Liberals also had an advantage, since they would have extra weight

\textsuperscript{170} For an example of this political line from the Czechs see Karel Jonaš, \textit{Federace učiní Rakousko silným a uspokojí národ německý I Slovany} (Prague: I.L. Kober, 1871), folder 61, box 9, BC 45, Masaryk collection. The title encapsulates the position in nutshell: Federation will make Austria strong and will satisfy the German nation and Slavs. See also Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, 23.
behind their claim to be oppressed by Germans and German culture, seeing as how the royal family itself was German. However, if the royal family existed above and beyond all nationalities as an entity unto itself then a supranational identity of being a citizen of the Empire trumped all wings of the Czech and German movements, while also at the same time giving these movements free play. What happened was that the Habsburg royal family never definitively stated where it stood in relation to its national identity. The Habsburgs then can perhaps be accused of leading every side on, and thus furthering the rise of tensions within the Empire that contributed to dissolution. The historian Victor S. Mamatey put it well that “It was perhaps their inability to decide on a role, whether to be German national rulers or supranational monarchs, that brought about their downfall and the dissolution of their empire.”

As the century progressed the extreme wings of the ethnic nationalists pushed out the moderate Liberals, the Habsburg citizens, and the officials, as they formed political parties which elected extremists to be the officials themselves. The unification of Germany in 1871 particularly galvanized the Pan-Germans. Railroad lines allowed politicians and writers to travel easily and swiftly across the Bohemian lands, spreading ideologies and giving the impression of a concerted movement among previously isolated rural areas and peoples. The Empire complicated matters by trying to sort citizens into neat and tidy ethnic groups via surveys, censuses, and demographic studies which focused on the ambiguous term “language of daily use” and did not allow people to

171 Mamatey, Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 2–3.
172 Some radical Pan-German university students at the time even pushed for a further unification of the German Reich by taking in parts of the Habsburg lands. See, Schorske, Fin-de-Siecle Vienna, 127.
choose multiple languages, even though many of them spoke both Czech and German every day. The population at large found it ever more difficult to remain neutral in the Czech/German divide as the Empire itself pushed them into one group or the other through its policies. The Empire, against its best intentions, helped create with these policies the very nationalist identities that it sought to prevent from forming.

A main example of this process is the Moravian Compromise. The Moravian Compromise was a law passed in late 1905 which split voting rights into two separate nationally defined groups, such that citizens now had to declare themselves definitively to be either Czech or German in order to vote. Legislation meant to appease nationalists and stop the nationalist trend resulted in fanning further enthusiasm among the nationalists as well as creating the very nationalist groups the Empire was trying to prevent from forming. As well, the national identity of women and children was largely determined by the male head of families (fathers or husbands). Whole families became either Czech or German in the eyes of the state and their communities based on the father’s official nationality.

Upwardly mobile and politically savvy citizens in Bohemia now had a choice to make, to either put their chips in with the Germans or the Czechs. As many were bilingual, they could just as easily go for either side. Depending on how the political winds blew and the advantages or disadvantages gained, people declared themselves to

173 Judson, Guardians of the Nation, 11–4, 27.
174 Zahra, Kidnapped Souls, 33. Eagle Glassheim has astutely noted the parallels of this creation of artificial linguistic categories via a single choice on the Habsburg census to the policy of the U.S. Census up to 2000 of only allowing respondents to choose one “race.” See Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 253n62.
be either purely German or Czech, destroying any middle ground. This sometimes resulted in farcical situations, such as a burgher’s club in Prague for Czech patriots/nationalists in which most of its members spoke better German than Czech. Many name changes also occurred, with people Germanizing or Czechifying their names depending on which camp they eventually settled in. For example, the founder of the Sokol, Miroslav Tyrš, was actually born Friedrich Emanuel Tirsch into a primarily German speaking family and town. Influenced by the 1848 revolutions, he became a Czech nationalist by the late 1850s and changed his name accordingly. As well, the first president of the Sokol, Jindřich Fügner, was born Heinrich Fügner into a German business family, becoming a Czech nationalist and changing his name by 1860. Fügner rejected his German origins, saying that “I was never German. I am a Praguer, a German-speaking Praguer.” Even by the turn of the nineteenth century, some supporters of Czech nationalism were still writing in German, for example a pamphlet by a Czech member of the Austrian Parliament criticizing language ordinances passed by Count Kasimir Badeni, Minister-President of Cisleithania from 1895 to 1897, and Badeni himself.

The Badeni language ordinances were legislation passed by Badeni in 1897 that made both Czech and German the official bureaucratic languages of the Bohemian lands and required that all Bohemian bureaucratic officials had to be fluent in both languages by 1901. Before this German alone had been the official language and all bureaucratic

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communication had been in German. This was seen as a major victory by the Czech nationalists and a defeat by the German nationalists. Within the ranks of the bureaucracy, those who could already speak Czech were overwhelmingly native speakers who had learned German. The ordinances posed no problem to them. But there were many officials who were native German speakers and thus had never had any need to learn Czech, meaning that they only spoke German or had a very limited Czech speaking ability. The ordinances threatened them with the loss of their jobs and livelihood if they could not become fluent by the deadline of 1901. German riots broke out in Prague and Vienna, led by nationalists. The parliament in Vienna broke down over the struggle between the Czech and German delegates.\textsuperscript{178} The above mentioned \textit{Ausgleich} became a point of major political contention. The \textit{Ausgleich} agreement had to be renewed every ten years by a vote in the Austrian parliament. The German nationalist opposition to the language ordinances used the \textit{Ausgleich} vote as a wedge. Either the language ordinances would be retracted or they would not vote for the renewal of the \textit{Ausgleich} and Hungary would be separated from Austria. Mark Twain, the great American writer, by chance was on a tour of Europe at the time and visited the Austrian parliament in the fall and early winter of 1897. His impressions of the crisis were put down in an article he wrote for Harper’s Magazine in 1898. A German delegate held a 12 hour filibuster at one point and fist fights broke out. Through some creative legislative juggling the \textit{Ausgleich} was

\textsuperscript{178} Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, 31.
passed, but the Badeni government collapsed and two years later in 1899 the ordinances were rescinded.\textsuperscript{179}

By the end of the century the extremists had won and politics became a brute struggle for ethnic national dominance, with outburst of violence and ill feeling on all sides. The ethnic national means by which Liberalism would achieve its ends became the ends themselves, with Liberalism as its means. Battles over language had led to a decline in bilingualism, such that by 1900 only 16 to 22 percent of schoolchildren were bilingual in a range of areas across the Bohemian lands; Prague, Budějovice/Budweis, Liberec/Reichenberg, and Most/Brüx.\textsuperscript{180} This is a steep decline from the estimated 60 percent bilingualism of the population in 1865, only thirty five years earlier. Those who identified solely as Habsburg citizens, or any identity outside of the Czech/German divide, found themselves with nowhere to go. With identities mostly rooted in locality, as being residents of a particular town or region, or in class in the case of the aristocracy, they could not compete against the broad all-encompassing identity of nation.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{179} As Twain concluded, “Some of the results of this wild freak followed instantly. The Badeni government came down with a crash; there was a popular outbreak or two in Vienna; there were three or four days of furious rioting in Prague, followed by the establishing there of martial law; the Jews and Germans were harried and plundered, and their houses destroyed; in other Bohemian towns there was rioting -- in some cases the Germans being the rioters, in others the Czechs -- and in all cases the Jew had to roast, no matter which side he was on. We are well along in December now, the new Minister-President has not been able to patch up a peace among the warring factions of the parliament, therefore there is no use in calling it together again for the present; public opinion believes that parliamentary government and the Constitution are actually threatened with extinction, and that the permanency of the monarchy itself is a not absolutely certain thing!” Mark Twain, “Stirring Times in Austria,” \textit{Harper's New Monthly Magazine}, March, 1898.

\textsuperscript{180} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 6.

\textsuperscript{181} Oswald Thun, a venerable Bohemian noble, wrote in 1898 during a vacation on the French Riviera his opinion on the crisis of the empire, which can serve in part as a paean of the nobility as a whole: “I am thinking about my good old Austria, and about our group, which was deluded enough to believe unshakably that ancient traditions and a certain spirit, which we carefully cultivated when we were children, could not be lost. Almost in tears, I have to say that in Austria the impossible has happened--Austria is crawling out of her skin, and nothing remains to us other than to lay ourselves down to sleep on
Nationalists from both sides had only contempt for them. German speakers in
Prague who attempted to retain their pan-Bohemian and Habsburg identity were referred
to by the German nationalists in the borderlands as “the dubious Germans in Prague.”
Some nobles of the empire who lived in the Bohemian lands committed themselves to
supranational ideal of Bohemia, sometimes called utraquism, a play on the term for the
old Hussite practice of the laity taking both the bread and the wine at Mass. They were
marginalized eventually with all the others however. Any attempts by the Habsburg
government to make compromises only embittered both sides to it and any attempts to
appease either side fed the fire. As the empire grew weaker the hopes of the extremists
and nationalists grew bolder. Even attempts by the Empire to conciliate the nationalists
were attacked. For example, a tourist magazine which was sponsored by the imperial
government and even by some German nationalist groups, and that had high praise for
German cultural achievements, was attacked by a prominent German nationalist group in
1911 which claimed that the magazine was funded by Czech banks.

When universal suffrage was granted in Cisleithania in 1907 all moderating
influences were gone and crisis loomed. By the eve of World War I the Czechs and
Germans were segregated into almost completely separate systems of governance,
unofficial ethnic states within the larger Empire that to modern eyes bear a resemblance
to a self-imposed apartheid. The Czechs and Germans had their own separate health

her discarded hide... The moment is coming, with giant strides, when the national element alone will
prevail–We will be crippled, because, duty bound, we feel ourselves to be more Imperial than the
Emperor.” Quoted in Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 37.
182 Nolte, The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914, 46.
183 Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 27.
184 Judson, Guardians of the Nation, 286n3.
clinics, orphanages, nurseries, schools, summer camps, and more.\textsuperscript{185} The Habsburg empire was divided and by the time World War I broke out it was nothing but a hollow corpse waiting to be punctured to let out the nationalist infection.\textsuperscript{186}

It was in this crucible that the Czech national narrative was forged and in which the \textit{buditele} operated. Dominance of the main regional city, Prague, was a central battle issue between the German and Czech nationalists after 1848. This battle in part led to the actual consolidation/creation of the conceptual identities of “Czech” and “German.” In the latter half of the nineteenth century a cultural civil war broke out in Prague, with the Czechs and Germans trying to outdo each other in the building of monuments, theaters, and social clubs in the hope of gaining dominance over cultural life. The Germans built dozens if not hundreds of monuments to Joseph II, the Holy Roman Emperor and Habsburg ruler who had made German the official language of state in the late seventeenth century, while the Czechs built theaters and opera houses to hold plays and events in their own language.\textsuperscript{187} German nationalists for their part commonly portrayed Czech and Slavic cultural achievements in general as a result of mimicking German culture, that of children playing with something which did not belong to them. An entire German literary sub-genre called \textit{Heimat} fiction arose in the late nineteenth century,

\textsuperscript{185} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 51.  
\textsuperscript{186} See Jeremy King’s and Nancy Wingfield’s excellent books on this process, particularly the first two chapters of King, as centered on the town of Budweis/Budějovice up to 1890. Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints} and King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 1–79.  
\textsuperscript{187} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 17–47. Within the first few days after the foundation of Czechoslovakia, Czechs tore down most of the Joseph II statues throughout the country. See King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 155–6.
which portrayed German cultural conflicts with Slavs in the Habsburg Empire, either heroically or cautionary, exhorting Germans to greater effort in the nationalist struggle.¹⁸⁸

A common source of the conflict was the dispute over whether the German or Czech language would be used in the public sphere. For example, in the southern Bohemian town of Budweis/Budějovice city council members bitterly fought in 1861 over the construction of a middle school that would give instruction in both German and Czech, as opposed to only German. The next year town citizens became involved in an argument over whether the local choir should sing both German and Czech songs, and if so what the proper ratio of the songs in each language should be.¹⁸⁹ There is a strong point to be made that these conflicts over language were so intense because oftentimes it was the only characteristic that differentiated the population of the Bohemian lands.¹⁹⁰ Language use had to become the dominant marker of difference for the nationalists before they could begin to pry apart the population into the neat categories of “German” and “Czech” along other lines. In 1882 the ancient Charles University in Prague itself, founded by Karel IV in 1348, split into Czech and German speaking parts.¹⁹¹ The issue of language of instruction in universities was a major bone of contention throughout the Bohemian lands, and the Habsburg empire itself, throughout this period. One professor, Jaroslav Goll, bemoaned the university language conflicts in a pamphlet issued in 1902 called The Hatred of the Peoples and the Austrian University. He called for an end to linguistic nationalism and separatism and a renewal of the sense of an overarching

¹⁸⁸ Judson, Guardians of the Nation, 36–41.
¹⁸⁹ King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, 1–4.
¹⁹⁰ Judson, Guardians of the Nation, 21.
¹⁹¹ Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 254n82.
identity of being members of the Habsburg empire. Even his was an unrealistic vision by that point.

Even Czech socialists were explicitly anti-German and anti-bilingualism, seeing Germans as the owners and manipulators of capital. The Czechs were perceived by the socialists as a traditionally peasant and proletarian people and for them to learn German to further social advancement and social relations would be to ruin themselves for the class struggle by becoming part of the enemy. The aims of socialism and Czech nationalism were one and the same for them.

As the economy boomed with the development of industry in the Bohemian lands and the linking of railroad lines, Czechs began to migrate for jobs and pushed into formerly German majority areas. The first linking railroads between Bohemia and Austria came in the 1830s and by the late 1840s factories were being outsourced there from Vienna. Large numbers of the very workers who built the railroads were also Czech. For example, the city of Brno in Moravia was a German majority city in the 1880s but the industrial suburbs around the city were dominated by the Czechs. Czech workers were shunned by the Germans in these areas, commonly segregated into separate housing by their employers if it was provided, and were paid very low. Yet as time went on the Germans were pushed out. Industrialization led to increased wealth for the Czechs, thus

194 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 17.
establishing a new bourgeoisie or middle class that embraced the high culture rhetoric and nationalism of the *budítele*, bootstrapping themselves towards greater legitimacy.\(^{198}\)

It also fueled increasing conflicts with the Germans, as depression in German industry in the borderlands worsened even as industry in the Czech heartlands boomed.\(^{199}\) As the Empire instituted higher standards of education throughout the 1860s, more people became able to read and write, and the number of political newspapers and political organizations exploded. Increased voting enfranchisement followed, leading to increased numbers of politically engaged and voting men.\(^{200}\) Social advancement and improved education cut ever larger segments of the population off from their traditional senses of identity, commonly centered on their town/village or rural district. Nationalism was a broader ideology of identity that many of these men came to adopt.

There were riots and street brawls between Czech and German university students in major Bohemian and Moravian cities in the early twentieth century before over the official language of schooling.\(^{201}\) Tensions spilled over into Germany proper. The distinguished German historian of the Roman Empire, Theodor Mommsen, wrote in a German Liberal newspaper in 1897, when there was fighting between Czechs and Germans over a decree that civil servants must be bilingual in Bohemia, that Germans must, “Be tough! The Czech skull is impervious to reason, but it is susceptible to blows.”\(^{202}\) States of emergency were declared in Prague by the Habsburg government

\(^{198}\) Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914*, 22.
\(^{199}\) Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914*, 111.
\(^{200}\) Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 11.
\(^{201}\) Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*, 79–106.
\(^{202}\) King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 96. In response to Mommsen the Czech historian Josef Pekař wrote a short polemical essay. Facetiously dedicated and addressed to Mommsen, the essay attacked
four times in under sixty years due to rioting and nationalist violence between Czechs and Germans, in 1848, 1868, 1893, and 1903.\textsuperscript{203}

A Prague German economist wrote in 1904, after the Czechs had effectively won control of Prague, that:

Prague was no German city before 1848. Perhaps it might have become one if the revival of the Czech nation had not intervened. Prague like all of Austria in the Vormarz stood under German leadership...The ruling classes were exclusively German. The Czech who obtained an education was trained to be a German and added to the strength of the German “society” which, based on the Czech substratum, presided over the city and passed for the whole city to the outside world.\textsuperscript{204}

A comment by Hitler in conversation is an example of German chauvinist opinion par excellence on the issue of the old German/Czech dispute; “About 1840, a Czech was ashamed of his language. His pride was to speak German. The summit of his pride was to be taken for a Viennese. The institution of universal suffrage in Austria was necessarily to lead to the collapse of German supremacy.”\textsuperscript{205} The implication here being that Hitler himself would remove universal suffrage and restore the Germans to their rightful place of dominance.

\textsuperscript{203} Mommsen’s theory of German history, portraying Martin Luther as a corrupting influence on an originally noble German culture. He claimed that the Germans were now the true barbarians of European culture and that the Czechs had preserved the true essence of European nobility. See Josef Pekař, \textit{Die Böhmen als Apostel der Barbarisierung}, (Prague: Bursík & Kohout, 1897), folder 35, box 5, BC 45, Masaryk collection.

\textsuperscript{204} Nolte, \textit{The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914}, 78, 129, 159.

\textsuperscript{205} Quoted in Cohen, \textit{The Politics of Ethnic Survival}, 21.

The nationality of children was also a major area of contestation. Nationalists on both sides established separate schools for children and fought over which children in a given community should be considered either Czech or German. The same process occurred in orphanages. The Habsburg state escalated the fight over the nationality of children by passing legislation promoting national segregation and definitions of nationality. Beyond the fight over nationality in which the schools themselves were contested, what occurred in the schools added to the fire, particularly after 1869, when a law was passed in the Empire that required a minimum of eight years of school for boys and girls starting at the age of six. This was because teachers as a class were prime subscribers to nationalism, both Czech and German. By the late nineteenth century they formed a large proportion of leadership in nationalist organizations, emphasized nationalism in their teaching, and reformed schools and wrote textbooks that promoted nationalism. Part of the rising, educated middle class which imbibed the fashionable doctrines of social Darwinism and cultural degeneration, teachers in turn spread these ideas among the population at large in the Bohemian lands and Germany, contributing to ideas of nationalist separation and conflict. Many teachers saw themselves as cultural crusaders for their respective nationalities, fighting for their nations via winning the hearts and minds of the young. The late scholar George Mosse did not hesitate to conjecture that nationalist teachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were a key element in creating a mentality in Germany that was amenable to Nazism.

206 Judson, Guardians of the Nation, 78–83.
There were boycotts from both ethnic groups on each other’s drinking establishments and the creation of banks and savings organization that catered solely to one ethnicity. In Budweis/Budějovice a business war broke out between Czech and German owned breweries. A slogan of the time was “Czech money for Czechs.” There was also a streak of anti-Semitism at this time in Czech nationalism, with German speaking Jews seen as controllers of capital in the Bohemian lands. In the eyes of nationalist Czechs, German and Jewish identities became conflated. Both were “colonists” and oppressors, with the Jews simply being an outgrowth or type of German. In one caricature by a Czech cartoonist, the German Club/House in Prague, a main center of German cultural activity, was identified with Hebrew letters. During riots in late November 1897 between Czech and German university students, synagogues and Jewish property were attacked by the Czechs. The Sokol by the late nineteenth century also developed anti-Semitic policies excluding Jews from clubs and forcing them to undergo special requirements to join. During infighting between various Czech nationalist groups they insulted each other with anti-Semitic slurs. Against the Sokol, one group used an anti-Semitic poem that stated that Sokol members had Jewish fathers with side locks and German mothers.

Many Jews in the Bohemian lands did consciously cultivate a German identity in the nineteenth century, for many reasons. The Germans were largely in cultural control of urban areas, giving greater access to education, social advancement, and business

208 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 106–11.
opportunities. German liberalism was also fairly accommodating of Jews as long as they assimilated to a degree. Traditional religious anti-Semitism was widespread among the majority Catholic Czech peasant population, affording little chance of successful integration into Czech communities by Jews until after the Czechs had won control of urban areas and German anti-Semitism among the Pan-German volkische groups pushed them out. The European Jewish language, Yiddish, is linguistically close to German, allowing ease of access for Jews to learn German. For those Jews seeking a better life and who had left strict practice of Judaism behind, German culture was the best option for participation in a broader European life.\textsuperscript{211} By 1900 almost half of all the German speakers in Prague were Jews.\textsuperscript{212} In Moravia the numbers were even higher, with over seventy percent of Jews declaring themselves German speakers in a 1900 census.\textsuperscript{213} Some Jews did choose a Czech identity, particularly poor ones, as the German community had a stricter social hierarchy that made moving into the stable middle class harder.

There were even intense disputes as to whether the Czechs or the Germans first came to the area in the sixth or seventh centuries A.D. Thomas Masaryk gave a lecture series at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1902, in which the Czech-German

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{211} King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 44. For the interested reader, a visit to the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague is essential. The majority of gravestones bear Germanized names, from a period roughly spanning 1860 to 1910. Outside of explicitly Jewish symbols on a few graves one could easily mistake it for being a German cemetery.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 119.
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conflict was a focus. The following lines from a lecture titled *The Czechs* are representative of the intellectual chauvinism on the Czech side:

“The Germans maintain that the Czechs supposedly came later; the Czechs, on the other hand, say that they came earlier. I do not think that it matters at all, but to politicians it is important to know who is the owner and who is the tenant. […] But I do think that archaeological research has sufficiently proved […] that the Czechs came much earlier than is usually believed.”

In a later lecture titled *Early Slavic Institutions*, he held that, “The greatest problem of the early Bohemians was their relationship to Germany. We note that even early in their history the Bohemians paid taxes to the Germans.” Regardless of the truth of these historical assessments by Masaryk, what is important here is that these assessments are indicative of the opinions of the Czech intelligentsia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Even into the post-World War II decades of the twentieth century debates between Czech and German historians over German origins in Bohemia occurred, particularly over whether they were primarily descendants of settlers in the medieval period or of pre-Slavic tribes Germanic tribes.

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214 Shillinglaw, *The Lectures of Professor T.G. Masaryk at the University of Chicago*, 46–7, Masaryk collection.
215 Shillinglaw, *The Lectures of Professor T.G. Masaryk at the University of Chicago*, 51, Masaryk collection.
216 The evidence is somewhat murky but it is known that by at least the early Medieval period peoples speaking Germanic and Slavic languages were living in Bohemia, with most Germanic speakers living in the mountainous area that later became known as the Sudetenland and at that time being encouraged to build settlements deeper within Bohemia. The movement of Germanic speaking peoples into Bohemia likely occurred in the early medieval period as the result of the discovery of silver in the area and the corresponding need for labor and the opportunities for wealth this created. King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 15, and Mamatey, *Rise of the Habsburg Empire*, 13.
The notion that Czechs had engaged in an ancient conflict with Germans was reflected in a Czechoslovak yearbook of 1929, which triumphantly held that the Czechoslovaks had come to the Bohemian lands and Slovakia in the 6th century A.D.:

“The new arrivals never left the country, but gradually merged into a nation, founded and organized a State, and by a tremendous cultural activity extending over more than a thousand years, gained the right to call that country—the actually territory of Czechoslovakia—their Motherland.”

By implication, the Germans had not gained that right. A history of Czechoslovakia in 1930 even said that tribes of Germans had killed all of the earlier settlers, implying a barbaric essence to the Germans that had been held in common since before the birth of Christ. A pamphlet published during the war on Pan-Slavism emphasized the point that the Germans had killed the original Slavic settlers of the Baltic coast and the Elbe River. It was said by officials in the Prague city hall as late as 1930 that “Prague is not so international that one has the luxury of permitting German to be spoken.” Any concession to Germany and the Germans was seen as lost ground in the cultural war.

There was however a brighter side of the mixed Czech/German atmosphere of the nineteenth century Bohemia lands. For example, some children from both communities participated in exchange programs in which they would spend their summer vacations or sometimes even school years with families of the opposite community, a tradition called

218 The Year-Book of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1929, 14, Masaryk collection.
221 Wingfield, Flag Wars and Stone Saints, 229.
Kindtausch/Wechsel in German and handl in Czech.\textsuperscript{222} Other fusions emerged such as the
famed work of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke He was born in Prague and spent his early life
there. In 1895 he published a cycle of poems, in German, titled \textit{Offerings to Lares}, which
celebrated Prague and the Bohemian countryside. Various poems celebrated the streets,
squares, and churches in Prague, the famous Old Jewish Cemetery, and the sights and
sounds of the area. They are beautiful and an example of the best of the German
Romantic tradition, but there are also hints of the tension between Czechs and Germans
moving throughout the cycle. One of the poems was inspired by viewing the Czech
Ethnographic Exhibition in 1895, in another he is hailed as a Slav by an old man, and a
wandering tinkerer/salesman, in Czech, begs him for a Kreuzer, the currency of the
Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the final poem of the cycle he meets a girl who weeps and
sings “Kde domov muj” (Where is my home), a Czech nationalist folksong and later the
Czechoslovak national anthem.\textsuperscript{223} Rilke and his contemporary Gustav Mahler embody
the best of the mixed cultural and ethnic milieu of late nineteenth and early twentieth
century Prague under the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, as well as this milieu’s decline and
fall. Nationalism and ethnic hatred destroyed it all.

Take the case of Mahler. Born in Bohemia, raised in Moravia, educated in
Vienna, Jewish, and German speaking, he premiered his 7\textsuperscript{th} symphony in Prague in
September 1908 to celebrate the 60\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the reign of Franz Joseph as
Habsburg Emperor.\textsuperscript{224} Such a cross cultural education, upbringing, and life up to that

\textsuperscript{222} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 1–2. and Judson, \textit{Guardians of the Nation}, 3.
\textsuperscript{223} Rainer Maria Rilke, \textit{Larenopfer: Offerings to Lares}, trans. Alfred de Zayas (Los Angeles: Red Hen
Press, 2005), 73, 95, 139, 143.
\textsuperscript{224} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 120.
time was only possible in the late Habsburg empire. With that empire’s collapse and fragmentation into nation states, figures such as Mahler would not be possible for almost a hundred years until after another collapse, that of communism.

Many Czechs did not take well to being conscripted into the Austrian-Hungarian military when World War I broke out. They were organized into majority ethnic battalions within larger regiments. Many Czech troops served on the Eastern Front against the Russians. On the front whole battalions surrendered without a fight to the Russians or even deserted and switched to fighting with the Russians. These surrenders and desertions were interpreted by the later Czechoslovak state as a final break with the Habsburg past and an important precursor to the founding of the country.225 German nationalists accused the Czechs as a whole as subversive traitors when the war broke out, possibly contributing to a Czech sense of isolation from the Habsburg state.226 The Habsburg state also suppressed and persecuted any displays of Czech nationalism during the war, like the German nationalists adopting the position that the Czechs could present a dangerous fifth column.227 These policies likely played a part in creating antagonism to the state among ordinary Czechs and gave legitimacy to the demands of the Czech nationalists for a separate state.

Czech nationalists, seeing the war as their great chance, went into action mobilizing opposition movements to the Habsburgs and establishing contacts with the French, British, Russians, and Americans. The movement was led by Tomáš Masaryk,

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225 King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, 148.
226 Zahra, Kidnapped Souls, 84.
227 Zahra, Kidnapped Souls, 86–7, and Judson, Guardians of the Nation, 221.
Edvard Beneš, and Milan Štefanik. Masaryk and Beneš went into exile, along with many other Czechoslovak nationalists. They centered their activities around Paris and formed an underground group called the Mafia, which worked to create a Czechoslovak nation and undermine the Habsburg Empire.\footnote{Nolte, \textit{The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914}, 179.} They organized the Czech and Slovak deserters and prisoners, as well as Czech and Slovak volunteers, into a 100,000 strong force called the Czechoslovak Legion, which fought on the Eastern Front against the German and Habsburg armies. There were also approximately 70,000 Czechs living in Russia when the war broke out, many volunteering to serve in the Russian Army against the Central Powers and later joining the Legion.\footnote{Zeman and Karlsch, \textit{Uranium Matters}, 63.} After the Russian Revolution the plan was for the Legion to march across the length of Russia, following the Trans-Siberian railroad, to Vladivostok where it would take ships back to Europe and fight on the Western Front, reinforcing the British, French, and Americans. This process took far longer than expected however, with the Legion getting bogged down in the Russian Civil War. It took the Legion over two years to finally make it back home in 1920.\footnote{Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 6–8.} By the end of the war newly established Czechoslovakia had an army of approximately 125,000 men, cobbled together from the Legion, Habsburg deserters, and fresh recruits.\footnote{Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 6.}

The Czechoslovak nationalists were aided in their campaign for independence after the war by the ties they established with sympathetic academics and interest groups in Britain and America. One influential supporter was Lewis B. Namier, the now famous political and diplomatic historian of Great Britain. A Polish-Jewish immigrant, he had no
great love of Germany and, as it were, was more Czech nationalist than the Czech nationalists. In a pamphlet published by a group called The Czech National Alliance in Great Britain in 1917, he said that “The international position of Bohemia after the war will be the truest test of victory.” According to Namier, the Holy Roman Empire was the ancestor of Pan-Germanism, the Germans looked down upon the Czechs “as a kind of half-extinct aborigines,” and that an independent Czechoslovak state would “destroy the nightmare of a German-Magyar hegemony of Europe.” The Germans were by their very nature aggressive and imperialistic, seeking to conquer the world and enslave the Slavs. The Czechs were a noble people who had been crushed under the Germans’ boots for centuries. It was only right and just that they were given their own country.232 Another supporter was the British historian R.W. Seton-Watson, who worked as a go between and advocate for the Czech nationalists with the British government. He hosted Masaryk in England for a time during World War I. He was a prominent supporter of Czechoslovak nationalism and sovereignty in Britain throughout his life. He issued many warnings against Nazi aggression and after the Anschluss of Austria he wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* about the German minority in Czechoslovakia, referring to Czechs and Germans as different “races” and intimating that the German minority could function as a “Trojan Horse by which the defenses of Czechoslovakia are to be pierced.”233 He also later published a heavily Czech nationalist history of Czechoslovakia in 1943.234 With

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supporters like Namier and Seton-Watson, the nationalists were able to convince the powers that be of their particular narrative of the Czechoslovak nation and German aggression. Any differing narratives were shut out due to the wartime tensions. The nation of Czechoslovakia was declared independent in October of 1918. A week after its founding a crowd of 250,000 gathered at White Mountain to commemorate the battle and celebrate the collapse of the Habsburg empire. 235 Both events existed on the same narrative continuum.

Many German speakers by 1918 lived in an area known as the Sudetenland (for the Germans) or the Sudety (for the Czechs). In general terms, it formed a half moon or sickle shaped region on the western, southern, and northern border of Bohemia. It was named after the Sudeten mountain range, or the Krkonoše, Orlické Hory, and Krušné Hory ranges, which border(s) Bavaria and Saxony. 236 Fittingly, Krušné Hory in Czech literally means the Cruel Mountains. 237 The area had been part of the Habsburg empire as long as the Bohemian lands were, and indeed it had been considered a province of the Bohemian lands. “Sudeten Germans” was a term coined only in 1902, among others to specify the distinct German minority in the area that existed outside of Germany.

235 Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 51, 139. As further evidence of the strength of feeling over the Battle of White Mountain, in 1934 an art exhibit was held to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the assassination of Albrecht von Wallenstein, military leader during the Thirty Years’ War. Nobles were asked to donate portraits from the period. One noble, Karl Buquoy was hesitant to donate his art, being the descendant of a victorious general at the Battle of White Mountain, and thus afraid that his works of art would be vandalized by Czechs in revenge.
237 Zeman and Karlsch, Uranium Matters, xii.
The term Sudetenländer had been used before then since the 1890s to refer to all German speaking areas of the Bohemian lands.\textsuperscript{239}

One Czech in December 1936 recalled that “Since my school days […] I have not heard very much about the ‘Sudeten,’ and even when I was a boy this was only a geographical expression, the collective name of a chain of mountains in Northern Bohemia. […] these people were always known to themselves, and to us, as the German-Bohemians….”\textsuperscript{240} Many of the Sudetens just thought of themselves as Germans, pure and simple. Czechs of the time did not like the term “Sudeten,” seeing it as a German derived word that purposely fostered a separatist identity among the Germans.\textsuperscript{241}

The Sudetens did not take well to suddenly finding themselves part of a new nation that had been conceived and founded without their input or imprimatur. Used to being members of an empire in which German language and culture had been privileged, they were now beholden to a people with whom they perceived that they had been clashing with politically for close to a century. Numbering approximately 3.5 million, they were too big to be insubstantial but too small to exert total political control.\textsuperscript{242}

The final separation of national groups occurred in various ways. After the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of Czechoslovakia, Czechs employees in the Austrian government were removed from their positions and


\textsuperscript{239} Judson, \textit{Guardians of the Nation}, 154.

\textsuperscript{240} Lechner, \textit{As We Saw it in Prague}, 54, Masaryk collection.

\textsuperscript{241} King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 166.

encouraged/forced to immigrate to Czechoslovakia. A Czech woman who lived in Vienna and whose husband had held a bureaucratic job in the Austro-Hungarian government related how after World War I there “followed an upheaval of governments and a revolution, resulting in the organization of the Czechoslovak State. All those of Czech nativity in the Austrian governmental positions were thrown out [...]” She and her husband moved to Prague under duress, where they waited months for the new Czechoslovak government to find him a job within the bureaucracy.243 This separating out of governments and nations via ethnic lines after World War I would do much to exacerbate tensions and further resentment and hatred from both the German and Czech sides.

Prague had been a German speaking majority city in 1856, but by 1910 it was an overwhelmingly Czech speaking majority city.244 The Sudeten saw themselves as being on the defensive, and they quickly shifted to ever more extreme politics. There were demands by the Sudeten that they be able to practice national self-determination per the Wilsonian doctrine that was sweeping across Europe after World War I. If they Czechs and Slovaks had been allowed to establish their own state due to arguments of national self-determination, then why should they, the Sudeten, not be allowed to as well? This was a popular attitude, with a desire to either link up the Sudetenland to Germany or Austria. In the immediate aftermath of the war a small number of German nationalists actually variously declared the creation of a separate Sudeten German provincial

government, a separate German district in southern Bohemia that was loyal to Austria, and a separate German district in southern Moravia that was also loyal to Austria.\textsuperscript{245} These separate movements were put down by Czechoslovak troops occupying the German areas.\textsuperscript{246} Bohumír Šmeral, a leader of the Czech Social Democrats and one of the founders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, had opposed the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia due to his fear of the dangers antagonizing the Germans. He was derided for this opinion after the war across the political spectrum and an assassination attempt was made on him.\textsuperscript{247} He was prescient however.

Tensions were high in the first handful of years after the war between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs. In 1919 the Czech army killed over fifty Sudeten German demonstrators who were protesting the exclusion of the Sudetens from the newly established postwar Austrian parliament.\textsuperscript{248} Thousands were either fined, interrogated or imprisoned for “falsely” putting down their nationality as German on the 1921 Czechoslovakian census.\textsuperscript{249} Sudeten Germans sent appeals to the League of Nations over claimed school abuses and poor schools set up by the Czechoslovak state.\textsuperscript{250} Surviving members of the old Habsburg nobility in the Bohemian lands after World War I largely took on German nationality and campaigned for Sudeten German rights starting in the 1920’s among the political elite of the West European powers. A number of them would

\textsuperscript{245} Judson, \textit{Guardians of the Nation}, 234.
\textsuperscript{246} Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, 58, 77.
\textsuperscript{247} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 8.
\textsuperscript{248} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 104–5.
\textsuperscript{249} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 107.
\textsuperscript{250} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 115.
go on to support Hitler.\textsuperscript{251} The Czechoslovak Ministerial Council pushed for state agencies to assign Czech civil servants who had large families to be placed in the Sudetenland to break up the German influence in the district and strengthen the Czechs.\textsuperscript{252} Czechoslovakia in many ways re-created the same ethnic/nationality problems of the Habsburg empire, with the Sudeten Germans now occupying the position in Czechoslovakia that the Czechoslovaks had held in the Habsburg empire.

Groups of idealistic young men began to attend the University of Vienna instead of going to Prague for their education, as Prague was now the symbol of national defeat and national shame.\textsuperscript{253} In Vienna a small circle of the Sudeten students formed, under the influence of Othmar Spann, a far right political theorist\textsuperscript{254}, a society called the \textit{Kameradschaftsbund, Bund fur volks und sozialpolitishe Bildung.} “The Party of Comrades – A party for the growth of the people and social politics” is a rough translation. Rejecting liberalism and classical conservatism, the party dreamed of a return to imperial, aristocratic politics in which a spiritually enlightened elite would guide a united German people. A phrase of Spann’s is indicative: “…individuals [are] mere \textit{Teilganzheiten,} parts of a larger, organic whole.”\textsuperscript{255}

\textsuperscript{251} Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, 83–129.
\textsuperscript{252} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 116.
\textsuperscript{253} Haag, “Knights of the Spirit,” 134.
\textsuperscript{255} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 23.
One of the early members was Konrad Henlein, who would go on to lead the Sudeten separatist movement, ally with Hitler, and accelerate the Munich affair.²⁵⁶ Henlein was also a member of the Sudeten Turnverband, a pan-German gymnastics movement that had grown out of the same split in Prague between Czech and German gymnasts as had the Sokol. He achieved a high ranking post in the organization in 1931, after which he used the Turnverband as a recruitment and promotional front for his separatist political parties.²⁵⁷ He founded the Sudeten Homeland Front in 1933 to immense success, after the Czechoslovak government had outlawed more radical German nationalist parties.²⁵⁸ In 1935 it changed its name to the Sudeten German Party at the insistence of the Czechoslovak government²⁵⁹ and in the elections of that year the party won the largest number of votes in the country but was banned from having representatives being seated in the parliament.²⁶⁰

In 1918, Masaryk himself called the Germans “emigrants and colonists.” He lowered his rhetoric in later years but still claimed in 1928 that while in “an ethnically and linguistically mixed state…representation of the minorities is a necessity…[the] majority must imprint its characteristics on society.”²⁶¹ There exists an anecdote that in his youth as a student in Vienna, sometime between 1872 and 1876, Masaryk got into a bar fight with a German. Masaryk and his Czech friends were singing were singing

²⁵⁸ King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, 170.
²⁵⁹ Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 279n5.
²⁶⁰ Cornwall, “A Leap into Ice-Cold Water,” 130–1.
Czech songs in a bar and a German called them a “Czech rabble,” whereupon Masaryk fought him and threw him out of the bar.262

There was a broad campaign by the Czechoslovak government to nationalize German businesses in the Sudetenland and to increase Czech industrial ownership over German ownership.263 Kamil Krofta denigrated the impact of the Germans in the history of the Bohemian lands:

“On the other hand however, it is a fact which no unbiased [sic] person who knows the historical development of our common fatherland can deny, that in the past the Germans were at no time an element here which determined the trend of the country’s history, an element that imprinted on that history the peculiar character which distinguishes it from the history of other countries and peoples, while it is also a fact that, in the ancient Bohemian State founded by the Czechs, the Germans were not the leading element in the intellectual, moral and political spheres.”264

Edvard Beneš, Czech president from 1937 to 1948, in his later memoirs claimed that Czechoslovak attempts to gain control over the Sudetenland were natural and orderly, and by implication justified: “The so-called Czechisation of our German territories was an automatic and natural exchange and mingling of the German and Czech population, the exact converse of the process [that] had gone on in former centuries in the opposite direction when Germans displaced Czechs, often by violent means.”265 For Beneš, this was merely the Czechs getting their due after centuries of German oppression.

262 Luza and Vella, The Hitler Kiss, 10.
264 Krofta, The Germans in the Czechoslovak Republic, 8–9, Masaryk collection.
Rosemary Kavan, an Englishwoman who married a Czech exile during the war and came to live in Prague in the immediate aftermath of WWII, witnessed her husband on at least one occasion deliver an anti-German tirade which captures the prevalent anti-German feeling:

“'It was in Old Town Square that the Czech leaders of the rebellion against the Habsburgs were executed. Two years later we were totally defeated in battle, and our country lost its independence for three centuries. In the face of religious persecution, the educated classes went into exile; German became the official language. Czech culture was virtually destroyed. The Czech language was kept alive only as the spoken tongue of the peasants and the poor in the town.' I then understood the longstanding Czech hatred of the Germans.”

The conflict is contained within the Czech language itself. The Czech word for German is němec, literally meaning mute and it is derived from the word nemy, meaning deaf. The word emerged when Germans, moving into the Bohemian lands after the Battle of White Mountain and the establishing of Habsburg sovereignty, were the people who could neither understand nor speak Czech, thus inherently alien and hostile. In the judgement of George F. Kennan, “linguistic rivalries […] constitute the curse of central Europe.”

It is unsurprising that the majority of Sudeten Germans found the Nazis appealing. Primed by the separatist parties, their minority status, sense of loss, and perceived persecution by the Czechs, a pan-German ideology based on consolidating all Germans within a single racial homeland made sense to them and offered a way out of

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267 Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Svejk*, 112.
Czechoslovakia. They were also hit particularly hard by the Depression in comparison to the rest of the country and seeing Germany undergo economic resurgence under the Nazis could not have hurt their enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{269} The industrial centers that produced most of Czechoslovakia’s export and consumer goods were located in the Sudetenland and mostly employed Germans, while the heavy industry centers were deeper within Bohemia and Moravia and mostly employed Czechs. With the Depression the export and consumer goods industry collapsed, leading to massive unemployment for the Germans, while the heavy industry centers continued to limp along due to their continued need in the economy and a resulting lower level of Czech unemployment in comparison.\textsuperscript{270} The greater suffering of the Germans in the Depression is the figurative straw that broke the camel’s back, fueling anger and pushing them further toward separatist and Nazi politics. German miners in the Jáchymov district were particularly hard put. Safety measures and adequate pay were ignored by the government. During the Depression most of the miners’ children went hungry and their only source of food were donations from charitable organizations. Their living standards declined dramatically. When the miners went on strike in 1938 in protest of their conditions, they sent a delegation to Prague to meet Beneš and air their grievances. They waited twelve days before being told that he would not meet with them.\textsuperscript{271}

The Czechs were particularly nervous over the rise of Nazism in Germany. As an example of the attitude of this nervousness as expressed among the intellectual and

\textsuperscript{269} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 22.
\textsuperscript{270} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 14.
political class, after Hitler came to power in 1933, that same year Emanuel Radl, a Czech philosopher of science, issued a pamphlet titled “On the German Revolution,” explicitly linking it with Edmund Burke’s famous work *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Radl charged that Nazism was an outgrowth of Germany’s traditional illiberalism and absolutism which threatened Czech culture. At the end of the pamphlet he called on the Czechs to draw on the life of František Palacký and to defend spiritual truth. Radl characterized Hitler as a false god of the Germans, tapping into the old Czech nationalist line of the Czechs being a religiously unique people who had stood for higher truth since the Hussite wars of the 15th century.²⁷²

As the 1930s went on the ties between the Sudeten separatist movement and the Nazis became closer and closer. Sudeten German children were given an education that emphasized the concept of *Heimat*, a German cultural concept of the special relationship between the German people and the lands that comprised the supposed German homeland.²⁷³ Starting in 1934, small groups of Sudeten German working class children were sent to Nazi Germany in the summer as a kind of cultural exchange program.²⁷⁴ Sudeten nationalists adopted language that was similar to that of the Nazis by the mid 1930s. A major Sudeten activist took a firm stance against anyone who was not totally devoted to the German cause. Anyone who wanted to preserve both a Czech and German identity was damned: “We must exclude from any kind of participation in German education those miserable, impoverished *Sprachgrenze* (language border) souls…pitiful

people who should be pilloried in a widely visible place.” The Nazis donated hundreds of thousands of marks to the party from 1935 on and Henlein symbolically adopted the use of the Nazi salute in 1937. Torchlight parades and processions were held as well, in the Nazi style. When Henlein publicly allied with Hitler in 1938, it was the official enacting of a de facto alliance of at least three years.

The grand terms used in the pan-German Nazi ideology were *Lebensraum* and *Volk*, living space and the People. Their primacy of place (literally) in Hitler’s worldview and politics is well known and need not be explicated here. He stated in a speech of 20 February 1938 that “over ten million Germans live in two of the States adjoining our frontiers.” Among his priorities was “the protection of those fellow Germans who live beyond our frontiers.” The two states were Austria and Czechoslovakia. After the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, Czechoslovakia appeared to be next. By May Hitler was writing, “It is my unalterable intention to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the nearest future.” Goebbels described Czechoslovakia as “a dagger pointed at the heart of Germany.” Many Sudeten Germans went wild. In the municipal elections of May the Sudeten German Party scored 82 to 85 percent of the entire German vote in Czechoslovakia. The slogan *Heim ins

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275 Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 146.
277 Lechner, *As We Saw it in Prague*, 100, Masaryk collection.
278 Woodruff D. Smith, “Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum,” *German Studies Review* 3 (1980) and Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* for background on the philosophy behind these terms
279 Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler*, 122–3. In one of those gentle ironies of events, the discovery of which is a chief joy of the historian, the Czech hockey team beat Germany that same day 3-0.
280 Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler*, 146.
282 Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler*, 146.
Reich (Home to the Reich), a favorite of the Sudeten German Party, was ubiquitous.\textsuperscript{283} A Sudeten German Freikorps, a paramilitary group, was formed in preparation for assisting a Nazi invasion.\textsuperscript{284} The Freikorps went so far as to attack a police station in the border town of Habartov.\textsuperscript{285} On the night of September 9th a Czech nursery school in the town of Hlučín was blown up by Nazi terrorists.\textsuperscript{286} In the month before Munich conflicts reached a boiling point, with martial law being imposed in the Sudetenland. Henlein fled to Germany, where he called for the Sudetens to fight against what he called “the Hussite-Bolshevik criminals of Prague” and described the Czechoslovaks as being tainted with Bolshevism.\textsuperscript{287}

The stage was now set for what was perceived by both sides as a final confrontation. Both interpreted Czech and German history as a struggle going back since at least the 1500s, and saw themselves as bringing the struggle to its end. The Nazis in particular hoped to establish German hegemony in the Bohemian lands once and for all. With tension at the highest levels, the aggression of the Nazis and Sudeten separatist campaigns were seen by the Czechs as further proof of the criminality and barbarity of the German people. They were justified in their struggle against the Germans in the first place it now seemed. Both groups had completely instantiated into reality their ideologies of distinct and separate ethnic nations.

\textsuperscript{283} Lukes, \textit{Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler}, 215, 264n31.
\textsuperscript{284} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 24.
\textsuperscript{285} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 250.
\textsuperscript{286} Zahra, \textit{Kidnapped Souls}, 165.
\textsuperscript{287} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 19–20.
CHAPTER 3

VISIONS OF DARKNESS

Masaryk stepped down as president at the end of 1935 and his friend, protégé, and fellow founder of the country, Edvard Beneš, the Foreign Minister up to that point, came into the office. Beneš was a lifelong socialist but opposed violent revolution. The claim by Robert Gellately that Beneš was a “dedicated anti-Communist” is overblown. Ferdinandy Peroutka as early as 1925 held that Beneš “implemented socialist policies.” For him democracy was the best means of reaching socialist ends. He went so far as to say once that true democrats were “often more radical than many of those who have by now reached the state of Bolshevism.”

Beneš’ goal throughout the interwar period was to chart a steady path for the country between the ideological ups and downs of the rest of Europe. As the 1930s wore on, this broadly became an East vs. West question: Should Czechoslovakia ally with France and Britain in protection against Germany or should it ally with the Soviet Union? Beneš did his best to reconcile this choice by creating a treaty with France and the Soviet Union such that if Czechoslovakia was attacked, then France had an obligation to help, and that if France helped so would the Soviet Union. This meant that while Beneš was

288 Lukes, Czechoslovakia Between Hitler and Stalin, 58.
291 Lukes, Czechoslovakia Between Hitler and Stalin, 11.
292 Lukes, Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler, 33–66. Beneš did not foresee that the weak link in this treaty was that France would not uphold it and leave Czechoslovakia alone to face Germany. The treaty
neither pro-Bolshevik nor pro-Stalin, he was also not necessarily anti-Bolshevik and anti-Stalin. Indeed, he took a diplomatic trip to Moscow in 1935 and described Stalin as “gracious, thoughtful, and accommodating…”

As the Sudeten crisis developed and the Western powers proved increasingly ineffectual in preventing German aggression, Beneš looked more and more to the Soviet Union. Britain was ambivalent at best toward Czechoslovakia throughout the 1930s, some influential British conservatives even sympathizing with Germany and Hitler, seeing Czechoslovakia as an unstable byproduct of the Versailles Treaty, against which Germany had rightful claims. Beneš was not alone in shifting eastwards so to speak; many Czechs developed sympathy towards the Soviet Union and socialism and communism in general. Economic ties with the Soviet Union were also increasing. From 1936 to 1937 imports from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia rose in value from 72 to 90 million Crowns and exports to the Soviet Union from 104 to 180 million Crowns.

By the time of the Munich Agreement, pro-Soviet sentiment was high in Prague and “as a result of the West’s abandonment of Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1938, many

had its roots in an older Franco-Russian alliance which supported the Czechs in the late nineteenth century. A traditional Pan-Slavic anthem called “Hej! Slované!” or “Hail the Slavs” actually had a new verse put in at an 1891 Sokol celebration that ran: “It lives! It lives! The Slav spirit, defiantly it grows and flowers: The Russian is with us; the Frenchman will sweep away whoever is against us!” See Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914*, 124.

Luke, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler*, 56. As an interesting side note on the theme of Pan-Slavism, oral tradition has it that the Soviet historian Vladimir Picheta, who was later to head Slavic and Polish studies in the Soviet Union, was released from a five a year exile, presumably in the gulags, on the request of Benes to meet him during this 1935 trip. See Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, “Stalinizing Polish Historiography: What the Soviet Archives Disclose,” *East European Politics and Societies* 7 (1993): 111.


Czechoslovaks started to rethink their country’s position. Hitler and the behavior of
French and British diplomats enhanced the appeal of the Soviet Union and its main
advocate in Czechoslovakia, the CPC [Communist Party of Czechoslovakia].”

Petr Zenkl offered a similar analysis of the ideological shift that is worth quoting in full, not
only for its entertaining and florid prose but also because of its insight:

Geographically, Czechoslovakia is situated between Germany and Russia. For 20
years – from 1918 to 1938 – Czechoslovakia in its policy attempted, in accord
with the national tradition, to disengage itself from this geographical location and
to attach itself to the Western countries. The logical consequence of this effort is
for one thing the treaty with France, for another the almost touching loyalty and
confidence of Czechoslovakia saw [sic] in France and England on the one hand
and in the League of Nations on the other, a protective lighthouse to which they
had looked for twenty years. When the beam of this lighthouse proved deceitful
and went out in 1938 it was no wonder that many Czechs and Slovaks expressed
criticism of the official Czechoslovak policy which was said not to have clearly
realized the given geopolitical realities and to have built on paper promises
instead of hard facts recorded on every map. Shortly: many people, and often
people with impeccable democratic past, succumbed to the essentially Nazi
propaganda which spoke of the so called geopolicy over a policy in the narrower
and older meaning of the word. And having succumbed to this “new” political
philosophy, they were, of course, confronted with the not too appealing
alternative of either Germany or Russia. Germany, as an old historical enemy,
was, of course, out of consideration. There was nothing more logical: only Russia
was left.

This insight of Zenkl’s segues into a phenomenon intertwined with the leftist
sympathy with the Soviet Union, that of Pan-Slavism. Pan-Slavism is the flip side of Pan-
Germanism, an ideal of ethnic unity that transcends national and ideological boundaries,
earlier touched upon as regards the buditele. A resurgence of Pan-Slavic ideology
occurred among the Czechs as the Nazis became more powerful. If the Germans were

297 Lukes, Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler, 260.
298 Zenkl, How They Did It? (1952), 4, Masaryk papers.
going to unite and threaten Slavic peoples, then the Slavic peoples would unite in defense. A phrase written in 1914 was still applicable in the 1930s: “The cry of a Slavic *Drang nach Westen* has been opposed to the cry of a German *Drang nach Osten*.”

The Czechs had a rich history to draw from to support this ideology, as according to Hans Kohn, “Modern Pan-Slavism originated and found its foremost spokesmen among the Czechs and Slovaks. Prague was its first home.” The first Slavic congress among the Slavic minorities of the Habsburg empire was held in Prague in 1848. Ironically, the delegates found they could only understand each other when speaking German, as it was the only language held in common. At the congress the delegates pledged loyalty to the Habsburgs, commitment to the revolutionary virtues of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and held that they would achieve their aims peacefully as, in the words of Tomas Masaryk, “only Germans and Latin peoples relied upon the sword to achieve hegemony.” In 1867 a group of Czechs and Slovaks, under the leadership of František Palacky, made a pilgrimage trip of sorts to Moscow for the Second Slav Congress. This trip kicked off a burst of Russophilism in the Bohemian lands among

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304 Beneš, *Pan-Slavism and Czechoslovak Policy During World War II*, 140, Masaryk collection. This attendance by Palacky and company at the Congress was celebrated into the 1930’s. The Institute of Slavonic Studies in Prague issued in 1931 a full history of the Congress and the Czech/Slovak delegation, titled “The Pilgrimage of the Slavs to Moscow in 1867.” In the front of the book there is a picture insert that shows all the delegates’ faces on the leaves of a flowers’ branches, encircling a main picture of five figures, in the center of which sits Palacky. See Milan Prelog, *Pout Slovanu do Moskvy Roku 1867* (Prague: Orbis, 1931), folder 19, box 3, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
the Czechs. Czech intellectuals worked to learn Russian and some Czechs immigrated to Russia under the romantic impulse to discover the homeland of the Slavic peoples. At Sokol meetings the Russian anthem was occasionally sung. By the early twentieth century Prague was being hailed as a “Slavic Athens.”

Some of the buditele rejected Pan-Slavism in the fear that the Czechs might come under the control of the Russian Empire, the most powerful and numerous Slavic state. Masaryk continued this line of thought and explicitly rejected Pan-Slavism in his politics. Pan-Slavism as a whole was varied, however and it makes more sense to speak, per Kohn again, “not of a Pan-Slav movement, but […] of local pan-movements, a Pan-Russian, a Pan-Serbian or a Pan-Polish movement, each one at times using Pan-Slav slogans to win the sympathy of other Slav peoples or to establish control over them.” It was the Russian type that prevailed among the Czechs. While it went dormant and seemed to have died out during much of the interwar period, “German aggression reawakened the old Russophilism…among the Czechs.” Once again Zenkl is bountiful:

“The relation to Slavs was forgotten when the nation was well off. At time of peril, however, this awareness always grew and strengthened. Every oppression of the Czech and Slovak nations was always accompanied in the past and will be in the future by the growth of Pan-Slavism…No wonder that, just after Munich, there appeared again the old assertion that after the decline of Romanic and Germanic nations in Europe – and this decline was here already – there would come the golden era of Slavic power and glory…Already the recognition of Soviet Union by Czechoslovakia before the war was presented as a victory of the Slavic policy and not as a victory of communism.”

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305 Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914*, 32.
307 Kohn, “Pan-Slavism on Central Europe,” 329.
308 Kohn, “Pan-Slavism on Central Europe,” 326.
309 Kohn, “Pan-Slavism on Central Europe,” 331.
310 Zenkl, *How They Did It?* (1952), 6–7, Masaryk papers.
By the 1930s Pan-Slavism was complicated by the reality of the Soviet Union. Pan-Slavism among the Czechs bled over into sympathy for or negation of hostility for communism and leftism as well as hostility to Germany. Pan-Slavism also emphasized the “inherently” democratic and peace-loving nature of the Slavs. A Czech history of the nobility published in 1918 claimed that nobility itself was a foreign concept imported into Czech culture by the Germans and that the Czechs were naturally egalitarian. A history from 1947 editorialized that “The Slavs today are democrats by conviction while the Germans try to stop progress.” Another, from 1930, thought that the Slavs were “Fond of music, dancing, festivals, they were ‘peaceful as doves’ by nature, becoming warlike only in the presence of their enemies.” The logic could then run that since the Soviet Union had a large Slavic population then it too had to carry a trace of democracy and peace. The two came to be seen as equivalent or that one came with the other. Adolf Hitler himself had an opinion on this connection between Pan-Slavism, Russia, and communism. In conversation in September 1941 he declared that “The Czechs are the people who will be most upset by the decline of Bolshevism, for it’s they who have always looked with secret hope towards Mother Russia.” The notion of a “special relationship” between Slavs and Russia at the center was a popular idea in the 1920s-1930s.

311 Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 46.
312 Polisensky, History of Czechoslovakia in Outline, 103, Masaryk collection.
313 Pesek, The Story of Czechoslovakia, 10, Masaryk collection.
314 Trevor-Roper, Hitler’s Table Talk, 35.
Pan-Slavism found its fullest visual expression in a series of twenty gigantic paintings called the *Slovenská epopej* or Slav Epic by Alfons Mucha. Mucha, more famous for his art nouveau work in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century, was an ardent Czech nationalist and Pan-Slavist. He provided Czechoslovakia soon after its founding with its first illustrations of postage stamps and banknotes. The Slav Epic was painted over an eighteen-year period and finally completed in 1928. The Epic portrays various scenes from the history of the Slavic peoples, creating an overarching narrative that is simultaneously mythical and historical. It binds together ancient Bulgarian and Serbian kings, the Hussite wars, the printing of the bible in Moravia, the Turkish invasion of Hungary, Mount Athos, and the abolition of serfdom in Russia into one triumphant movement that ends with a final painting titled “Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity,” which shows a group of Slavs in white weaving together national flags, framed by rainbows, a gigantic figure holding wreaths, and Christ himself bestowing a blessing on the scene. The full effect is monumental and unambiguous: The Slavs are a chosen people destined to struggle against adversity and be scattered across Europe, but will eventually unite and achieve greatness.\(^{315}\)

The Communist Party itself also underwent a change in its public relations that was friendlier to the nation in 1935 by order of Stalin via the Comintern. To help negate the Nazi threat, Communist Parties across Europe were ordered to form a united or popular front with “social democratic parties, reformist trade unions and other

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organizations.\textsuperscript{316} The Party was to stop revolutionary action and rhetoric, help the military if needed, and to act in solidarity with the nation. Not without some squirming and mixed feelings on the part of the party’s leader Klement Gottwald, the party obeyed. Edward Táborský, in a short book on Czech politics, highlighted this change in the Party’s actions in the years between the rise of fascism and the outbreak of war.

“…it soon appreciated the Fascist danger threatening Czechoslovaks from Germany; thereafter it supported democracy and to some extent the other socialist parties, though it remained consistently opposed to active collaboration as a member of the Government.” “The Communist Party underwent a radical change in the years before Munich. It shed its ideas of a communist world revolution and the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ slogan was dropped. Communists formed a united front with democratic socialism. Their social postulates and their attitude toward democracy became indistinguishable from that of the Social Democratic Party.”\textsuperscript{317}

At the KSČ congress in April 1936 Gottwald declared that the defense of Czechoslovakia was a chief aim of the party.\textsuperscript{318}

As proof of their solidarity with the nation during the Sudeten crisis, large numbers of communists without their insignia attended a mass rally, led by, of all people, Petr Zenkl in Prague’s Wenceslas Square on May 2, 1938. On the very eve of Munich on September 22, 1938, another mass rally spontaneously occurred in front of the Castle, the main government building of Czechoslovakia and home of the President, analogous to the White House, at which various politicians spoke and stood side by side to show their support for the nation and their willingness to fight the Germans. At this rally, Gottwald

\textsuperscript{316} Lukes, \textit{Czechoslovakia Between Hitler and Stalin}, 72.
\textsuperscript{318} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 21.
and Zenkl, who would later consider themselves the greatest of enemies after World War II, touched shoulders.\(^{319}\)

A blend of nationalism with equal parts ethnicity and communism took shape. A strong Czech nationalism had begun to see being Slavic as an essential component of Czechness, with hints that the nationalist narrative of struggle against oppression was not in opposition to communism. In its full form it had a unique teleological narrative. To be a good Czech was to support the nation, to support the nation was to work for its survival, to work for its survival was to ally with Russia, to ally with Russia was to reconcile with communism, to reconcile with communism was to be a good Slav, to be a good Slav was to ally with Russia, to ally with Russia was to work for the survival of your fellow Slavs, and to work for the survival of your fellow Slavs was to be a good Czech. After Munich, the ideological circle closed as Czechs saw themselves once again besieged and victimized. By 1942 a leading Czechoslovak politician in exile in Britain was calling for increased cooperation with the Soviet Union based on shared principles of equality and social justice.\(^{320}\)

\(^{319}\) Lukes, Czechoslovakia Between Hitler and Stalin, 230–1.

\(^{320}\) Hubert Ripka. *Russia and the West: Lecture delivered on 25\textsuperscript{th} February, 1942 at the Institute Francais, London* (London: New Europe Forum, 1942) folder 640, box 78, BC 45, Masaryk collection. Sections of the speech are worth quoting in full: (pages 24-26) “Socialism is not a specially Russian problem, it is a world problem. Masaryk called it ‘the crucial point of the conscience of modern mankind.’ Socialism of all types endeavors to attain social justice by the economic and social equality of all individuals. The socialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the heir of the French Revolution which preached not only the idea of liberty but also those of equality and fraternity. It rightly stresses the fact that the equality of the citizen before the law is insufficient, as such equality does not do away with the profound inequality that exists between the rich and the poor, between those who are materially independent and those who are not. True equality can only be ensured by a social order which does away with or at least reduces to a minimum the economic exploitation of man by man. And just as liberty would be lost if the juridical power of the State did not see to its preservation, in the same way, the State has the duty of ensuring the economic and social equality of all citizens. Bolshevism endeavours to realise this equality in its own fashion—a fashion which has to a great extent been determined by the Russian social milieu and by the political tradition of the
František Palacky, the great Czech historian and *buditele*, wrote in 1873 in an epilogue to one of his many books an incredibly prescient passage relating to the relations between the Czechs and the Germans and Russians:

I have already stated that I have little faith in the future of Austria, particularly in view of German and Hungarian despotism. We thus face the important question: what will become of the Slavs within the Austrian state, especially the Czechs? We cannot examine all the possibilities, and no mortal can predict the future. However, I say with full conviction that if the Czechs were ever to be forcibly incorporated into a Russian or Prussian empire, they would never accept such a fate. They would never forget that they have an ancient right to be governed only by a ruler chosen by themselves. They could not help but regard the Prussians—with their Germanizing fury—as implacable foes and murderers of their nation. With respect to the Russians, however, the situation would be quite different. Although the Czechs would refuse to become Russian subjects, they would regard the Russians as natural blood-relations, friends, and allies. They would be willing to serve as loyal partners, and—if need be—perhaps even act as the Russian vanguard in Europe.³²¹

At this point an answer can be tentatively given to the earlier question of why socialist was not dominant in the Bohemian lands throughout the industrial boom of the nineteenth century and the interwar period with the rise of the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Concepts of national conflict and nationalism prevailed over concepts of class conflict, indeed the two became conflated. As the population of the Habsburg Empire experienced the blessings and curses of the industrial revolution, improved education, and voting enfranchisement, the population at large came to see itself as belonging to

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specific cultures and nations, not as economic classes generally. Even when they did see themselves as economic classes, they were viewed through a nationalist lens. Capitalists and land owners were seen as Germans, and low level industrial workers were seen as Czechs, or vice versa, such that the two were seen as one and the same. The site of social conflict became the power balance over the supposed ethnic and cultural groups of “Czech” vs. “German.” Within each nationalist group, economic inequalities were seen as secondary to the main point of belonging to, and fighting for, the group. Economic exploitation and inequality then became an outgrowth of nationalist conflict. If a worker was poor, depending on his supposed nationality, it was because he was being exploited by the opposite nation. Socialism as a mass idea could not compete with nationalism in the Bohemian lands and Slovakia. This held true up through the Second World War, as the dichotomy became ever larger and developed into an idea between supposed German and Slav essences fighting over the soul of Europe.

All this is not to advance the argument that socialism and class conflict are true and that nationalism interfered with their proper historical instantiation. Rather, it is to argue that as an idea, socialism and class conflict among the populace of the Habsburg Empire in the Bohemian lands and Slovakia was in competition with the idea of nationalism, resulting in a hybridity of the two, with nationalism as the dominant element.

Fear of Germany was a major driving force in Czechoslovak military strategy and preparation in the interwar period. Czechoslovak military officials kept abreast of German military writings, particularly Heinz Guderian’s infamous Achtung Panzer,
arguably the most influential work on the development of Nazi Bliztkrieg tactics. Fortifications were built along the northern Moravian and Silesian borders with Germany, with some disagreement over whether emphasis should also be placed on quick moving tank divisions to counter a potential German invasion at the narrowest point in the country between Poland and Austria.

In the first half of the 1930s the number of military divisions was increased from twelve to twenty. In 1935 alone seven new army corps were organized and in the fall of that year the chief of staff of the Red Army visited Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak military command, and also invited the command to attend Red Army maneuvers in summer 1936. In May 1938 the military was partially mobilized for a predicted war with Germany. With the development of the crisis leading to Munich the military went into action. On September 23, 1938, a total general mobilization was declared and the entire army, consisting of forty divisions and over a million men, was moved into their pre-arranged strategic placings. Excitement for the long predicted final clash with the Germans was high, even among civilians. The day after the general mobilization thousands of people in the city of Brno gathered in front of the cities military command headquarters and chanted “Give us weapons! Give us weapons!” All of the main roads in the country were mined and blocked and blackout ordinances were put into effect. The government evacuated Prague on 27 September, expecting it to be bombed in the upcoming German invasion. If ever an entire country and society was prepared for war, it was Czechoslovakia in the immediate days before the Munich Agreement.\textsuperscript{322}

\textsuperscript{322} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 13, 15, 19–22.
But the Czechoslovak-German war was not to be. The crisis had become an international situation and the leaders of France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy met to negotiate in Munich. It was agreed that Germany would be allowed to take the Sudetenland and that neither France nor Great Britain would support Czechoslovakia if it resisted and went to war. The Soviet Union was only obligated to aid Czechoslovakia on the condition that France did so first, and so also left Czechoslovakia alone. Faced with an effective abandonment by the powers of Europe, Beneš refused to call the troops into action against the Germans. He held that “I will not drive the nation to the slaughterhouse for this.”

The Czechoslovak generals begged Beneš to give the military the green light to fight but he refused, with much weeping done by both. The military was demobilized and dispersed.

Beneš was proud but not foolish. As far as a counterfactual can be determined, a war between Czechoslovakia and Germany would have in all likelihood been horrific, on par with the devastation of Poland in World War II. There would have been no factors holding back German aggression, given Czechoslovakia’s hostility, and this, mixed with the old Czech/German ethnic conflict, would have in all probability led to complete devastation. Beneš predicted this and sacrificed the nation’s pride for its survival.

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323 King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, 175.
324 Luza and Vella, The Hitler Kiss, 22.
325 Some Czechoslovak soldiers and citizens in the eastern half of the country, primarily from Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, actually fled to the Soviet Union rather than lay down arms. Presumably more did so after the invasion of the entire country in March 1939. It was claimed by Radomir Luza that a good number of these Czechoslovaks were Sokol members. They would go on form a fighting unit within the Red Army, and as workers on collective farms, which the Soviet Union used to great propaganda effect. A small book was published in Moscow in 1943, written in Czech, titled “Forever Faithful” that included a preface by Beneš and consisted of personal accounts of some of these Czech worker/soldiers of life in the USSR and the fighting on the Eastern Front. The book is, of course, highly patriotic, pro-Soviet, and anti-German. The question of exactly whom the book was meant for is nebulous, given that it was printed in...
later conversation with his secretary Edward Taborsky, Beneš revealed his reasoning. “Fighting Germany alone means suicide, a sacrifice of countless lives and the odium that peace has been broken because of our apparent desire to hold a territory inhabited by Germans…. I have a plan of my own. Although I submit, I know that social forces will push Europe into war. Then Czechoslovakia will be resurrected and receive satisfaction.”

The Nazis annexed the Sudetenland the day after the Munich talks on October 1, 1938. Igor Lukes noted that “…the whole Sudetenland seemed to be covered with the Swastika.” A wave of violence broke out across the region and many Czechs fled. In February 1939, a Czech witness held that “All followers of the democratic and anti-Nazi parties, and a considerable number the Czechs living in this district, were mercilessly beaten; on the frontier many were killed, and many more committed suicide.” Within the first weeks of the annexation more than 200,000 people fled the Sudetenland for the interior of Bohemia and Moravia. Shortly after the annexation the Nazis sponsored a homework assignment for German children in the Sudetenland in which they were to write down their personal experience of their supposed liberation by the Nazis from the Czechs. Poland and Hungary, wanting to get in on the action, in the next few months also annexed parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland taking control of the Teschen/Těšín region.

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327 Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Hitler and Stalin*, 256.
328 Lechner, *As We Saw it in Prague*, 159, Masaryk collection.
in Silesia and Hungary a region of five thousand square miles in southern Slovakia.\textsuperscript{330} Many Sudeten Germans went on to fight for the Third Reich in World War II, either through conscription or by volunteering, with an estimated 200,000 killed.\textsuperscript{331}

Beneš, predicting what would follow, resigned on October 5 and fled to London and then moved to Chicago, where he took up a teaching position at the University of Chicago.\textsuperscript{332} After Britain and France gave their support to Poland in the event of war in March 1939, he sailed back to London, where he set up a government in exile.\textsuperscript{333} Throughout the time of this early exile period, even while in Chicago, Beneš was in close contact with representatives of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{334} Members of the exile government set up a Czechoslovak Slavic Committee in London, focused on the issue of Pan-Slavic solidarity.\textsuperscript{335} Throughout the war the exile government issued dozens if not hundreds of pamphlets in English for the end of boosting their cause and gaining sympathy. In one of the earlier pamphlets an explicit link was made between the German occupation and the Battle of White Mountain. The German occupation was a second time of darkness in which “the development of Czechoslovak culture is in mortal danger.”\textsuperscript{336} This reasoning was perfectly in line with the national narrative and lent a sense of continuity to events.

From the Czechoslovak exile perspective, once again the Czechoslovaks were the victims

\textsuperscript{331} Mastny, \textit{The Czechs Under Nazi Rule}, 25n81.
\textsuperscript{332} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, xiii.
\textsuperscript{334} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 19–21.
\textsuperscript{335} Beneš, \textit{Pan-Slavism and Czechoslovak Policy During World War II}, 149, Masaryk collection.
\textsuperscript{336} German Cultural Oppression in Czechoslovakia (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1940), 27, folder 832, box 96, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
of German aggression. A new government, led first by a Czechoslovak general named Jan Syrový and then by a leader of the Agrarian party named Rudolf Beran, appointed an aged and weak judge named Emil Hácha as president. All political parties were dissolved and two new ones formed, the dominant Party of National Unity and the token opposition National Labor Party. It was formed after Beneš resigned and called the Second Republic. It lasted up until the later occupation of the entirety of the Bohemian lands by the Nazis. This new government was largely run by members of the right-wing Agrarian political party, who pushed an accommodationist line with Nazi Germany. This would not be forgotten after the war, when the Agrarian party was outlawed as one of the first pieces of postwar legislation.

The name of the country during this interregnum was changed to Czecho-Slovakia as a concession to Slovak demands for autonomy, the prelude to Slovakia’s secession. Late in 1938 the Sudeten German Party dissolved and its members were required to apply for membership in the Nazi Party. Under the new government the Communist Party was outlawed in December 1938 and German exiles who had fled the Nazis by settling in Czechoslovakia were extradited back to Germany. After a few months of military and economic pressure, the Nazis took over the rest of the country on March 15, 1939 and created the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. In the buildup to it, Germans in Prague, Brno, Jihlava, and Olomouc rioted on March 12, the

337 Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists*, 152.
340 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 177.
anniversary of the above mentioned killing of over fifty Sudeten Germans protesting exclusion from the Austrian parliament in 1919 by the Czechoslovak military.  

Hitler and Hermann Goring met Hacha the night on the night of the 14th, at which meeting Goring threatened that if Hacha did not cooperate and sign papers that gave nominal legal recognition of the invasion the German military would exercise no restraint and bomb Prague. This was a bluff on Hitler and Goring’s part, as Prague at that hour was enveloped by a thick fog that prevented airplane navigation. Hacha signed but not before fainting first and having to be revived by a doctor. The opening statements to the legal papers, written by Hitler himself, held that the Bohemian lands had been an ancient part of the German nation for over a thousand years and that the Germans were fully within their rights to take what was theirs.

For a fuller understanding of the Nazi conception of the place of the Czechs and the Bohemian lands within their racial and historical ideology, it is instructive to examine a lecture of Karl Hermann Frank, a leading member of Konrad Henlein’s Sudeten German Party, and Secretary of State of the Protectorate. At the invitation of Hans Frank, governor of the General Government in Poland, Hermann Frank gave a lecture in Cracow on June 24, 1941 titled “Bohemia and Moravia in the Reich.” Hermann Frank presented in the lecture a long ranging historical analysis that claimed that the Bohemian lands had traditionally been part of the Germanic world, or within the context of his Nazi beliefs, the German “habitat.” The lecture reads as a perfect counter-point to the Czech Pan-

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345 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 177.
Slavic narrative. According to Hermann Frank it was the Germans who had come first to the Bohemian lands. Charlemagne had created the first Reich under which the Bohemian lands were a part of German sovereignty and had remained so until the *budítele* under František Palacký began to spread lies among the populace about Czech culture and independence. Palacký’s refusal to attend the Frankfurt parliament in 1848 was a “deliberate untruth.” Tomaš Masaryk was a “fame-seeking philosopher” who manipulated the Western powers and abused the German population in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak state was an inherently “anti-German” idea and when the Nazis occupied the Sudetenland there was “joyous and grateful weeping by the freed German people.” Echoing the language of Josef Goebbels, Hermann Frank claimed that the military power and armaments industry in Czechoslovakia had been a source of instability in Central Europe and German “leaders could not tolerate the sharpened dagger in the German body.” The establishment of the Protectorate was simply the German people reclaiming lands that had rightfully belonged to them for over a thousand years, until their theft by Czech fanatics in nineteenth century.\(^{346}\)

In the interim period the Nazis had tried to boost claims of the numbers of the German population in the Bohemian lands so that its annexation along their ideological lines would be justified. According to one report, German representatives paid 200 crowns to unemployed Czechs if they went to employment agencies and registered themselves as Germans. University students from the Sudetenland were forbidden to

\(^{346}\) Karl Hermann Frank, *Böhmen und Mähren im Reich* (Prague: Volk und Reich Verlag Prag, 1941), folder 826, box 96, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
study in areas controlled by the Reich and were pushed to go study in Prague in order to
bolster the German numbers there.\textsuperscript{347} A nominal Czech government was set up but under
the authority of a Nazi Reichsprotektor.\textsuperscript{348} The first Protector was Konstantin von
Neurath, a nobleman and former Foreign Minister for both Weimar and Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{349}
All political parties were outlawed, except for one newly created party, the National
Partnership. By the summer of 1939 approximately 98 percent of adult Czech males were
members of the party, as their sole legal means of solidarity in the Protectorate.\textsuperscript{350}

The administration of the Protectorate contained many Sudeten Germans, from
the leadership to the lowest levels, eager to settle old scores.\textsuperscript{351} In the town of Jihlava in
July 1939 a speech was given by Rudolf Jung, a Sudeten German and one of the founding
members of the German National Socialist Workers Party, the precursor to the
NSDAP/Nazi party. In his speech he mocked the Czechs and called them Hussites. The
implication was that the Germans had won the old conflict between them once and for
all.\textsuperscript{352} In the summer of 1939 there were frequent electrical storms throughout the
Bohemian lands, adding to the tension. Desperate exiles, refugees, and political anti-
Nazis flocked to diplomatic missions over the summer, seeking asylum.\textsuperscript{353}

Given Hitler’s plans to conquer Europe and Asia, he knew that he had to have the
economic strength to do so. Much has been written about Hitler’s conception of Ukraine

\textsuperscript{347} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 31–2.
\textsuperscript{348} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, xxii.
\textsuperscript{349} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 14–5.
\textsuperscript{350} Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationalists}, 193.
\textsuperscript{351} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 172, 174.
\textsuperscript{352} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 210.
\textsuperscript{353} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 85–6, 217.
and Eastern Europe as the future bread basket for his empire and hence the motivation behind the opening of the Eastern Front with Operation Barbarossa and the massive bloodshed that followed.354 But an empire does not run on bread alone, least of all an empire in the making. Clothes, vitamins, steel, boots, tires, bullets, guns… the list of essential items is massive. Hitler needed these items, quickly and in large quantity. If Ukraine was the bread basket, then Czechoslovakia was the factory.

The ideology of Nazi foreign policy was colonization, in which the German empire would conquer and subjugate the rest of Europe and Asia, enforcing racial hygiene and hierarchy. The planned deterritorialization of the whole of Europe and concepts of Europe as a single geographical space to be manipulated along geopolitical lines were essential.355 This was to be a process of the inner colonization of Europe, with Germany at the center and the surrounding European areas subjected into specific sites of economic activity. Czechoslovakia was seen and used as an industrial colony from the beginning of the Nazi occupation as one giant production line to fuel the Nazi economy. It was also an excellent strategic point for further expansion into Eastern Europe, a position not lost on the Czechs themselves. In a conversation in April 1938 about the Anschluss of Austria, a Czech pointed out that “Czechoslovakia still lies between the

Nazis and the Rumanian oil, the Bessarabian wheat, and the Yugoslavian Banat, that fertile region.”

While in practice Czechoslovakia was a colony of the Nazi empire, the Nazis themselves made a distinction between the Bohemian lands and areas they explicitly considered colonies. Nominally Bohemia and Moravia were a protected area whose citizens were under the rule of the Reich and possessors of statehood and rights. When the Protectorate was established it was officially incorporated into the Reich. Germans living in the Protectorate became Reich citizens and Czechs became Protectorate nationals, a kind of federated status within the Reich. Poland on the other hand was a colony and so its citizens were without rights or statehood, outside of the rule of Reich law. Hans Frank, the notorious Governor-General of the conquered area of Poland called the General Government, said that “Poland shall be treated as a colony; the Poles shall be the slaves of the Greater German World Empire.” This distinction goes a long way in making sense of the varied levels of brutality committed in the Bohemian lands and Poland by the Nazis. Excluding the Jewish population, approximately 96,000 Czechs were killed during the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia as opposed to, again excluding the Jewish population, the estimated 2 to 3 million or more Poles who died as a

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356 Lechner, *As We Saw it in Prague*, 90, Masaryk collection.
357 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 96.
360 Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, 75.
result of the Nazi occupation.\textsuperscript{362} It is estimated that only 2.7 percent of the total Czech and Slovak population died as a result of the war.\textsuperscript{363}

From his own words, Hitler seems to have had a special kind of simultaneous animosity and respect towards the Czechs, born out of his time living in Vienna under the Habsburg Empire. He described Czechs, noting that, “They’re skilled at not awakening the distrust of their occupiers, and are wonderful at playing the role of subjects. It’s true they’ve had five centuries experience of it! I saw them at work in Vienna during my youth. Arriving penniless and dragging their worn-out shoes over the streets of the city, they quickly acquired the Viennese accent—and one fine day one was quite surprised to see them installed in the key positions.”\textsuperscript{364} In talks held in January 1942, he called the Czechs “[…] the most efficient of the Slavs […] hard-working and careful.”\textsuperscript{365} And in July 1942: “[…] I consider the Czechs to be industrious and intelligent workers and am most anxious to see political stability restored in their country—and particularly in view of the presence therein of two great and most important German armaments factories […]”\textsuperscript{366} In his fullest expression of his thoughts on the Czechs he said that:

“Of all the Slavs, the Czech is the most dangerous, because he’s a worker. He has a sense of discipline, he’s orderly, he’s more a Mongol than a Slav. Beneath the top layer of a certain loyalty, he knows how to hide his plans. Now they’ll work, for they know we’re pitiless and brutal. I don’t despise them, I have no resentment against them. It’s destiny that wishes us to be adversaries. To put it briefly, the

\textsuperscript{363} Zeman and Karlsch, \textit{Uranium Matters}, 111.
\textsuperscript{364} Trevor-Roper, \textit{Hitler’s Table Talk}, 405.
\textsuperscript{365} Trevor-Roper, \textit{Hitler’s Table Talk}, 183.
\textsuperscript{366} Trevor-Roper, \textit{Hitler’s Table Talk}, 558.
Czechs are a foreign body in the midst of the German community. There’s no room both for them and for us. One of us must give way.”

Finally, in an ominous statement that summed up his views, Hitler opined: “The Czechs’ behaviour towards the old Austria was a complete expression of the meaning of the phrase: ‘passive resistance.’ The most impertinent are always those who are treated with the greatest respect. In their eyes, consideration is a sign of weakness or stupidity. I’d rather be regarded as a brute than as an idiot.”

While caution must be used in extrapolating the words of one man as a theoretical basis of policy, in the case of Hitler it is justified. These views are worth quoting extensively for they go a long way towards explaining the Nazi policy towards the Czechs during the war in terms of its impact on the level of bodily harm inflicted on the Czechs and its emphasis on economic exploitation. An understanding of the ideological viewpoint of Hitler and the Nazi hierarchy is crucial to an overall understanding of what happened to the Czechs and Czechoslovakia during the war. Hitler viewed the Czechs as talented and skilled but also as tricky and wily. In his eyes they would be useful to the Reich but had to be properly subdued and handled. Given Hitler’s and the Nazi/German nationalist worldview, the Czechs were the object of a kind of grudging respect. They were “worthy nationalist foes,” people who had proven themselves to a degree in the struggle for the survival of the fittest and they provided the Germans with opponents who would challenge them and make them stronger.

Hitler’s initial plan seem to have to been expelling the Czechs from the Bohemian lands and shipping them to Siberia or Volhynia, the border region

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367 Trevor-Roper. *Hitler’s Table Talk*, 234.
368 Trevor-Roper. *Hitler’s Table Talk*, 204.
between Poland, Ukraine, and Belasrus. Economic realities and potential uses of the Czechs soon changed this though.

Hermann Goring was the main economic official for the Nazis, and he worked to implement a policy called *Grossraumwirtschaft* (greater economic space). According to Chad Bryant, it was to be “a continentwide ‘linked economy’ of strictly regulated and managed cartels, investment practices, prices, wages, production goals, and avenues of trade. German businesses would sweep across Europe. Food—and raw material—producing areas on the peripheries of Europe would be linked to the industrially rich center in a system designed to enrich Germany and tool it for war.” Czechoslovakia fit this conception like a dream, especially given its armaments and munitions industry, which included some of the most skilled workers in Europe. The Nazis moved quickly. Hermann Goring met with representatives of Czech industry on March 20, 1939, five days after the invasion, securing their compliance and setting up extensive orders from their factories for the German military. By the end of 1940 a majority of Czechoslovakia’s heavy industry had been placed under the control of the Goring Works, the main Nazi industrial conglomerate led by Paul Pleiger. This process was streamlined due to the nature of the Czechoslovak economy on the eve of the occupation. In the late 1930s almost all of Czechoslovak industrial production was under the control of government regulatory cartels that “fixed prices, allocated production quotas, and had

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broad powers in setting the conditions of trade.” The Nazis merely had to take over these regulatory cartels and much of their work was already done. Three months before the invasion detailed plans were laid out for the seizure of Czech arms, factories, and ammunition. These plans were carried out flawlessly, also netting the seizure of over two hundred thousand technical designs and patents.

Czech businesses were forced to join central planning associations by law. Non-essential wartime production, such as candy and chocolate, was limited, while iron and steel works were refitted to make tanks and grenades. Price controls, rationing, and food and merchandise tickets were introduced. Jewish owned businesses were liquidated, and Jewish owned property was expropriated. In 1940 Jews were required “to sell their valuables to a special public purchasing agency and to deposit stocks and other paper assets in a foreign currency bank.” Such measures freed up mountains of capital to increase investment, production, and personal graft, upwards of six billion crowns, the Czechoslovak currency. The four major Czechoslovak national banks came under German control and as a result “all Czechoslovak capital was absorbed in Nazi finance.” Petr Zenkl provides a summary of the situation:

“…there was the transfer from peace to war production. The production of consumer goods was restricted to the minimum and the exports were stopped. Labor force was reshuffled or transferred to Germany. Machinery and equipment were not renewed for the whole duration of the war. Some industries were completely destroyed or liquidated. There were also essential changes in ownership. All enterprises owned by Jews – and there were thousands of them –

374 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 19.
376 Bryant, Prague in Black, 78–9, 82–3.
were expropriated as well as many businesses owned by Czechs. The Germans seized all large concerns (whose owners or share-holders were often sent to concentration camps for the sole reason that their property could be confiscated) all banks and insurance companies. The Germans had, soon, absolute majority on the boards of directors of all joint-stock companies and limited liability companies. Only exceptionally were companies of any importance to be found still in Czech hands toward the end of the war.”

The Communist Party was immediately gutted by arrests and executions. On the first day of the Nazi invasion 4,600 Communists and political refugees from Germany were arrested, and the arrests continued throughout the summer and fall. In spring 1939 an estimated 20 to 40 Czechs were arrested daily, many of whom had once been connected to the administration of the Sudetenland under the Czechoslovak government. On September 1, 1939, the first official day of World War II, two thousand Czechoslovak public figures were arrested. The Party did its best to remain active but was viciously hunted. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia each organized and lost four central committees and an estimated 25,000 Party members were killed from 1939 to 1945. The Sokol was also heavily persecuted. Benjamin Frommer notes that “1,135 members were executed, 1,979 died in concentration camps and Nazi jails, and another 7,935 survived imprisonment.”

There was also an arrest campaign carried out against members of the Czechoslovak land office, which had been in charge of the land reform initiatives and the

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378 Zenkl, How They Did It? (1952), 33, Masaryk papers.
379 Bryant, Prague in Black, 34.
380 Kennan, From Prague after Munich, 181.
381 Luza and Vella, The Hitler Kiss, 27.
382 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 35, 54.
383 Frommer, National Cleansing, 26.
breaking up of large estates. Many of these large estates had been German owned and now revenge was the order of the day. The old regime struck back. Czech noble families, ranked as some of “...the oldest and most distinguished of Europe’s aristocracy,” were pressured to profess to be Germans and join the Nazi party. If not, they were threatened with the loss of their lands.

Universities were closed and the intelligentsia and political leadership was severely repressed, with many given the choice of either the camps or collaboration. Peroutka and Zenkl are examples of their fate. Incidentally, Peroutka was given an offer in 1942 to leave the camps if he would write for a collaborationist newspaper. He refused and spent 27 months in solitary confinement as punishment. Those intellectuals and politicians who did escape formed a Czechoslovak Brigade in France that fought against the Nazi invasion of that country, after which many gravitated to the government in exile in London. Rosemary Kavan, an Englishwoman who married one of these Czechoslovak exiles, described the Czechoslovak Brigade as having been, “…the only army in the West where privates with two doctorates were not uncommon and leaves were spent in political activity.” By deduction, few men and women of this caliber of

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384 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 182.
385 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 222.
388 Czechoslovaks who fled abroad and either formed their own military units or joined the militaries of other countries to fight the Nazis formed a large part of a Czechoslovak narrative of honorable resistance created during but especially after the war. These exiled soldiers were seen as giving proof that, contrary to the view of many, the Czechoslovaks had done their part in the fight. See for an example Zdeněk Vršovský, *Czechoslovakian Soldiers Tell Their Story: “Our Ways”*, trans. Henri Fancis (London, 1941), folder 637, box 78, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
education and activity were to be found in Czechoslovakia by 1941. The intellectual class was destroyed, and the remainder dispersed for the duration of the occupation.

There was a demonstration in Prague on October 28, 1939, the anniversary of national independence. There were chants of “Long Live Beneš” and “Long Live Stalin.” At this demonstration German troops fired on the crowd and a young university student named Jan Opletal was killed. At his funeral on November 15th university students en masse staged large protests against the Nazis and the Protectorate regime. The response was vicious. The great Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal, himself a law student at the time, related in a letter written late in his life what he saw the next day on the 16th. He had missed the protests on the 15th due to drinking with a friend at a pub and so headed off to Charles University the morning of the 16th without knowing what had and was still occurring.

“The next day I set off to the Law Faculty – I left shortly after ten in the morning, and when I got to the front steps of the Faculty, what did I see…but German soldiers driving students down the steps, beating their backs with rifle butts, other horrified students were running out of the auditorium and corridors, and the soldiers herded the students into waiting army trucks, more and more of them, then they raised the flaps up, and the soldiers jumped in…I stood there aghast – if I’d been half an hour earlier, I would’ve ended up like those friends of mine, the trucks drove off, and I heard my fellow students singing Kde domov muj, the national anthem […] we could see the horror and dread emanating from everybody, and the expectation of what indeed came to pass – the closing of universities and colleges, the execution of twelve students on 17th November, and one thousand two hundred students arrested in their student residences and transported to Sachsenhausen…”

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392 Hrabal, *Total Fears*, 88–90.
After this incident all institutions of higher education were closed down and history and geography were not taught at any level of education.\textsuperscript{393}

The Nazis utilized any and all potential labor. When the Nazis invaded in March 1939 approximately 120,000 people were unemployed in the Protectorate area. By June this number was down to 17,000.\textsuperscript{394} In 1942 only twenty-three people were counted as unemployed in the Protectorate. Such measures were very successful and the Bohemian lands became essential to the running of the Nazi economy. Almost a third of all steel and rolling mill products made by the Goring Works during the war came from a single Czech company, the Vitkovice Mining and Iron Works. One coal mine’s output in the Moravska Ostrava region increased from less than 12 million tons in 1939 to 16.7 million tons in 1940. The Bata shoe factory in the town of Zlin “was refitted to make V1 and V2 rockets as well as tires for the German army. The Skoda factory in Plzen that had formerly made cars now made tanks and airplane engines.” Between 1939 and late 1944 the number of industrial workers increased by 150,000 and “the number of people working in metal or metal-working factories” increased by 198,000.\textsuperscript{395} Even Czech high school students were made to work six weeks during their summer vacations to boost manpower.\textsuperscript{396}

Central and Eastern Europe as a whole became Germany’s “economic backyard” under \textit{Grossraumwirtschaft} initiatives, with “more than 37 percent of Germany’s wheat,

\textsuperscript{393} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 122.
\textsuperscript{395} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 81, 85, 86, 182.
\textsuperscript{396} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 29.
35 percent of meat, 31 percent of lard, 61 percent of tobacco, and 62 percent of bauxite imports” coming from the region.\footnote{397} It is hard to calculate the Protectorate’s share in the German economy because from October 1940 onwards German economic statisticians considered the Protectorate and Germany as one unit, indicating the level of ideological commitment to making the Protectorate a province of Germany. Hitler estimated the assimilation of the Protectorate into Germany would take one hundred years.\footnote{398}

Industrial production as a whole in the areas of Czechoslovakia under Protectorate rule rose by an estimated 12 percent between 1939 and 1945.\footnote{399} In an ideological gesture that speaks more than most, the Protectorate government issued a fifty crown note in 1941 with a portrait of a female representation of the Czech people on it. This was a copy of a portrait from a one hundred crown bill issued in 1931 but with one difference, that the woman no longer wore a Phrygian cap of liberty.\footnote{400} The Nazis even went so far as to melt down Czech statues of various national and folk heroes for their metal to use in the war effort.\footnote{401}

The Nazis planned for a possible use of Czechs as forced labor within Germany itself in the event of a war of defense: “In the event of war […] the Slav subjects of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia would be fully available for work in the fields, forests, mines and factories, and would in this manner help contribute to the

\footnote{398} Mastny, \textit{The Czechs Under Nazi Rule}, 78–9, 128.  
\footnote{399} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 341n15.  
\footnote{400} Sayer, \textit{Coasts of Bohemia}, 234.  
\footnote{401} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 255, 341n37.
defense of the great common homeland.” These plans proved true as the war progressed. With increasing casualties on the Eastern front and later on with the Western front, and the resulting increase in military conscriptions, Germany’s native labor force shrank at an exponential rate. Czech labor became correspondingly more important. All Czech laborers who could pass a basic physical were potentially under enlistment to be shipped to Germany and occupied areas to work. In 1942 mass shipment of Czech workers to Germany and elsewhere began in force. In one year, from early 1943 to early 1944, approximately 75,000 Czech men and women were sent “to work in Germany, Austria, Norway, and elsewhere in Europe.”

In total 401,763 Czech laborers worked in Germany at some point between September 1939 and April 1944. Workers from other parts of Reich were also sent to work on farms in the Protectorate.

The Nazis did not treat the Czechs badly relative to neighboring populations. While Nazi racial ideology contained a distinct strain of hatred against Slavs, the Czechs could not be annihilated or reduced to bare slave conditions due to economic reasons. The Czechs were needed in order to ensure “the utilization of advanced technology and capacity in Czech heavy industry and, above all, the employment of skilled labour, qualified technicians and an educated workforce – all of which became increasingly important in Germany’s war effort.” The majority of Czechs did go hungry and

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402 Moskowitz, “Three Years of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia,” 367.
suffered from malnutrition by the war’s end, with official rations being set in early in 1941 at 1,600 calories per person per day, but starvation did not occur beyond the intermittent individual level, unlike in Eastern Europe. General rations allotted to Czech workers were close to the levels given to German workers and the Czech birth rate actually went up during the war. 407 Czech armament workers were given a free meal at their factories under a program sponsored by the Protectorate government and the Nazi leadership. 408

During the war real wages rose by 3 percent. 409 According to Alice Teichova, “The contributions the Czechs were capable of making to the German war effort” mitigated potential violence and persecution. 410 The persecution, death or “arrest of a Czech worker […] meant a loss of a qualified worker in the German war machine.” 411 A member of the Polish resistance who was in Prague in late 1943 reported to the Czechoslovak government in exile his astonishment over the ease of life in the Protectorate for the Czechs in comparison to others areas of Nazi occupation. 412

In 1942, Reinhard Heydrich, then Lord Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, appointed in late September 1941 413, actually increased rations and allowed Czech workers free entrance to soccer games on May Day in an effort to co-opt dissent and keep

411 Zenkl, *How They Did It?* (1952), 25, Masaryk papers.
413 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 248.
the Czechs working.\textsuperscript{414} He also gave 200,000 pairs of new shoes to munitions workers, improved the social security system, and formulated a plan, in retrospect similar to the vacation tactics of the Strength Through Joy program for German workers, of sending workers on vacations to spa towns. These tactics formed part of Heydrich’s stick and carrot tactics to keep the Czechs quiet and production flowing, all while slowly Germanizing them. On October 2, 1941, he had delivered a secret speech to Nazi bureaucrats in the Protectorate titled “On the Elimination of the Czech Nation,” in which he emphasized the need of Nazi Germany to eliminate the Czechs via Germanization “in a masked way.”\textsuperscript{415} Among the foreign workers in the Reich, “relatively best off were the West European workers and Czechs.”\textsuperscript{416} The Czech workers were important enough to the Reich economy that it was important to treat them somewhat well and keep them productive. Hitler himself in late 1939 stated that “the German authorities are to avoid anything that is likely to provoke…mass actions.”\textsuperscript{417}

An incident in Germany underscores this analysis. At a work camp under the aegis of Krupp called Spenlestrassse, a group of Czech workers in 1942 broke into the camp kitchen and confronted the head cook due to dissatisfaction over the quality of their food. When security guards arrived they threw stones at them and in retaliation the guards fired and presumably restored order. Only one of the Czechs was wounded, none

\textsuperscript{414} Mark Mazower, \textit{Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe} (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 244.
\textsuperscript{417} Mastny, \textit{The Czechs Under Nazi Rule}, 121.
killed, and no further retaliation by the guards was taken. The Czechs were the most well off workers in the camp. Outside of a prohibition to have sex with Germans, they had no other restrictions on their behavior and movement and were given the same food and wages as German workers. The confrontation is taken by Ulrich Herbert, an historian of foreign labor in the Third Reich, as the defense of the Czechs of their right to a proper meal. More explicitly, it means that the Czechs were confident enough in their status and value in the eyes of the Germans that they felt secure enough to protest without fear of brutal retaliation i.e. death and torture. The extraordinary nature of this incident and the Czechs position during this time is better seen if one considers what their fate would have been if they had been Polish or Russian. Needless to say, they were all skilled steel workers.\footnote{Ulrich Herbert, \textit{Hitler’s Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 213–4.}

During the occupation there developed an odd triangular relationship between the Nazis or Reich Germans, the Sudeten Germans, and the Czechs. Given the Nazi emphasis on using Czech labor, they moved large amounts of Czechs into the Sudetenland, a move which angered the Sudeten Germans. They felt as if the Nazis were actually increasing Czech influence in the Sudetenland and that they were giving the Czechs preferential treatment in job placement. For their part the Nazis soon took a negative view of the Sudeten Germans, seeing them as uneducated, unhygienic, and rude. Ordinary Czechs also expressed their animosity more towards the Sudeten Germans than to the Reich Germans. Per the Nazi viewpoint of the Czechs as worthy nationalist foes, there existed a
level of discourse in which the Reich Germans saw the Czechs as civilized. The Sudeten Germans were conceived as a backward and lost German Volk that would require re-civilizing. The Sudeten Germans in turn came to feel that the Reich Germans had betrayed them for the Czechs.419

The Nazis, as part of their ideology of racial colonialism, had also pegged the Czechs for “Germanization” plans. Put simply, Germanization was “that this space [Bohemia] be stuffed with German people.”420 Put more complexly, Germanization within Nazi ideology was to be the process in which the German people would conquer various lands, expel or kill their inhabitants, and then settle these lands and transform them into extensions of Germany itself. If the native peoples of these lands could be proven to be related to Germans or to be Germans who had been minimally polluted with foreign blood, they were then considered suitable for “re-Germanization” measures in which they would be assimilated back into the German race via inter-marriage and education.421

The Czechs presented a conundrum for the Nazis, however. The Czechs did not fit easily into their racial framework. They were valuable economically as a labor force, and the presence of a population of hundreds of thousands of ethnically ambiguous people throughout the Bohemian lands who still spoke both German and Czech, if not more languages, such as Polish and Slovak, colloquially known as “amphibians” or

420 Bryant, Prague in Black, 104.
421 Mazower, Hitler’s Empire, 187.
“hermaphrodites,” caused them tremendous administrative headaches.\textsuperscript{422} George F. Kennan judged that in the Bohemian lands, “…nationality is a matter of language rather than of blood, that speech rather than origin is the distinguishing characteristic of friend or foe.”\textsuperscript{423} But what then of those who spoke many languages? Did they belong to multiple nationalities? The circumstances of the “amphibians” and the questions they raised for the Germanization measures reveal the absurdity of Nazi racial policy. In one district in spring of 1939, Moravska Ostrava, many people did not even know what their nationality was.\textsuperscript{424} On an individual level, Czechs could apply to become Germans if they passed linguistic and “racial” standards. It is estimated that 70,000 Czechs became German, with some sources indicating a much higher number.\textsuperscript{425}

Ironically, an official of the Nazi Race and Settlement Head Office determined in a report that the Czechs were as a whole racially superior to the Sudeten Germans. “…from a purely numerical point of view the racial picture of the Czech people is considerably more favorable today than that of the Sudeten German population.”\textsuperscript{426} Karl Hermann Frank even claimed that half of all Czechs could eventually be assimilated and become Germans.\textsuperscript{427} The Nazis initially applied anti-Semitic measures in the Protectorate under the claim that it was the Jews who caused bad relations between the Czechs and the

\textsuperscript{422} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 138. Kafka is a good example of an “amphibian.” Born in the then Austrian part of the Habsburg empire, he grew up speaking German and Czech and lived mostly in Prague in a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Figures like him did not fit easily into the national and ethnic categories of the time. His secular Jewish identity complicates matters even further. Under the Habsburgs the term used was “utraquists,” a play on the Hussite doctrine of taking both the bread and the wine together at the Eucharist, \textit{sub utraque specie} in Latin. See King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 20.

\textsuperscript{423} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 44–5.

\textsuperscript{424} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 134.

\textsuperscript{425} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 18.

\textsuperscript{426} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 315n43.

\textsuperscript{427} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 17.
They should have heeded the words of Kamil Krofta that “Those who are acquainted with the history of the German element in our country see clearly that only a small number of our German fellow-countrymen would be able to meet the strict demands of the theory of the racial purity of the German nation.”

Examples of the Germanization measures are many. Border towns near the Reich proper were aggressively made to take up Nazi culture, with the flying of the Czech flag discouraged, pictures of Hitler hung up everywhere, and the use of the Nazi salute becoming ubiquitous. Czech farmers were pressured to exchange their lands for others in the Reich, to which they would move, and German farmers would then move onto their old lands in the Protectorate. In the spring of 1942, five mobile squads under the disguise of testing for tuberculosis in schools traveled the Protectorate x-raying children to determine if they were racially fit.

Mixed Czech-German marriages required approval. Czech women who had married German men before the occupation had to undergo medical tests for racial health and fitness, and doctors visited schools to test and measure children for “body type, skin and hair color, ‘spiritual liveliness,’ and father’s profession.” In his novel I Served the King of England, Bohumil Hrabal gave an account of a Czech man undergoing a medical tests to prove his fitness to marry a German woman, “[…] I had to stand naked in front of

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428 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 46.
430 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 133.
431 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 222.
433 Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 163.
a doctor who lifted my penis with a cane and then made me turn around while he used the cane to look into my anus, and then he hefted my scrotum and dictated in a loud voice. Next he asked me to masturbate and bring him a little semen so they could examine it scientifically […]”

An organization called the Kuratorium was set up to “coordinate mandatory youth service, physical and ideological education for Czech youth.” By the summer of 1944 approximately 500,000 Czech boys and girls had been forced to join.435 There was also a privileging of the German language over Czech. Czechs could be arrested on the charge of slandering the German language. Bohumil Hrabal in the same letter as the one above about the university students relates another close call with Germans due to this language policy.

“I remember how one day during that time in Nymburk my friend Jirka Jerabek and I went to have a few beers at the Grand, we drank a lot, and later that evening we were returning across the deserted square – speaking a sort of Bohemian Czechish mingled with German, talking away raucously and mockingly in pidgin German – when suddenly two men in capes came out of the Hotel Na Knizeci with a girl, one of them seized me by the throat and roared: Halt! He gripped my throat, and I could see his terrible eyes, and he practically dragged me along the ground to his car… Just as he opened the door, still holding on tight to my throat, the girl came rushing out of the side street, K poste, and she yelled out… Hanzi, let the young man go at once, at once, Hanzi, do you hear, or I’ll stop seeing you… Hanzi! Hanzi! I’ll never see you again! And she turned and ran back into Postovni Street… and Hanzi let go of me to run after her… And I ran into Mostecka and over the bridge, I ran all the way to the brewery, because I had escaped the concentration camp again, thanks to that girl, because he was Gestapo, that man, he’d have run me in for slandering the German language and insulting the German Reich…”

436 Hrabal, Total Fears, 90–1.
The Nazis could not expel or kill the Czechs because they needed their labor and they also could not push Germanization measures too hard for the same reason. Karl Hermann Frank put it well: “Humans are the empire’s capital and in the new Reich we cannot do without the labour of seven million Czechs.”\textsuperscript{437} The chairman of the Federation of Industries in Prague expressed similar thoughts, that “the Czech nation which inhabits the area of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia […] constitutes an integral part of the Greater German and future European economic area, in which it has to fulfill special functions…This is the main reason for the fact that it is not possible simply to deport the Czech nation in its entirety, as the resulting vacuum could have very unfavorable consequences for the whole of the Greater German Reich.”\textsuperscript{438}

All of these processes resulted in a wholesale gutting of the Czech middle and upper class, to be replaced by Germans, and the creation and consolidation of the majority of the population as a labor force. Petr Zenkl had something to say on this as well:

“It is natural that the high standard of living which had been the pride of Czechoslovakia before the war, rapidly lowered. Whole classes of the population were being turned into proletarians. This is true especially of white collar workers, teachers and intellectual circles in general. How many office workers were deprived of their jobs and how many were sent to unpaid jobs! Similar was the suffering of farmers who were blackmailed by prescribed delivery quotas. And we do not mention thousands of families whose wage earners had been sent to concentration camps and who existed only from merciful gifts, often heavily punishable. We may say without exaggeration that war, hunger, and misery decimated the whole middles class in Czechoslovakia, where middle class had been the strongest among all countries of Middle and East Europe. The almost

\textsuperscript{437} Quoted in Mazower, \textit{Hitler’s Empire}, 187.
\textsuperscript{438} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 127.
ideal structure of the Czech nation, which had existed before the war, was disrupted.”

Zenkl, admirable as his outrage is, overplays the oppression to a degree (as well as the perfection of Czechoslovakia). This was a labor force that was essential to the running of the Nazi economy and so while squeezed for time and energy, working twelve to fourteen hour day and six days a week with only Sunday off, it was relatively well taken care of by the Nazis. The horrors of the Eastern Front did not touch Czechoslovakia. There was Nazi retribution for the assassination of Heydrich in 1942 and the Slovak uprising of 1944, but these were minimal compared to the fate of Poland, the Balkans, and the countries in the Soviet orbit. Hitler initially wanted to execute 10,000 Czechs in reprisal for the assassination of Heydrich but Karl Hermann Frank flew to Berlin and persuaded him that such a brutal act would have a major negative impact on arms production. The destruction of the villages of Lidice and Ležáky, and the execution of 1,357 people on charges of collaboration with the resistance sufficed to slake Hitler’s vengeance. On the whole, deliberate and provocative oppression was kept low.

This may go far in explaining why there was little active Czech resistance against the Nazis. An article of 1944 characterized Czechoslovakia as “a country of primarily passive resistance.” Jokes, work slowdowns, the occasional appropriation of food or machine parts were the main acts of Czech resistance. Resistance of this kind has also

439 Zenkl, How They Did It? (1952) 32, Masaryk papers.
440 Bryant, Prague in Black, 195.
441 Evans, The Third Reich at War, 277–8.
been characterized as a kind of “good solider Svejk” strategy, in which the Czechs
complied but were also subtly subversive.\footnote{Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 118. One Czech noble family went so far as to “Svejkishly” name their newborn daughter Svetlana, after the daughter of Stalin himself, in 1944. See Glassheim, \textit{Noble Nationals}, 206.} Benjamin Frommer has called this “openly adapting to the system while secretly trying to undo it.” Beneš himself even said that, “I don’t like Schweik, but there’ll apparently be nothing for us to do but to wait out these evil times through Schweikism.”\footnote{Mastny, \textit{The Czechs Under Nazi Rule}, 24–5.}

There were many acts of ideological subversion in this vein. In early May 1939 the remains of the Czech romantic poet, Karel Hynek Macha, which were originally buried in the Sudetenland, were dug up and reinterred in the national cemetery of Vyserad in Prague. During this same time the Prague Orchestra did a performance of Bedrich Smetana’s \textit{Ma Vlast} (My Country), after which there was a standing ovation of fifteen minutes and the conductor kissed the score.\footnote{Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 158–9.} Periodic boycotts of newspapers occurred, in opposition to the censoring that always portrayed the Nazis in a positive light.\footnote{Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 2.} There was also bribery and corruption on the part of Czech members of the Protectorate administration, “…feeling that the greater the disintegration of the integrity of the administration, the more difficult things will be for the Germans.”\footnote{Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 170.} A popular form of resistance was listening to foreign radio broadcasts, especially the BBC. The death penalty was a possible punishment if caught.\footnote{Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 163.} Ninety-eight percent of all Czech
male voters became members of National Solidarity, the lone official Czech political party allowed in the Protectorate.\textsuperscript{449}

The American Consul General in Prague in 1939 listed in a dispatch a series of examples of the kind of Svejkish resistance that occurred, some with a decidedly leftward bent.

“The telephone wires of the Reichswehr authorities are frequently cut by mysterious hands. People in the motion-picture theatres make wisecracks, under the cover of darkness, over German newsreels. Czech waiters infuriate their German patrons by always handing them the \textit{Voelkischer Beobachter} face down. Germans sometimes find their parked cars decorated with the hammer and sickle, and the old CSR license tags (Czechoslovak Republic) changed to read USSR.”\textsuperscript{450}

A group of drunken Czech students early on in the occupation also raised the ironic cry of “We want colonies,” “Colonies for the Czechs” in a mockery of the German policies, which were absurdly taken seriously by German administrators as proof of “…Czech appreciation of the benefits which they would receive from Germany’s recovery of a colonial empire.”\textsuperscript{451} Active, armed resistance however, while it did occur, was at a low level, ineffective and mostly tragically pathetic. A few bands of partisans did develop in the Moravian hills by the summer of 1944, organized by communists and including handfuls of Soviet parachutists and escaped British POWs but their overall impact on the war was negligible.\textsuperscript{452} Due to the Nazi emphasis on culling Communists from the beginning of the occupation major Communist resistance groups did not come into existence until late in 1944. Traditional Sokol terms of address were used within the few

\textsuperscript{449} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 30.
\textsuperscript{450} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 209.
\textsuperscript{451} Kennan, \textit{From Prague after Munich}, 209.
\textsuperscript{452} Seton-Watson, \textit{The East European Revolution}, 149.
active resistance groups, further evidence of the Sokol’s impact on Czech nationalism and its fundamentally militaristic nature.\textsuperscript{453}

But why should there have been much active, armed resistance? The people who most likely would have led resistance movements were arrested and imprisoned or killed early on in the occupation. Those who were left within the resistance were the most ardent of Czech nationalists. For an example, Jan Vignati was one of them. A highly successful medical researcher working in the city of Olomouc, he stopped all work and publication when the occupation began, taking the attitude that he did not want “to do anything that might in any way enhance this period in the eyes of posterity.” He was later arrested on March 1, 1940, by the Nazis and tortured and imprisoned for 30 months before being executed. At his trial he defied his judges and said that the conflict between Czechs and Germans “had never changed and never would change.” In a final letter he sent to his wife before his execution he wrote that “The entire German nation that has placed power in the hands of these monsters is responsible to the full for all.”\textsuperscript{454} Yet during the occupation Jan Vignati was the exception rather than the rule.

\textsuperscript{453} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 55, 110–3, 176–7. Interestingly, there were quite a few Red Army soldiers who were part of the active resistance groups by the end of 1944, having either escaped from POW camps or having parachuted in. In tandem with this, most of the Czech active resisters were highly conservative but had a distinct apathy toward Communism. It was perceived by them as simply another political system among many and not a threat to Czechoslovakia. That this was the opinion among the most right wing of Czechs is indicative of the attitude among the population on the whole on the rest of the political spectrum. In the fall of 1944 many Soviet paratroop units were being dropped in the Bohemian lands, naming themselves after Czech heroes. This cannot have failed to have had an influence on popular opinion among the right wing Czechs in the resistance. 

\textsuperscript{454} \textit{In Memoriam Br. Jan Vignati, M.D.} (Brno: Circle of Friends of Jan Vignati, M.D., 1947), 18, 20–1, 34–5, folder 1044, box 137, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
Jaroslav Drabek, a Czech lawyer responsible for the prosecution of Karl Hermann Frank for war crimes, wrote from the perspective of just over a decade removed from the events that, “There is little doubt that Czech workers were equally opposed to the Nazi regime in Czechoslovakia as was the rest of the populace. But it is true that they liked to smoke more cigarettes, to enjoy German organized vacations, and receive advantageous food rations for extra work; otherwise they hated the Nazis as much as anyone else. They were simply less courageous than the intelligentsia and more materialistic – probably under the influence of the Marxist teaching.”455 One intellectual decades later wrote scathingly that “…during the war the working class behaved generally tamely and compliently worked for the occupying power for the meager enough privileges of special fat and tobacco rations.”456 An historian of the occupation, Vojtech Mastny, was more charitable and pointed out that “The frontiers between collaboration and resistance were fluid and often the same persons participated in both.”457 With Drabek we can see the nationalist narrative at play, accusing the Czechs of insufficient courage and will to fight the age old oppressor due to the pernicious influence of an alien ideology. Mastny though has the further insight of posterity.

But the Czechs did not stay passive and Svejkish forever. Irving Linnell, Consul General of the American consulate in Prague at the beginning of the Protectorate, ominously predicted in 1939 that, “…if the tide ever turns, Czech retaliation will be

456 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 301n24.
fearful to contemplate." A main task of the official underground resistance organizations was to keep their eyes and ears open and gather information for potential use at a later date. Beneš himself from London urged the Czechs to “Observe with secure equanimity everything that our enemy undertakes and the immoral plans to destroy our national position he prepares. And forget nothing.” Michel Foucault famously used the prison and the design of the Panopticon as a metaphor for modernity, in which behavior is regulated or disciplined due to constant surveillance. This metaphor works both ways however. Prisoners themselves can surveil within their prison, and watch their guards as intently as the guards watch them. The Czechs surveilled the Nazis intensely, and when the locks on their prison government were cut open, they were to use what they had observed to terrible effect.

The Slovaks during the occupation however are a different matter. George F. Kennan judged in May 1939 that there was widespread communist sympathy in eastern Slovakia. In Kennan’s opinion “[they] have no interest in communist theory but feel that communism with its Russian backing is the only possible weapon against Germany.” Later on, supporting that analysis, there was an exceptionally active Communist underground, and under the control of Communist partisans an anti-Axis Slovak National Council had been created in 1943. It did not recognize the government in exile led by Beneš in London, rather putting its trust in the Soviet Union. There was widespread

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458 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 178.
461 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 140.
discontent with the Tiso government by the summer of 1944, even among some of
government officials.\textsuperscript{462} In August 1944 the Slovak National Council played a leading
role in staging an uprising against the Slovak government led by Tiso and his Nazi allies.
It was supplied with weapons and 1,700 Czechoslovak paratroopers from the USSR.\textsuperscript{463}
Partisan units were also sent into Slovakia during this time by the USSR.\textsuperscript{464} The uprising
was put down within a month but it gave the Slovak communists who had led the
uprising favor among the Soviets and any Czechoslovaks who had strong anti-Nazi
sympathies. Two of the leaders of the Slovak National Council would both go on to
become General Secretaries of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Gustáv Husák and
Rudolf Slansky.\textsuperscript{465} However, beyond the uprising the life of the Slovak communists was
unremarkable. Alexander Dubček describes his life as a member of the Communist
underground until the uprising as “rather quiet,” consisting of doing his work as
mandated at a factory and attending Communist party meetings.\textsuperscript{466} During the occupation
support for communism grew exponentially. In October 1944, at a council meeting of
factory workers, there were calls for a Soviet Slovakia and a strong post war alliance with
the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{467}

The exiled government under Eduard Beneš worked frantically to protect the
interests of Czechoslovakia while it was under occupation. Feeling betrayed by the
Western Powers after Munich, already sympathetic to the Soviet Union by the late 1930s,

\textsuperscript{462} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 41.
\textsuperscript{463} Dubček, \textit{Hope Dies Last}, 54.
\textsuperscript{464} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 42.
\textsuperscript{465} Swain and Swain, \textit{Eastern Europe Since 1945}, 46.
\textsuperscript{466} Dubček, \textit{Hope Dies Last}, 30–40.
\textsuperscript{467} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 45.
and aware that there was a large contingent of Czech communists living in Moscow under exile, he visited Moscow from December 13 to 20, 1943, and signed a mutual assistance pact and treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union.\(^{468}\) This was an educated gamble on the outcome of the war but one that Beneš felt was worth taking. By most accounts Stalin put on a great show and reception for Beneš, seeing this as his chance to bring Czechoslovakia within his fold. Stalin held a banquet for Beneš that some of the Czech delegation found almost obscene in its opulence, and also declared that “the Soviet Union will never interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia.”\(^{469}\) This agreement was later upheld by the Soviet Union as a model of how other countries should enter into relations with it. Molotov himself said in early 1945 that, “[…] if there were standard treaties […] I replied that the one with Czechoslovakia might be taken as such.”\(^{470}\)

It worked. His secretary, Edward Táborský, recalled Beneš as being “all jubilant” at the end of the talks. At the villa they were staying in Beneš said “We have settled everything, we agreed on everything.”\(^{471}\) On his return to Czechoslovakia, Beneš said that, “I have been frequently asked whether Russia is sincere, and every time I have answered that I consider it as guaranteed that Russia will keep her promises. The development in Russia will not be in a basic conflict with the West.”\(^{472}\) In his report of the treaty to the State Council of the government in exile, Beneš called it “…[an] alliance


\(^{472}\) Peroutka, *Was Eduard Benes Guilty?* (1950), 9, Masaryk papers.
and harmonious co-operation of...Slav States for the defence of peace in this part of the globe.” 473 This judgment however is belied by an account from the then chief of the Czechoslovak Military Mission in Moscow, Colonel Heliodor Pika, who reported that in a conversation with Red Army officers in August 1941, they had predicted a social revolution would occur in Czechoslovakia and that, “When the Red Army is in the Czech lands, everybody will vote for the dictatorship of the proletariat.” 474

A further motivation for the pact was that the Soviet Union immediately recognized the Czechoslovak government in exile upon its formation, only after which did the British recognize the government, even though it was based in London. The British were also squeamish about guaranteeing that in the case of Allied victory the Sudetenland would be returned to Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union however declared quickly and loudly to Beneš that it would guarantee the return of the Sudetenland. The Soviet Union also pledged itself to restoring the entirety of the pre-Munich borders of Czechoslovakia. The United States in turn took the same stance as the British and was non-committal in its recognition of the government in exile and Czechoslovakia’s borders. Also like the British, the United States only recognized the government in exile after the Soviet Union did, as a response to Soviet diplomatic maneuvering. 475 The British gave Beneš to understand before the Soviet recognition of the government in exile that he was not to be considered as a head of state but as a private person. It seems not too far off the mark to hazard that Beneš felt demeaned and abused by the British and

473 Beneš, Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Benes, 258, Masaryk collection.
474 Lukes, On the Edge of the Cold War, 9.
475 Lukes, On the Edge of the Cold War, 21–2.
without support from them looked elsewhere, and found it in the Soviets.\textsuperscript{476} This cold and indifferent treatment by the main Western governments would come back to haunt them when the Czechoslovak government drew ever closer to the Soviet Union.

There was also the matter of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The leadership of the Party had fled/gone into exile in Moscow with the annexation of the Sudetenland and the occupation of the rest of the country. There they had set up a party in exile. As part of Beneš’ increased alliance with the Soviet Union, the government in exile also became committed to this party in exile. Beneš even for a time contemplated inviting the Communist leadership to join his government in exile in London.\textsuperscript{477} Beneš and the government in exile could not denounce the communists as this would be tantamount to scorning the Soviet Union, under whose favor and protection the party resided. And to scorn the Soviet Union would have put the sovereignty of the government in exile in a dangerous position, seeing as how the Soviet Union could easily withdraw recognition of it in retaliation, after which most likely would follow the withdrawal of Britain and the United States, as they had only granted recognition after the Soviet Union had. On their part, the party leadership refused to join Beneš in London but was broadly cooperative in its communication and support.\textsuperscript{478}

The fate of the Polish government in exile served as a warning of what could happen to the government in exile. The Polish government in exile had denounced the Polish communist party in Moscow, after which it was, in the words of Igor Lukes,

\textsuperscript{476} Peroutka, Was Eduard Benes Guilty? (1950), 11, Masaryk papers.
\textsuperscript{477} Mastny, The Czechs Under Nazi Rule, 149–50.
\textsuperscript{478} Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 35.
“condemned by Stalin as agents of Hitler and treated by the British and the Americans as a nuisance.” The historian Jacques Rupnik also backed this analysis in an interview from the early 1980s. “The political parties were working agreement and cooperation with the Communists. You do not have the Polish situation, with a Government-in-exile which is anti-Communist, and then a Communist-sponsored Lublin government, with the two fighting for legitimacy.”

To prevent a Polish situation, for better or for worse, the Czechoslovak government in exile increased their ties with the party. For their part, the Czechoslovak communist leadership in Moscow emphasized Pan-Slavism and solidarity between Czechoslovakia and Russia as points of agreement with Beneš, who had said that the 1943 treaty was “…possibly a model for all Slavs.” Mirroring this, Klement Gottwald, the leader of the Czechoslovak party, gave a speech after the treaty was signed in which he said that “The dreams of the noblest thinkers of our nations have been fulfilled: our Slav linden has found a powerful support in the mighty Russian Slavic oak.”

The treaty was also enthusiastically greeted by members of the government in exile. Hubert Ripka, Secretary of State in the exiled government and later Minister of Foreign Trade in the post-war home government, delivered a speech in 1943 in which he extolled the treaty. The Czechoslovaks now had a “friendship towards the Soviet Union in a spirit of solemn sincerity” and “the German Drang nach Osten should be broken for

479 Charlton, The Eagle and the Small Birds, 61.
481 Beneš, Pan-Slavism and Czechoslovak Policy During World War II, 151–2, Masaryk collection.
Gottwald was playing off imagery originally used by Jan Kollár, a Czech budítele and Pan-Slavist in the nineteenth century. Kollár had used the linden tree as a metaphor for Pan-Slavic solidarity and reciprocity. See Nolte, The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914, 24.
ever.” “I certainly do not exaggerate if I declare the conclusion of the Soviet-
Czechoslovakia Pact to be an exceptionally noteworthy success of our foreign policy.”

Ripka even published in 1944 a short book in Britain based on a series of lectures he had
given while in exile called *East and West*. The book extolled Czechoslovak
Russophilism, Czechoslovakia’s relations with the Soviet Union, and predicted long term
friendship and cooperation between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Ripka
would go into exile after the Communist takeover in 1948, publishing a book titled
*Czechoslovakia Enslaved: The Story of the Communist Coup d’Etat*. One wonders what
he thought in his later years of his conclusions in his speech and book.

As the advance of the Red Army into the Bohemian lands in the winter and early
spring of 1945 became seemingly ever more inevitable, the energy within the
Protectorate changed. Jan Stransky, a Czech politician active in the government in exile
and later an exile again after 1948, related that, “Every household studied maps and
followed the march of the Russian armies. In the meantime transports of tired German
soldiers were driving through villages […] and the Germans started to evacuate offices
and stores.” A vanguard of retreating German soldiers, partisans, and escaped prisoners
of war began to flood through the area. Czech women would steal Nazi flags, cut out the
swastika on white in the middle, and sew on red fabric to cover the hole, thus creating a

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483 Hubert Ripka, *East and West* (London: Lincolns-Prager, 1944), folder 663, box 80, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
red flag to wave for the advancing Soviets.\textsuperscript{484} By the spring of 1945 there were 7500 partisans in the Bohemian lands.\textsuperscript{485}

As the Reich infrastructure collapsed completely around March, hundreds of thousands of German civilians and soldiers fled west, hoping for better chances under surrender to the Americans. Concentration camps survivors, the guards having abandoned their posts, wandered into the Protectorate from the northeast and tens of thousands of Czech workers who had been sent to Germany began to come back any way they could.\textsuperscript{486} Partisan attacks became common, as did SS reprisals in return. There were also death marches of concentration camp prisoners moving through the area, their goal being to kill the participants.\textsuperscript{487}

Hitler committed suicide on April 30 but the German troops who still remained in Prague were mostly SS and refused to surrender.\textsuperscript{488} An American army under George Patton also advanced into Bohemia, but stopped at the city of Plzen/Pilsen, just 95 kilometers or 59 miles from Prague. Eisenhower refused to order Patton to move on Prague, as apparently a deal had been made with the Soviet Union by Great Britain and the United States that Czechoslovakia would be part of the Soviet Union’s “zone of operations.” Thus it was the Soviets who entered Prague and gained the reputation of liberating it, doing much to bolster their own and communism’s reputation.\textsuperscript{489} Patton was

\textsuperscript{485} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 50.
\textsuperscript{486} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 227.
\textsuperscript{487} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 41.
\textsuperscript{488} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 45–6
\textsuperscript{489} Charlton, \textit{The Eagle and the Small Birds}, 55–8.
angry at these orders and was of the opinion that the Americans should have gone on to at least the Vltava River, without worrying about angering the Soviets. In retrospect it seems that Patton’s judgement was the better.

The Czechs, with the presence of the Red Army nearby, took up arms in Prague on May 5th. The fighting lasted until the 8th, a day after Germany’s official surrender. The New York Times wrote in its article on the end of the fighting in Prague, “Thus the first democratic capital to fall to Hitler’s horde suffers the last agony of war in Europe.” In the uprising, 935 Germans and 1,693 Czechs were killed, 589 of them Sokol members. The fighting was particularly brutal. SS soldiers used Czech civilians as shields in front of their tanks. In one house SS soldiers barricaded themselves inside with a group of women and children. When they realized that they were losing and would not escape the house alive, they killed the women and smashed in the heads of the children. A pamphlet published immediately after the war maintained that SS soldiers broke into air raid shelters to pull out women and children, whom they strangled, slit their throats, put their eyes out, or tied to the front of their tanks. Two captured German soldiers were hung head down by their feet from an arch and set on fire. Some people in a crowd that gathered to watch lit cigarettes off the bodies. The Old Town Hall, a central

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490 Zeman and Karlsch, Uranium Matters, 23.
491 Sayer, Coasts of Bohemia, 235.
493 Frommer, National Cleansing, 26, 28.
494 Stransky, East Wind Over Prague, 152.
496 Bryant, Prague in Black, 235.
building, was set on fire as well.\footnote{Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 42.} On the 10\textsuperscript{th} the fighting was over, the Soviets had entered Prague, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia no longer existed.

Peter Demetz, now Professor emeritus of German Language and Literature at Yale, lived through the occupation as a young man. His description of the entrance of the Soviet soldiers into Prague follows: “Prague citizens celebrated the arrival of the Soviet soldiers in an overwhelming wave of emotions, flowers, embraces, flags and sincere gratitude, and they had little reason to heed the rumors of the misconduct of Soviet troops in distant Moravian villages. Ancient Pan-Slav hopes merged with the sudden joy that the occupation and the war had ended. On the streets and in official celebrations poets, politicians, and generals dedicated themselves to the idea of Czechoslovak-Soviet brotherhood.”\footnote{Peter Demetz, \textit{Prague in Black: The Years of German Occupation, 1939–45: Memories and History, Terror and Resistance, Theater and Jazz, Film and Poetry, Politics and War}, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 230.}

On the darker side of Pan-Slavic relations, there was a Russian émigré population from the Russian Civil War that had survived in Prague. The Soviets in the chaotic first few days of their entrance into the city hunted down them down. According to Igor Lukes, “Some were dragged from their homes and shot on the street; those arrested were sometimes never seen again.”\footnote{Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 53.} In his autobiography Alexander Dubček recalled that he tried to find a friend of his right after the war who was the son of White Russian exiles. His friend had disappeared and according to people Dubček asked, “They [the Soviets]
were picking up all Russian exiles…They had them all on a list.”

During its advance toward Prague the Soviet Union had also annexed Ruthenia, the far eastern edge of Czechoslovakia. The Red Army stayed in Czechoslovakia until November 15. The NKVD was certainly active in Slovakia during its time there, where the Red Army had a more overwhelming presence, arresting suspected members of fascist organizations. Membership in a fascist organization was presumably a wide category. Interestingly, during his victory speech on May 9, 1945, Stalin characterized the war as a “struggle of the Slavic peoples” against Germany.

Stalin also pursued an active policy of characterizing the genocide of the Jews as a genocide of “Soviet citizens” and while occasionally fixating on Hitler’s plan to “above all things force out and exterminate the Slavonic nations,” he never brought up the Jews. Whether Stalin was anti-Semitic is beyond the scope of this work but it seems that Stalin was concerned with clamping down on the specificity of the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews and with portraying it in Soviet and Slavic terms in order to encourage unity within the Soviet Union and of the Slavic nations with the Soviet Union.

During the occupation years the native bourgeoisie was liquidated and replaced with a German one. The remaining Czechs were made laborers of one kind or another. George F. Kennan already estimated in 1940 that, “…the Czechs have been thrown at

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500 Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 57.
502 Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War*, 109. The American army withdraw at roughly the same time, leaving Czechoslovakia free of any occupying troops, a unique case among the many countries who were liberated or defeated by either army. See Macura, *The Mystifications of a Nation*, 47.
503 Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 58.
least 50 percent of the way back toward the status of a nation of peasants, servants, and laborers…” Class and ethnic tension became fused. To hate the Germans, to love one’s fellow Czechs and Slavs, to resent the bourgeoisie, and to have solidarity with one’s class was all one and the same for the Czechs. In the two years immediately after the war, from May 1945 to May 1947, the tension exploded.

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506 Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, 238.
CHAPTER 4

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR - THE EXPULSION OF THE GERMANS AND THE COMING OF COMMUNISM

Some statistics defy full understanding. It is estimated that the Czechs expelled from Czechoslovakia three million Germans either to occupied Germany or Austria from May 1945 to May 1947. The exact number is unknown. Government sanctioned expulsions or “transfers” did not start until early 1946 but 660,000 to 950,000 Germans had already been expelled unofficially by then in a period called the “wild transfer.” Anti-German sentiment among the Czechs was fierce and universal. During the Prague uprising Heda Margolius Kovaly gave a glass of water to a dying German soldier and was told by a nurse that, “If I didn’t know you had been in a concentration camp, I’d make sure you paid for this. […] Take care of the Czechs and let the Germans go to hell!” In Prague in the first few days after the war an old woman was pushed out of a window, “a member of a visiting German orchestra was beaten to death in the street because he could not speak Czech,” and German patients in hospitals were tracked down and killed. German women were beaten, whipped, and their heads shaved, and sometimes red ink or oil was poured over them. Czech women who had had sexual

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509 Wingfield, Flag Wars and Stone Saints, 263.
510 Kovaly, Under a Cruel Star, 43.
511 Demetz, Prague in Danger, 235.
512 Gellately, Stalin’s Curse, 231–32.
relationships with Germans, so called “horizontal collaborators,” received the same
treatment. One memoirist of the time described seeing “…a group of Czechs forcing two
German women to lick a huge swastika chalked on the pavement. The tufts of peroxided
hair strewn about indicated the punishment they had already received.” Vigilante
killings of Germans and suspected collaborators were rampant throughout all of
Czechoslovakia in the first few postwar weeks. In the town of Postoloprty a mass killing
of Germans occurred, with 763 bodies being later unearthed. A riot in Usti nad Labem
on July 31 1945 resulted in the deaths of at least 200 Germans.

In a speech he gave on May 16th 1945, immediately after the war ended, Beneš
called for a “definitive clearance of Germans [and] German influence from our
country.” That same day he also said that, “…The Czechs and Slovaks…[have
begun]… a new beneficent life for new ideals, for new, exalted aims, for a new
humanity—a humanity better, more complete, more beautiful—a humanity such as was
understood and proclaimed by Masaryk.” In a speech four days earlier he had said that
the Germans “had ceased to be human.” There would be no humanity for them. On
July 10, 1945, at a commemorative service, Beneš said that “all Germans are responsible
for [the massacre] at Lidice.”

Beneš had been formulating plans for the expulsion of the Germans since September 1938, and had pushed hard throughout the war to get the Allied powers to agree to it.\textsuperscript{520} He had the support of most of the members of the government in exile, some of whose members published scathing pamphlets in support of the expulsions.\textsuperscript{521} The title of one pamphlet was particularly unambiguous, “German Minorities–Spearhead of Nazism: Henlein’s Deceit.”\textsuperscript{522} Stalin had already given his approval to Beneš for the planned expulsions by the time of the Yalta conference in early February 1945. During talks in March 1945 in Moscow to decide the future government of Czechoslovakia, Beneš again received confirmation, via Molotov, that the Soviet government approved of the planned expulsions.\textsuperscript{523} Just before he left for Moscow, in late February 1945, Beneš had also released an official decree that stipulated terms of retribution to be taken against the Germans and collaborators.\textsuperscript{524} On August 2, 1945, Harry Truman, Stalin, and Clement Attlee signed an agreement giving official approval of German expulsions from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, with no limits sets for how many Germans Czechoslovakia could expel.\textsuperscript{525} It was officially decided on November 20, 1945, that approximately 750,000 Germans would be transferred to the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany, and 1,750,000 to the American zone.\textsuperscript{526}

\textsuperscript{520} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 28.
\textsuperscript{521} Hubert Ripka, \textit{The Future of the Czechoslovak Germans} (London: Czechoslovak-British Friendship Club, 1944), folder 638, box 78, BC 45, Masaryk collection and Prokop Drtina and Ivan Herben, \textit{My a Němci} (Prague: Melantrich, 1945), folder 672, box 80, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
\textsuperscript{522} \textit{German Minorities–Spearhead of Nazism: Henlein’s Deceit} (London: Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Service, 1943), folder 830, box 96, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
\textsuperscript{524} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 72.
\textsuperscript{525} King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 196.
\textsuperscript{526} \textit{Statement of Mr. Jan Masaryk, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the Provisional National Assembly on March 6th, 1946}, 31, folder 806, box 95, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
The German writer Günter Grass at this time was a teenage POW in a hospital held by American forces in far western Czechoslovakia in the town of Marienbad/Marianske Lazne. In his memoirs he describes being guarded by an American GI: “And we couldn’t help wondering whether he was there to keep us from escaping or to keep the Czech militia, humiliated for so long by the German presence in their country, from taking revenge.”527 The former Sudetenland became a lawless zone for a few weeks, a temporary Wild West to which opportunists of all stripes came to take what they could, while they could.528

The rape of German women by Soviet soldiers was widespread. The Germans who got off comparatively lightly in the first year were forced into temporary concentration camps before being sent out of the country on trains. By the end of May 1945 Germans were being held in up to 500 sites throughout the country. In a perverse reversal, Theresienstadt itself was put back into use to hold Germans. In the greater Prague metro area up to 25,000 Germans were held in approximately forty sites, including schools, prisons, and soccer stadiums. In June 1945 all these sites were consolidated into a handful of camps, holding 20,000 to 40,000 people.529 The guards at these camps and sites were a mixture of policemen, partisans, Red Army soldiers, former resistance members, and former prisoners of the Nazis. They gained a fierce reputation for rapes and beatings, taking revenge. Attempts to stop the violence in the first few weeks were met with charges of being a “Germanophile” and protecting collaborators.

528 Frommer, National Cleansing, 49.
Any vigilantes or guards that were arrested over allegations of abuse were almost always soon let go without charges.\textsuperscript{530} Above a camp outside the town of Budweis/Budějovice in the summer of 1945 there was a sign in Czech which said “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”\textsuperscript{531} Rations for all Germans except well proven anti-fascists was reduced to the level that had been given to Jews under the Nazis during the war.\textsuperscript{532}

Germans were commonly identified by having swastikas painted on the backs of their clothing and taunted with calls to “go home to the Reich.” The category of German was very loose. Official policy was to check the Czechoslovak census of 1930 and the Nazi census of 1939 to see what the person had put down as his or her nationality, but unofficially far more factors also counted.\textsuperscript{533} Sometimes just being able to speak German qualified.\textsuperscript{534} This stipulation would cause many problems for the new government as it tried to sort out who was Czech and who was German due to the linguistic/national amphibians, the same problems that the Nazis had faced. One organization from the northeast of Bohemia said “In our borderlands there are many inhabitants who could just as easily demonstrate their Czech origin as their German.”\textsuperscript{535} Attempts to split the difference were a bureaucratic nightmare. During the occupation some people had switched between identifying as Czech, then as German, and then back to Czech after the war due to their ambiguous heritage. Those who were seen as having been too close to the Germans were retroactively made Germans and subject to expulsion and

\textsuperscript{530} Frommer, National Cleansing, 55–9.
\textsuperscript{531} King, Budweisers into Czechs and Germans, 193.
\textsuperscript{532} Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 63.
\textsuperscript{533} Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 209.
\textsuperscript{534} Demetz, Prague in Danger, 236–7 and Wingfield, Flag Wars and Stone Saints, 263–4
\textsuperscript{535} Frommer, National Cleansing, 199–206.
imprisonment. In some instances even Jewish concentration camp survivors were classified as Germans.\footnote{King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 194, 199.}

Czechs who had married Germans were often punished as well, the marriage being seen as a form of collaboration.\footnote{Frommer, *National Cleansing*, 49.} In a typical account by a German woman, Czechs came to her house with guns, forced her to leave with no possessions, and sent her to a temporary holding area at a local prison barracks where she spent three days before being shipped out on a coal train. The coal train brought her and other Germans to a station a few miles from the border from which they were made to march until they crossed the border. It is estimated that between 19,000 and 30,000 Germans were killed or died as a result of the wild transfers.\footnote{Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 238–9} Hundreds of German civilians and POWs were sentenced to forced labor in uranium mines under the retribution decrees of Beneš.\footnote{Zeman and Karlsch, *Uranium Matters*, 56–7.}

There was however one special group of Germans who were barred from being expelled or emigrating on their own choice: skilled or trained workers. There was a shortage of trained workers in the borderlands regions and economics took priority. Thousands of skilled German workers were prevented from leaving Czechoslovakia. Approximately 140,000 Germans were still in Czechoslovakia by November 1946, of whom 86,640 were skilled workers and their families.\footnote{Frommer, *National Cleansing*, 258.}

Jan Stransky, a Czech National Socialist and friend of Petr Zenkl, wrote a line about the expelled Germans in his postwar memoir cum propaganda piece that is

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{[536]} King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 194, 199.
\item \footnote{[537]} Frommer, *National Cleansing*, 49.
\item \footnote{[538]} Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 238–9
\item \footnote{[539]} Zeman and Karlsch, *Uranium Matters*, 56–7.
\item \footnote{[540]} Frommer, *National Cleansing*, 258.
\end{itemize}
representative of the Czech attitude towards the Germans as a whole: “Many did not realize and many had forgotten the collective injury by which they had brought their fate upon themselves.” The expulsion had widespread support across the entire political spectrum, from liberal democrats to hardline communists. The leading democrat of the time, Prokop Drtina, said that “The Germans are foreigners, carpetbaggers, and colonizers […] they were always but an open sore on our body.” The communist newspaper *Rude Pravo* (Red Justice or Red Truth) explicitly linked the expulsions with Czech nationalism, holding that the expulsions would undo the centuries of defeat after the Battle of White Mountain. Beneš in a governmental meeting on October 28, 1945, even obliquely referred to the expulsions as “…the final solution to the German question….” The conflict with the Germans was read backward into the distant past, such that a history of Czechoslovakia published in 1947, referring to political events in 1212, said that “The age-long efforts of the German Emperors to subjugate the Czech countries were completely frustrated by this stroke.” The conflict was already supposedly age-long in 1212! Edward Táborský, Beneš’ personal secretary, accused the Germans of evil intentions from the beginning of the founding of Czechoslovakia: “When Austria-Hungary collapsed in 1918 and the Czechs declared their independence, the German population of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia thought the moment opportune for breaking up the 1,000 year old frontiers of the Czech State.”

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542 Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War*, 104.
Beyond simple revenge and ethnic chauvinism, a motivation for these expulsions was also fear of Germany. A resurgent Germany was the bogeyman of the end of World War II and immediate post-World War II politics and often invoked as a reason for the expulsions of Germans throughout Europe. A pamphlet published by the government in exile in Britain in 1944, when it was obvious that Germany would eventually lose the war, held that “To make German aggression impossible once and for all, German minorities in non-German states must be prevented from being used as tools of Germany’s expansionist policy” and that expulsion of the Germans would “once and for all, prevent the use of a German minority in Czechoslovakia for Pan-German aims, which are a deadly menace to the Czechoslovak people, as well as most serious danger to the other nations also.”

As well, during the summer of 1945 in Czechoslovakia there were widespread conspiracy theory reports of underground Nazi partisan groups, part of the infamous Operation Werwolf. Fear of Werwolf plots and sabotage whipped the Czechs into a frenzy, contributing to the brutality of the expulsions.

Fear of Germany helped to drive people into, if not a positive opinion of the Soviets and communism, at least a sense that it was the best option available. If the communists could prevent Germany from ever rising again, then much could be excused them. A poll was held in mid-1947 throughout various countries that asked questions related to peoples’ opinions on political issues. To the question, “Will Germany attempt to start a new war in the future?” 81 percent of Czechs polled answered yes.

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Communists won the majority of votes in the 1946 elections, the cry of one woman that “Now we are really safe from the fascists!” could not have been the only one of its kind. Rosemary Kavan observed that, “Like many Czechs, she saw the communist victory, together with the Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance, as a guarantee of no further betrayal of Czechoslovakia by its allies.”

There was the sense among the Czechoslovak population that only by supporting everything that was non-fascist i.e. non-German, could they heal the country of the occupation. Heda Margolius Kovaly believed that “For many people in Czechoslovakia after the war, the Communist revolution was just another attempt to find the way home, to fight their way back to humanity.” More pointedly, since the Nazis had portrayed the Soviet Union and communism as the ultimate evil, and the Nazis themselves were seen as evil incarnate, then the Soviet Union and communism must be good. Fear of Germany was also an element in Beneš’ diplomacy with the Soviet Union during the war. In a speech on November 11, 1940, he said that “I regard the present war as the decisive historic opportunity to bring to an end once and for all time the pan-German ‘Drang nach Osten.’ This same war has proved that in order to do so, real, friendly and loyal cooperation between Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union is essential. (italics are his)” For Beneš, if Czechoslovakia did not align itself now with the most anti-Nazi power i.e. the Soviet Union, a future catastrophe brought about by a resurgent or victorious Germany would be inevitable.

549 Kavan, Freedom at a Price, 41.
551 Beneš, Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš, 239–40, Masaryk collection.
As Hugh Seton-Watson observed as early as the 1950s, “So profoundly did the Czechs fear the future threat to their independence from a Power which did not even exist, that they were prepared in the meantime to hand over this very independence to the puppets of another Power.”\footnote{Seton-Watson, \textit{The East European Revolution}, 361.} The historian Igor Lukes has also stated, in a damning analysis, that, “The greatest share of responsibility for the loss of Czechoslovakia’s democratic identity rests with the Czechs. Blinded by an irrational fear of Germany, the nation tolerated and accepted in its midst the aggressive minority that had embraced Communism.”\footnote{Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 15.} In November 1947, the Minister of Information, a Communist, wrote a front page piece in a major newspaper in which he gave the standard postwar Czech view of the German situation: “A firm and indivisible alliance with the Soviet Union secures us against the possibility that Germans should ever lay hand on Czech or Slovak territory. It secures us further against the possibility that even a single German transferred beyond the borders of our fatherland will ever return to the Sudetens and here prepare our end.”\footnote{Quoted in King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 204.}

The official expulsions starting in 1946 were less violent but not necessarily more humane. Districts and cities put out official instruction notices and letters in their areas telling the Germans what they were required to do and where to go, on threat of arrest with the result of being shipped out of the country anyway. In July 1946 the system was
running so smoothly that twelve trains carrying 14,400 Germans were leaving the country every day.\textsuperscript{555} A sampling of one of the notices/letters gives a taste of the process.

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“Expulsion form from Turmitz, near Aussig.

We inform you that you and your entire family will be transferred to the territory of the German Reich.

You are to report at Tyrsova ul. (the former barracks) in Tumitz at 6.30 a.m. on 16 August 1946.

You are to hand over:

1. This expulsion form.
2. All living room and house keys attached to a plate bearing name and address.
3. A list of all articles of furniture and equipment.
4. Objects of value (gold, silver, savings bank books, Czechoslovak and foreign currency, etc.).
5. Household identity card.

Non-observance of this order will be punished.

Instructions: All evacuated persons must be equipped with warm linen, clothing, footwear and blankets. Food for 7-9 days. In addition the following objects may be taken with one: wedding ring, silver watch (for persons over eighteen), small objects (souvenirs), and objects of daily use, up to a weight of 50 kilograms per person. These things must be loaded on hand carts.”\textsuperscript{556}
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The judgment of a Czech theologian in 1946, appears representative of polite opinion. He wrote: “Nobody is enthusiastic about it [the transfers]. The measure was taken rather as an indispensable step on the on the road to a better and more secure

\textsuperscript{555} Radvanovský, “The Transfer of Czechoslovakia’s Germans,” 224.
\textsuperscript{556} Theodore Schneider, ed, \textit{The Expulsion of the German Population From Czechoslovakia: A Selection and Translation From “Dokumentation Der Vertreibung Der Deutschen Aus Ost-Mitteleuropa, Band IV, 1 und IV, 2} (Bonn: Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, 1960), 323.
organization of post-war Europe." This opinion was simply false. Villages, cities, and streets that had German names were christened with new Czech ones. In the case of the town of Budweis/Budějovice, the former Deutsches Haus or German House/Club was renamed Stalinův dům or Stalin House. In the town’s graveyard even German language inscribed tombstones were removed. The use of the Czech word for the Sudetenland, Sudety, was outlawed in May 1945. The Czechoslovak citizenship of Germans was revoked on August 2 1945. In Budweis/Budějovice the news of the stripping of the Germans’ citizenship was greeted with a celebratory demonstration and a beer festival at which a band played the Czechoslovak and the Soviet national anthems.

The speaking of the German language was banned as was the teaching of any history of the Germans that had occurred within what were now the Czechoslovak borders. Students who lived in the historical border areas of the former Sudetenland were also banned from even studying the German language. There was hostile behavior against non-Czechs who interacted with the Germans. Soldiers in the American zone in Czechoslovakia after the war who socialized with German women faced with suspicion. Likewise, an American diplomat who served in Prague in the aftermath recalled that American foreign service staff speaking German in public received “horrible, dirty looks.”

559 Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*, 269.
561 King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 196.
In tandem with the expulsions there was also a judicial campaign against collaborators, made up of what were called People’s Courts and following a series of decrees issued by the government that lasted up until the takeover. Just over 700 people were executed and approximately 168,000 were tried, with 69,000 being convicted on various charges and forms of collaboration.\footnote{Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 3, 321.} Over 20,000 were imprisoned for varying lengths of time.\footnote{Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 140.} Slovakia had its own statute of retribution separate from the rest of Czechoslovakia, under which the death penalty was mandated for any citizen who was found guilty of having “publicly denigrate[d] the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the allies, or their state systems and armies.”\footnote{Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 76n42.}

One execution in particular bears special attention. On September 6, 1945, Josef Pfitzner was publicly hanged (\textit{Staromestske namesti}) in Prague. A former professor and active member of the Sudeten German Party, he was the Nazi mayor of Prague for the entirety of the occupation. The hanging was meant to evoke remembrance, as well as a culmination, of a past event. The 27 Bohemian noblemen who had rebelled against the Habsburgs were themselves hanged and beheaded in 1621, thus escalating the Thirty Years’ War and marking the beginning of Habsburg, i.e. German, control of the Bohemian lands and Slovakia, according to the Czechoslovak nationalist narrative. An estimated 30,000 people attended. Right before the rope dropped, Pfitzner said, “I die for
In yet another case of irony, only one of the executed Bohemian lords had spoken Czech, the rest were German speakers.

All of these actions were little protested against. There was at least one condemnatory pamphlet though, published in the United States in June 1946 by an organization called the American Friends of Democratic Sudetens. It was signed and endorsed by luminaries such as John Dewey; Roger Nash Baldwin, one of the founders of the ACLU; and Oswald Garrison Villard, one of the founders of the NAACP, among a variety of professors, journalists, and labor leaders. The pamphlet opposed the expulsions and mistreatment of Germans by Czechs and accused Czechoslovakia of having channeled the spirit of Hitler in its actions. Sadly, while its moral integrity is laudable, its actual effect was nothing and serves today merely as a good mark toward the reputation of its signers.

In 1848 one of the main buditele, Karel Havlíček, had written a poem about the relationship between the Czechs and Germans. One wishes that he had not been so prescient.

Farewells, farewells, how difficult they are
oh, how it pains the heart
when we must part
the Czech/Bohemian land from Germany.

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567 Frommer, National Cleansing, 97–9.
568 Hrabal, Total Fears, 151.
When we said farewell, both of us wept,
the Germans shedding
tears of bitter sorrow,
the Czechs of heartfelt joy.

You or I must die, not the both of us,
whoever wins shall be lord
and sing to the other amen,
then bury him.\textsuperscript{570}

By the end of May 1945 everything had come together. The Germans were
defeated and being expelled. The Soviets had liberated Prague and eastern
Czechoslovakia. Democracy and fascism were discredited. Nationalism was burning hot,
a nationalism with certain particularities that made it amenable to socialism of a sort.
There was no longer a middle or upper class after the combined assault of the Nazi
occupation and the German expulsions, resulting in a mass proletarian level society. The
analysis of this situation by the historian Bradley Abrams is insightful. “In itself the
exhaustion of the middle classes need not be strengthening the radical left in the region,
but the physical weakening of the class with both the ability and inclination to oppose
radical social change is certainly a factor that must constantly be borne in mind.” In a
metaphor, the social classes that served as dams against drastic social change were now
gone and a flood was brewing. Beneš himself in a speech he gave on December 15, 1945,
when he received an honorary Doctorate of Law declared that “we cannot return” to

\textsuperscript{570} Quoted in King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 189.
liberal society, and “We accept the idea that liberal society is theoretically and in practice overcome.”

The Germans were not the only group to suffer at the hands of the Czechoslovaks after the war. There was a Hungarian minority in southern and eastern borderlands of Slovakia, as well as a Slovak minority in the borderlands of Hungary. Having fought on the side of the Axis, from the Czechoslovak view the time had come to enact justice and vengeance. On August 2 1945, Beneš revoked the citizenship of all Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, and in 1946 approximately 44,000 Hungarians were removed from their homes and moved to other areas in Czechoslovakia, while 70,000 were sent to Hungary itself. As a result of talks with Hungary, approximately 73,000 Slovaks who lived in Hungary were moved to Slovakia. Special commissions were sent to the border areas to prep residents and to accept applications to move from either. These commissions were given the fullest cooperation of the Hungarian government. In 1947, a further 11,642 Hungarian families were moved from Slovakia to the borders of Bohemia. Much less has been written, at least in English, about this counterpart ethnic cleansing to that of the Germans.

With liberal democracy discredited by Munich, and the perception of the success of the Red Army in defeating the Nazis, sympathy to communism and socialism was

571 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 18, 332n3.
572 Swain and Swain, Eastern Europe Since 1945, 55.
573 Lowe, Savage Continent, 247–8.
574 Swain and Swain, Eastern Europe Since 1945, 55.
575 Statement of Mr. Jan Masaryk, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the Provisional National Assembly on March 6th, 1946, 29, folder 806, box 95, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
576 Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 144.
high. As Igor Lukes has noted “[…] Stalingrad and the Red Army stood for the putative superiority of the Stalinist system.”\textsuperscript{577} This sympathy was well played upon by the Soviet Union. The Communist Party put emphasis on the phrase “The Soviet Union has never betrayed us” in its newspaper \textit{Rude Pravo}. An OSS agent in Prague in May right after the fighting ended noted that a popular opinion was “Our cries for help were heard only in Moscow, the Western Powers merely turned a deaf ear.” Munich as a symbol of total betrayal by the West was widespread after the war. In the most extreme postwar rhetoric it was held that “The unprecedented betrayal… [showed] that our people have their most reliable ally in the people of Slavic Russia.”\textsuperscript{578} There was also a popular Czech image, at least in the very immediate aftermath of the war, of the Red Army soldiers as cheerful and fun loving, playing accordions on tanks.\textsuperscript{579}

Pan-Slavism and a sense of Slavic unity with Russia was particularly resurgent, causing Beneš himself to write a book, published in 1947, entitled \textit{Reflections on Slavism}. In it he warned that: “The enormous victory of the USSR in the World War II gave it such great political and power prestige among the Slavic nations that the mystical idea of new Russian messianism with a communist varnish forced itself, almost automatically, not only on Soviet actors, but also the simple masses in the other Slavic nations.” However, in this same work he also said “All Slavic nations are by their nature exceedingly democratic and naturally exhibit stronger egalitarian tendencies than the other European nations.”\textsuperscript{580} The contradiction in these statements between wariness of the

\textsuperscript{577} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 17.
\textsuperscript{578} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 107.
\textsuperscript{579} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 54.
\textsuperscript{580} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 164–5.
USSR due to its communism but also an embrace of it due to its supposed Russian Slavic and democratic nature is a reflection of the contradiction in Beneš’ own thoughts and political actions. Most indicative of the cultural attitude are the words of the Czech intellectual, Vaclav Černy from an article in 1945: “That the old Russophilism of our culture is gaining quasi-official certification alarms me in no special way. It is only an official seal on what has been long dictated by a natural and unforced love.”

Pan-Slavism was now even seen as an ancient tradition of the Czechs. A history from 1947 referring to the Middle Ages said that “…the Czech milieu found its flowering in the conception of a Czech national spirit and moreover in the broader Slav consciousness, growing out of a kinship of language and common interests.”

Setting a precedent in the relations of power early, the Soviets insisted that negotiations for the future government of Czechoslovakia and the transition of power and infrastructure from the Red Army take place in Moscow, not in Prague. Beneš and representatives of the Catholic People’s Party, the National Socialists, and the Social Democrats were essentially summoned to Moscow again in March 1945 to decide the future of their country. Worried about Communist control of the government, he said that Communists would only get control of the key Ministry of the Interior over his dead body. However, Beneš did not die and the Communists got the Ministry of the Interior as well as that of defense, information, education, and agriculture. Ferdinand Peroutka said that, “The Moscow climate was irresistible.” In Moscow the talks had essentially

consisted of negotiations with the Czech Communist Party over the extent of their involvement in the new government. Beneš took no direct part in talks and the formulation of post war policies was left to discussions between the Communist Party, the National Socialists, and the Social Democrats.\(^{585}\) Beneš was to remain president, with various ministerial positions divided among “four parties, the Communists, Social Democrats, National Socialists, and the People’s (Catholic) Party.” In the end the Communists got a quarter of the ministerial seats, but they were the most powerful and influential ones. Zdenek Fierlinger, a Social Democrat and longtime Soviet fellow traveler, was appointed Prime Minister.\(^{586}\) Klement Gottwald, the leader of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, was appointed deputy Prime Minister. Jan Masaryk, Tomáš Masaryk’s son, who had been active in the exile government, was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs as an appeasement to the non-Communist parties and to establish a continuity with the First Republic before the war.\(^{587}\)

This was a major victory for the Communists on the road to power, as will be seen below. The Ministry of the Interior was a position which was a goal for many postwar communists in their respective governments to have. The Hungarian politician and anti-communist Ferenc Nagy called the position “the all powerful portfolio” due to its control over the police, passports, visas, and newspaper operating licenses.

\(^{585}\) Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 47.

\(^{586}\) Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War*, 37. For detailed information of Fierlinger’s Soviet sympathies and activities during the war that favored the Soviets while he was a member of the government in exile see Zeman and Karlsch, *Uranium Matters*, 63–75.

\(^{587}\) Luza and Vella, *The Hitler Kiss*, 216, 238.
Communists obtained the position in multiple countries, including Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Finland.588

In a report drafted by the OSS on July 4, 1945, titled “Report on Czechoslovakia: Pivot Point of Europe” it was determined that Czechoslovakia was “the master key to Europe” and that it was “a chessboard, where the next move in the big game between East and West is being played.”589 It would be naïve not to think that similar conclusions were being drawn by the Soviet Union and the Czechs themselves. A.J.P Taylor had also determined in a lecture at the Czechoslovak Institute in London on April 29, 1943, that Czechoslovakia was a “keypoint in Central Europe” and had a large role in maintaining the balance of power in Europe.590 Stalin in retrospect then was disingenuous, or at least ideologically coy, telling the Czech delegation and Beneš in March 1945 that in Central Europe he wanted there to be “a communion in which all have the same rights, all are equal, and no nation is oppressed.”591

In a volume of memoirs first published in 1947, Beneš expressed an opinion that shows his tragic attitude to the Soviet Union: “I never agreed with the policy of the Western democracies, which for so many years isolated the Soviet Union and excluded it from co-operation in Europe and in the world. It seemed to me that ultimate victory would go to the side to which the Soviet Union ultimately gave its support. I therefore tried systematically, and before it was too late, to incline it towards the ranks of the

588 Lowe, Savage Continent, 333.
589 Lukes, On the Edge of the Cold War, 10–11.
590 Lukes, On the Edge of the Cold War, 17.
591 Lukes, On the Edge of the Cold War, 234n18.
European democracies.”\textsuperscript{592} Incredibly, Beneš claimed that he was trying to democratize the Soviet Union, when all the evidence points to the conclusion that the Soviet Union was co-opting Beneš and Czechoslovakia. This kind of arrogant humility, that Beneš thought he himself would somehow alter the political outlook of an out and out Communist state for the better, simultaneously endears one to him while also making him pitiable. Up till the very end of his life he appeared to believe the best of the Soviet Union and its intentions. He truly believed that the purges of the 1930s really were the attempt of the Soviet Union to root out a conspiracy against Stalin.\textsuperscript{593}

On April 5, 1945, the new Czech government met for the first time in the town of Kosice in eastern Slovakia\textsuperscript{594} and issued its political and economic plan, called the Kosice Program. It contained plans to “nationalize industrial plants, coal mines, banks, and the insurance industry.” Also outlined was an agrarian reform campaign which “amounted to transferring the land confiscated from aristocrats and from the Sudeten German and Hungarian minorities to small owners.” Towns and villages would organize “national committees” which were in basic concept and execution similar to the worker’s councils (soviets) of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{595} The new government made big changes quickly. In the week before a government meeting on October 28, 1945, Beneš signed more than forty decrees.\textsuperscript{596} That government meeting marked the official celebration of the nationalizations. It also happened to be the date of the 27\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the founding of

\textsuperscript{592} Beneš, \textit{Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš}, 6, Masaryk collection.  
\textsuperscript{593} Zeman and Karlsch, \textit{Uranium Matters}, 65. 
\textsuperscript{594} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 73. 
\textsuperscript{595} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 40. 
\textsuperscript{596} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 186.
Czechoslovakia, a coincidence of dates that was not accidental.\textsuperscript{597} The government purposely worked to have the nationalizations held on that day to link the nationalizations with the broader history of the nation and make them seem as the culmination of the struggle of the Czechoslovak people.

Most property, industry, and business in Czechoslovakia had been essentially nationalized under the Nazi economic policies, and had been left in worker hands as the war ended. The Nazis had “seized and exploited up to 75 percent of the country’s industry.”\textsuperscript{598} When the Czechoslovak government became functional again it took over these nationalized properties, industries, and businesses and many workers refused to go back to a private ownership system.\textsuperscript{599} In May 1947 workers at a textile factory went on strike in the town of Varnsdorf to protest their factory being given back to its pre-war owner.\textsuperscript{600} As Jan Stransky perceived, “It is a fact which many people still do not realize: the fact that it was the Germans and their regulated wartime economy that gradually created deeper changes in the economic and social structure of many European States than could ever have been achieved by a Socialist revolution.”\textsuperscript{601} Therefore the new Czechoslovak government essentially took over an already nationalized economy. Nationalization campaigns did still take place, bringing almost the entire economy under state control. With a number of Communists as part of the new government, they worked to place Party members as managers of nationalized industries and companies, and so

\textsuperscript{597} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 72.  
\textsuperscript{598} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 102.  
\textsuperscript{599} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 20.  
\textsuperscript{600} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 148.  
\textsuperscript{601} Stransky, \textit{East Wind Over Prague}, 170.
spread low-level Communist influence throughout much of the country. Numerous Factory Councils were set up, organizations of workers in factories similar to unions in concept but much more powerful in reality. They formed their own militia groups to protect themselves and their factories during the post-war chaos, which lasted through the immediate postwar period until the February crisis. Not explicitly siding with any party at the time, they would play an important role in helping the communists to power.

By January 1946 61 percent of the Czechoslovak workforce was in the state sector. Beneš had signed decrees in October 1945 that nationalized an incredible range of the economy:

“[…] joint stock banks, coal mines, power plants, insurance agencies, iron and steel works, rolling mills, printing presses, engineering works, optical works, armament and munitions plants, chemical industries, glass works, limestone quarries, brick works, cellulose factories, paper and cardboard manufacturing plants, sawmills, veneer factories, plywood factories, cotton-spinning mills, wool-, silk-, and artificial-fiber-weaving mills, textile works, sugar and alcohol refineries, industrial distilleries, food enterprises in general, and large breweries. All mining and iron industries, more than 90 percent of power and gas plants, and over 70 percent of the remaining heavy industries […]”

In late 1946 an economic plan was introduced called “The Two-Year Plan for the Renewal and Reconstruction of the Czechoslovak Economy.” With this two-year plan Czechoslovakia became the second country behind the Soviet Union to take on a planned economy. According to Alice Teichova, “By the spring of 1947, nationalized industries and confiscated companies employed approximately 80 per cent of all workers and

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602 Zenkl, The Plague of Communism (nd), 7, Masaryk papers.  
603 Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 67–8.  
604 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 21.  
disposed of over two-thirds of Czechoslovakia’s total production capacity.\textsuperscript{606} The intellectual position of the time was that, “We may or may not like it, but the general moral, political, and economic atmosphere has become such that a system based on individual profit and ownership would prove inadequate and fail.”\textsuperscript{607}

In the postwar government the positions of Ministers of the Interior and Agriculture were filled by communists. These ministries were in charge of the distribution and governance of the land and properties of the now expelled Germans. By October 1946, approximately 1.8 million Czechs were moved onto these lands, most of whom were either peasants, laborers with no land previously or small landholders from densely populated areas in the interior of the Czech lands.\textsuperscript{608} These formerly German-owned lands made up roughly 2.6 million hectares or 11,500 square miles, 8.8 percent of all of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{609} Such a gain to such a large number of Czechs via these ministries headed by communists surely did much to boost the image of the communists and their policies amongst the Czech population. Put more bluntly by Keith Lowe, the communists “literally bought the support of millions of peasants.”\textsuperscript{610} This huge redistribution of land was seen by the Czech Left as the triumphant completion of the land reform that had taken place during the early interwar period. It gave further credence to the Communist claim to be in sync with earlier currents in Czechoslovak politics and

\textsuperscript{606} Teichova, \textit{The Czechoslovak Economy, 1918-1980}, 92, 102.  
\textsuperscript{607} Taggart, \textit{J.L. Hromadka (October 12, 1946)}, 13 February 1976, Masaryk collection.  
\textsuperscript{608} Seton-Watson, \textit{The East European Revolution}, 180.  
\textsuperscript{609} Seton-Watson, \textit{The East European Revolution}, 266 and Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 21, 205.  
\textsuperscript{610} Keith Lowe, \textit{Savage Continent}, 335.
history. The Ministry of Agriculture was explicit that this land reform was meant as a prelude to the collectivization of agriculture on a model based on the Soviet Union.611

Even for explicitly non-communist politicians, these measures were seen as just and appropriate. President Beneš, the most respected Czechoslovak politician of the time, asked rhetorically and grandiosely in his memoirs of 1947, “Can the Soviet Socialist system live side by side with the new and transformed democracy which has in essence accepted the principles of nationalisation of the means of production and private profit and which seeks to apply them courageously, reasonably and step-by-step in addition to other so-called Socialistic measures? Yes or no? Again I answer: Yes!”612 This was the wrong answer and one taken by almost all non-communist politicians, who looked up to and followed Beneš’ example.

Food hoarding and black market trading were rampant by the end of the war and in its immediate aftermath. The new Czechoslovak government punished such behavior harshly, carrying sentences of five to ten years in prison. “[…] the crime of enriching oneself at the expense of the state or its citizens during the war […]” was an easily used excuse to go after anyone who come out of the war with any kind of valuable capital or resources.613 Any “black market bourgeoisie,” so to speak, that had formed was eliminated via such measures, further leveling socioeconomically the population. Tons of valuable goods were seized, “…pork, lard, and wine to cigarettes, cash, and even cars…” Rude pravo, the Communist daily, exhorted its readers to report on black market activity.

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611 Glassheim, Noble Nationalists, 71, 222.
612 Beneš, Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš, 284, Masaryk collection.
613 Keith Lowe, Savage Continent, 48.
“It’s not denunciation. It’s a patriotic and social act!” It arguably gave the new government credibility in the eyes of the population because it was perceived to be enacting justice against corruption. In tandem with this, the Soviet Union provided much needed food aid for the malnourished Czechoslovak population, increasing the average calorie rations from 1300 to 1800-1900 by the end of 1945.615

On top of it all, the government also enacted a radical currency reform in October 1945 in order to clear up the currency mess left over by the war. Czechoslovak citizens were to deposit all paper currency of whatever kind they had into accounts at banks and post offices, which would then be frozen. In return for depositing their paper money, citizens would receive up to 500 units of the new Czechoslovak currency, the revamped crown. In practical terms this meant that any wealth or capital that had been accumulated in paper currency was gutted and leveled to 500 crowns for everyone.616 By these measures the entire population was brought to the same socioeconomic level, whether by rising or falling depending on where they had stood before. Fittingly, by March 1946 the newly legal Communist Party had over one million members, up from 28,000 at the end of the war.617 By 1946 the Communist Party won a majority in the elections and began building influence.

In the 1946 elections, the last before the takeover, the Communist Party was unquestionably dominant. Due to the eleven-year gap caused by the war since the last

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615 Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 56.
617 Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 12.
election, over two million people voted for the first time.\(^{618}\) Out of a total of 7,102,889 votes cast the Party received 2,695,227, the most of any party and 38 percent of the electorate. The runner-up, Zenkl’s National Socialist Party, received 1,298,980 votes, giving it 18.3 percent of the electorate.\(^{619}\) The Communist Party published a political manifesto for the election that emphasized the party’s commitment to the common Czech people. It was endorsed by “841 prominent writers, poets, actors, artists scientists, and public intellectuals.”\(^{620}\) A spontaneous parade occurred in Prague in which people shouted “Long live peace” and “Long live socialism.”\(^{621}\)

As a result of this election the Communist Party, “gained 78 percent of district national committee chairs in the Bohemian lands.”\(^{622}\) It had 40.2 percent of the electorate in Bohemia and Moravia, 30.4 percent in Slovakia, and 38 percent overall.\(^{623}\) In the areas in which Czechs had moved onto formerly German held property, especially the Sudetenland, the Communist Party won approximately 75 percent of the ballot.\(^{624}\) In the words of Bradley Abrams, “[…] one can have little doubt that overseeing the completion of a land reform […] stood on the credit side of the Communists’ balance sheet.”\(^{625}\) It must be kept in mind that the main political parties, outside of the Communists, were also explicitly socialist. Just because they were not Communist does not mean that they were

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\(^{618}\) Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 125.
\(^{619}\) Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia*, 258. It must be pointed out that parties designated right-wing had been banned immediately after the war, which surely affected the voting demographics. See Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 245.
\(^{620}\) Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War*, 133.
\(^{621}\) Kavan, *Freedom at a Price*, 41.
\(^{622}\) Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 261.
\(^{623}\) Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War*, 135.
\(^{624}\) Gellately, *Stalin’s Curse*, 235.
\(^{625}\) Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 22.
not on the Left. They were part of a distinct anti-Marxist Left. The National Socialists themselves frequently claimed at this time that they regarded themselves as a party of the Left.\textsuperscript{626} When the total vote for socialist orientated parties is tallied for the 1946 elections, including the Communist party, they received approximately 80 percent.\textsuperscript{627}

These were free elections. The Minister of Justice at the time, Prokop Drtina, not a Communist, and later an exile, wrote that, “I consider it necessary to stress that in 1946 Czechoslovakia still had free elections.” The American Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Laurence Steinhardt, also vouched that the elections were free.\textsuperscript{628} By the end of 1947 the Communist Party had approximately 1,394,000 members; 11.6 percent of the population.\textsuperscript{629} The Communist Party was also the most widespread of all the political parties, “having offices in 96 percent of localities across the republic…”\textsuperscript{630}

The feeling among the people on the ground in Czechoslovakia was essential in all this. Many found communism attractive. Milan Kundera, writing in 1969 about his enthusiasm for communism at this time, said that it had appealed to him because it seemed to put him at “the steering wheel of history.”\textsuperscript{631} Hopes were high even among anti-communists. Ivo Duchaček, an official who served the government in exile in London and was a liaison to the American army as it moved into western Czechoslovakia, in an interview in the early 1980s expressed his sense of the times. “I

\textsuperscript{626} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 114.
\textsuperscript{627} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 132.
\textsuperscript{628} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 58, 304n15.
\textsuperscript{629} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 162.
\textsuperscript{630} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 57.
\textsuperscript{631} Lukes, \textit{On the Edge of the Cold War}, 112.
think we were all prisoners of the general atmosphere during World War II […] The atmosphere was, I think, that the war had done something to the Soviet Union and the Communist Party, and that what we would be facing in 1945 would not be the Communist Party of the Purges but the Communist Party which ran what they called the Great Patriotic War, a nationalized Communism, the ‘Russian Way’, with a ‘Czech way’ becoming part of the national tradition."632 Heda Margolius Kovaly, a Jewish Czech survivor of the Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz whose husband was later purged and executed, also captured the mentality of the time in her memoir: “In Czechoslovakia, it would all be different. We would not be building socialism in a backward society under conditions of imperialist intervention and inner turmoil, but at peace, in an industrially advanced country, with an intelligent, well-educated population. We would leap over a whole epoch.”633

The so called “special path” to socialism was all the rage among the Czechoslovaks. Klement Gottwald met with Stalin in the autumn of 1946, at which Stalin gave his approval of the Czechoslovak “special path” to socialism, holding that Czechoslovakia did not have to follow the Soviet model. Stalin had earlier suggested in a talk with British Labour Party leaders that there were two roads to socialism, the Russian and the British, setting a precedent for other countries to also have their own path.634 Gottwald announced this decision to the nation with great fanfare.635 The Tito-Stalin split

632 Charlton, The Eagle and the Small Birds, 56.
634 Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 138.
635 Gellately, Stalin’s Curse, 235, 310.
had not occurred yet and Tito was held as a hero and an example to follow. An independent path to socialism, under the mentorship of the Soviet Union, seemed a real possibility, per the experience of Yugoslavia. Eduard Goldstucker, a Communist Party member at this time, later ambassador to Israel and political dissident, in an interview expressed the same feeling. He wrote, “We thought that with that democratic tradition, and the possibility of solving our Czech/Slovak problem amicably, we stood the chance of creating a European Socialism different from Tito’s – and different, of course, from Stalin’s.”

Political diversity was low. Symbolically, the People’s Party, the token conservative Catholic party, at its first postwar meeting in May 1945 had the stage flanked by portraits of Stalin and Edvard Beneš. The Social Democratic Party, nominally not communist, enthusiastically proclaimed its Marxist and revolutionary credentials after the war. Some in the leadership even suggested a merger with the KSČ. The KSČ refused but in many areas the Social Democratic Party only existed because it was artificially created and propped up by the KSČ. The People’s Party was the only party to declare itself non-socialist, but given the portrait incident this may not have counted for much. Czech politicians unanimously denounced Churchill after he gave his Iron Curtain speech on March 5 1946.

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636 Kovaly, Under a Cruel Star, 63.
637 Charlton, The Eagle and the Small Birds, 114.
638 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 72.
639 Myant, Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 121, 123, 161.
Rosemary Kavan in her memoir said of the period right after the takeover that “We predicted that the wheels of progress would revolve at double speed, now that the lost capitalist spokes had been removed.” And if anything says something about the public mood, it is the books they were buying. By the end of 1947 approximately 140,000 copies of The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), close to 100,000 copies of On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union by Stalin, and 60,000 copies of Klement Gottwald’s Deset Let (Ten Years) had been sold. Deset Let was a collection of Gottwald’s speeches and articles from 1936 to 1946. All were of a strict communist perspective, from speeches in support of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War to an article on the eighteenth anniversary of Lenin’s death to a speech in Brno in late 1945 titled “Friendship with the Soviet Union Forever.” It seems that Gottwald wanted to portray himself as having impeccable communist credentials, while also capturing the zeitgeist of the postwar years to boost his reputation. If there were any qualms on the part of some, the common attitude was that of needing to break eggs to make an omelet. People were aware of the violence in the Soviet Union but as Heda Margolius Kovaly characterized the thinking of the time, “Who, today, would condemn democracy for the Terror of the Jacobins after the French Revolution?”

640 Kavan, Freedom at a Price, 44.
641 Abrams, The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation, 330n80.
643 Kovaly, Under a Cruel Star, 61.
In less abstract terms, Alexander Dubček, working in a yeast factory at the time, recalled the postwar years as calm and hopeful, seeing what he perceived to be concrete gains in social justice being made.

“Like most of my co-workers, I supported wholeheartedly the policies carried out by the governments since the liberation: on the whole they promised a better life, and nothing was more important. What we saw was old injustices redressed by steps such as land reform, nationalization, and general health insurance. With most other people, I also believed that the plague of unemployment would not come back in a system of economic planning that had started with the Two Year Plan of 1946.”

Josef Hromadka, a prominent Czech Lutheran theologian, in conversation in October 1946, held that there was, “…nothing ‘ideological’ or propagandistically artificial behind Czechoslovak interest and sympathy for the Soviet Union…The political instinct of the common man, and the terrific changes in the very structure of European history have directed the Czechoslovak political and international orientation toward the Soviet Union.”

Jiří Hajek was a Czech intellectual and politician who later in life became a dissenter against the Communist government and was a founding member and signer of the famous Charter 77 with Vaclav Havel. He spent the war as a forced laborer and in 1946 published articles in which he examined this experience in light of his then deeply held socialist beliefs. He argued that the experience of the Czechoslovaks, especially young Czechoslovaks, as forced laborers was crucial to the postwar socialist boom. In his analysis, young intellectuals and workers, due to the forced labor initiatives, broke

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644 Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 60.
through normal social barriers and interacted on an everyday level with each other. The intellectuals came to know what it was like to be a worker, further reinforcing their latent belief in dialectical materialism after seeing the Great Depression and the rise of fascism, becoming “… a strong anchor in our most inner personal life…” while the workers learned about and embraced socialism from the intellectuals. Thus it was perfectly natural for there to be a socialist resurgence.\(^\text{646}\) This is a persuasive analysis, particularly coming from someone of Hajek’s credentials but more in-depth empirical research needs to be done.

Communists also made an interesting use of Czechoslovakia’s historical Hussite movement. Jan Hus was characterized as a revolutionary and early communist, encouraging the common people to rise up against the Catholic Church and the nobility. One communist intellectual, Zdenek Nejedly, held that “Today Hus would be the head of a political party…And his party would be very close—about this we can be certain—to us Communists.”\(^\text{647}\) It was held that there was a continuity of Czechoslovak history from Hus to the postwar socialist, a manifestation of the special historical character and destiny of the Czechoslovak people. This was in line with high level Czechoslovak intellectual nationalism that held that Hus was the first major break away from the Catholic Church, inspiring Luther and the Reformation, and later the Enlightenment and modern democracy and liberalism.\(^\text{648}\) To push the line of development to Communism and socialism was not much of a stretch at all. Once again then, to be a good Communist was

\(^{646}\) Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 149–50.

\(^{647}\) Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 101.

nothing less than to be a good Czechoslovak, and vice versa. Hus and Marx were on the same historical path. At this time there was even a book published titled, *Communists: The Inheritors of the Great Tradition of the Czech Nation*. Not unsurprisingly, Petr Zenkl condemned this comparison, emphasizing the contradiction between the materialism of Communism and the worship of God by the Hussites.\(^{649}\) At an anniversary celebration of Hus in 1947 the Communist Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vlado Clementis, characterized Hus as an early socialist and a fighter against German imperialism.\(^{650}\)

The realm of cultural influence became a contested ground. Communist intellectuals actually attacked a scholarly work on Czech court poetry for encouraging sympathy with the West because it claimed that this poetry was influenced by French and Italian troubadours.\(^{651}\) Bradley Abrams has put it well, “The Czech radical left performed a simultaneous two-sided transformation: the Communist Party became super-patriotic, and Czech history was reinterpreted to make the communist movement the logical inheritor of the best values of the nation, by portraying the Communist Party as walking in the footsteps of the greatest figures of Czech history.”\(^{652}\) The Communist Party promoted the slogan “Without November 7, 1917, there would not have been a May 5, 1945” implying that there was a continuous line of development between the Russian Revolution and what was called by the Communists the “May Revolution” or the uprising in Prague.\(^{653}\) A history of Czechoslovakia of the time emphasized the role of the

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\(^{650}\) Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*, 270.

\(^{651}\) Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 324n57.

\(^{652}\) Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 89.

\(^{653}\) Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*, 271.
peasantry in the “birth” of the nation, saying that the *budítele* “…highly esteemed the Czech peasant as representative of the Czech revolting classes. The peasants were for the first modern Czech patriots the guarantee of the national existence, they were the future leading class of the nation.” František Palacký became even more revered than he had already been before the war. He was now seen as a prophetic figure, foreseeing Nazi aggression and the supposedly saving role of Russia in liberating the Czechs at last from German dominance as part of their Pan-Slavic brotherhood.

As a final piece, at the time of the February takeover, a quarter of Czechoslovakia’s population was between fifteen and thirty. Having been born between 1918 and 1933, this was a generation that had come of age immediately before, during, and after the war. The stark choice, fascism or communism, while immediate for many Europeans of the 20th century, was particularly so for the Czechoslovaks, being geographically sandwiched between the regimes which exemplified the ideologies. Democracy was largely discredited due to the perceived betrayal at Munich by the Western democratic states. Fascism was not a choice at all. This left communism. One of

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655 One pamphlet celebrating Palacký, published in 1947 by the Prague Historical Club, concluded by saying: “During the second Great War, which was kindled again by German aggression, Palacký’s faith in a defeated Germany by a European coalition of freedom loving and democratic nations was confirmed for a second time. This time Russia really played the liberating roll [sic] which Palacký visualized at the end of his life. The great Czech patriot, the European, and believer in humanity, combined with the victory of the Slavonic cause his faith and hopes that ‘mankind will then attain his noble calling in justice and peace.’ There is no better wish than that this prophesy [sic] of the historian and his ethical and political faith should be proved in reality.” See Jaroslav Werstadt, *František Palacký a Náš Osvoboženský Boj* (Praha: Vydal Historický Klub, 1947), 35–6, folder 15, box 3, BC 45, Masaryk collection.
656 Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 260.
the very first postwar reforms in Czechoslovakia was the lowering of the voting age to 18. Eric Hobsbawm gets right to the heart of the matter:

“…so many of its communists (especially intellectuals, sprung from a party with genuine mass support both before and after the Nazi occupation) were profoundly shocked by the contrast between the communist hopes they still retained and the reality of the regime. As so often in Nazi-occupied Europe, where the party became the heart of the resistance movement, it attracted young idealists whose commitment at such a time was a guarantee of selflessness. What, other than hope and possible torture and death, could someone expect who, like a friend of the present author, joined the party in Prague in 1941?”

On July 4, 1947, Marshall Aid was accepted by the Czechoslovak government. Before this though the U.S. had cancelled a loan to Czechoslovakia in 1946 due to accusations that Czechoslovakia was engaged in “unjustified accusations […] that the US is pursuing an imperialist economic policy.” The U.S. had also stopped almost all economic assistance to Czechoslovakia by the late spring of 1947. However, at a diplomatic meeting held in Paris from June 26 to July 3, Vyacheslav Molotov, the premier Soviet diplomat, had concluded that Marshall Aid was meant to undermine the Soviet Union and form an anti-communist bloc. On July 2 he and the Soviet delegation walked out of the conference, full of denunciation. Czechoslovakia could not be allowed to establish total independence from the Soviet Union and potentially veer off the path to socialism. On July 7 the Soviets ordered the Czechoslovak government to repudiate their prior acceptance of Marshall Aid. However, Klement Gottwald was now

657 Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 34.
659 Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 162.
660 Swain and Swain, *Eastern Europe Since 1945*, 60.
661 Pleshakov and Zubok, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 106.
caught in a bind. He told Soviet representatives that he and the Communist Party were part of a coalition government and that the government would not support reneging on Marshall Aid.

Stalin was furious when he heard this. He ignominiously summoned Gottwald and his ministers to Moscow on July 9 and forbade them to take part in Marshall Aid. Stalin met Gottwald in private first, during which he raged at him. Later he met the rest of the delegation and was calm. Stalin stated that, “the Soviet people could not tolerate such a flagrant disruption of Slav unity,” and that “for us this question is one of friendship between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.” The very next day on July 10 the Czechoslovak government reversed its decision and refused Marshall Aid. The Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk, the son of Thomas Masaryk, had taken part in the Moscow meeting. In his words, “I went to Moscow as the Foreign Minister of an independent sovereign state. I returned as a lackey of the Soviet government.” This marks the point from which the Communist push for control of the government increased dramatically. The “special path” was now seen by the Soviets as a divergence from, not an alternate route to, socialism. As a pair of Russian historians of the Cold War, Constantine Pleshakov and Vladislav Zubok, have pointed out, “The Marshall Plan

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663 Pleshakov and Zubok, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 51.
665 Swain and Swain, *Eastern Europe Since 1945*, 60.
marked a watershed in Stalin’s postwar foreign policy, from relative relaxation to ruthless
determination.”

That fall of 1947 the Communist Information Bureau or Cominform was founded, increasing the centralization of European communist parties under Moscow’s control, likely in response to the Marshall Plan. There was also the failure of the Italian and French communist parties to gain power and their expulsion from the government of their countries. It seems that in light of these failures and the Marshall Plan, Stalin put pressure on the Czechoslovak Communists via the Cominform to gain control of the country as soon as possible. Czechoslovakia also had good ties with Tito at this time, right when he was coming under suspicion and infamy from Stalin. Gottwald’s daughter was even married to a high ranking member of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was fear that Czechoslovakia might go down the Titoist road and become independent of the Soviet Union. Assertion of control had to be made. There was also the matter of a major drought that had struck in 1947. The harvest was very poor and lowered living standards were expected to hit in a few months. The KSČ feared that the National Socialists would take political advantage of the drought and use it against them, further galvanizing them to put on political pressure at the first opportunity.

It also did not hurt Soviet interest in Czechoslovakia that there were active uranium mines in the northwestern district of Jachymov, in the Sudetenland within the Erzgebirge/Krušné Hory mountains. Albert Einstein himself had written a letter to

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667 Pleshakov and Zubok, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 74.
President Roosevelt in 1939 about the dangers of nuclear fission, in which he specifically mentioned the uranium potential of Jáchymov and the threat of Nazi control over it. The Soviets sent out geologists in the summer of 1945 to explore the area for its uranium potential, sending highly positive reports of Jáchymov’s potential in the fall.\(^670\) On November 23, 1945, a secret treaty was signed between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, giving the Soviet Union exclusive access to Czechoslovakia’s uranium and oversight over the mining operations. The treaty was signed on the Czechoslovak side by none other than Hubert Ripka, the previously mentioned initial enthusiast for Czechoslovak/Soviet relations and later exile.\(^671\)

In August 1946 a three-day military conference was held in Jáchymov that was attended by “Soviet atomic scientists and nuclear energy specialists.” It was agreed between the Czechoslovak government and the Soviet Union that an extra 4,500 Czech miners and engineers would be sent to the uranium mines to increase extraction and processing.\(^672\) In at least the first three years after the takeover thirty freight trains of uranium ore were being shipped to the USSR each month to fuel its nuclear weapons program.\(^673\) Thousands of German POWs were made to work in the mines, and between 1945 and 1948 Czechoslovakia sent 143 tons of uranium from its mining operations to the Soviet Union.\(^674\) The Soviets created after the takeover forced labor camps similar to the gulags for prisoners to mine uranium. These camps were active up until 1960 and

\(^{672}\) Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War*, 137.
variously housed political prisoners, petty criminals, and German POWs still in captivity from the war.\textsuperscript{675} One of the prisoners would be Jiří Mucha, Alfons Mucha’s son. Arrested in 1951 on charges of espionage, he would spend years in the camp at Jáchymov. During his imprisonment he wrote a diary on contraband notebooks smuggled to him by a miner. It was later published, first in English in 1967 as \textit{Living and Partly Living}, and in Czechoslovakia a year later during the open period of 1968 as \textit{Studené slunce} (Cold Sun.)\textsuperscript{676}

Political tensions were raised on the eve of 1948 by violence in Slovakia. Ultra-right wing Ukrainian nationalist guerillas called Banderovci were making their way west to get outside of the Soviet political orbit, creating chaos as they went. There were fears that the Banderovci were linking up with underground remnants of the wartime Slovak state and planning an armed uprising. Slovaks called for a crackdown by the government on any suspected so-called reactionaries, along with increased government power to deal with the situation, feeding the Communist sense that a time of decisive political action was imminent. Beneš remained unperturbed this, believing that in the event of any political crisis that half the police and almost the entire army would back him rather than the KSČ. A special military unit was sent to Slovakia to take care of Banderovci.\textsuperscript{677}

Matters came to a head in 1948, a year of potent anniversaries; Charles University in Prague (600 years), the first Slavic Congress and the revolutions of 1848 (100 years),

\textsuperscript{677} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 174–5, 196, 205.
the founding of the country (30 years), and the Munich Agreement (10 years).\textsuperscript{678} The Communists had been pushing their influence hard since the Marshall Aid debacle. Tensions between the political parties were high. In September of 1947 bomb packages had been sent to Jan Masaryk, Petr Zenkl, and Prokop Drtina, all non-Communists and leaders in the National Socialist party, a crude assassination attempt that all of them survived. Investigations into the bombs implicated members of the Communist party, but the police were perceived to be lackluster in pursuing charges due to Communist pressure.\textsuperscript{679}

At the start of February, the National Socialists accused the Communists of manipulating the police force for their own ends, the bomb case large in their minds. Amid the debate, multiple non-Communist police chiefs in Prague were fired. Ministers from the non-Communist parties banded together and demanded that the Communists reinstate the police chiefs. When the Communists stalled in doing so, twelve non-Communist ministers from the National Socialists, the People’s Party, and the Democratic Party from Slovakia, resigned in protest on February 20\textsuperscript{th}, seeming to bank on the contingency that Beneš would dissolve the government and create a new one or refuse their resignations. It seems that all parties had decided on the conflict over the police to be the final proving ground for all the other lingering political disagreements and crises. Beneš neither rejected the resignations nor dissolved the government.

\textsuperscript{678} Abrams, \textit{The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation}, 98.
\textsuperscript{679} Luza and Vella, \textit{The Hitler Kiss}, 243.
Realizing that they were now the majority of the government after the resignations, the Communists took their chance and mobilized.\textsuperscript{680}

On February 21, 1948, at the beginning of the takeover period, which ran from the 20-25, at least 100,000 members of various trade unions gathered in the Old Town Square of Prague in solidarity with the Party and to hear speeches. As Chad Bryant put it “Encouraged by the Communist Party, hundreds of thousands of protestors filled city and town squares across the country…”\textsuperscript{681} On February 24 all trade unions coordinated a one-hour general strike from noon to one which involved millions and during which virtually all work in the country ceased.\textsuperscript{682} 200, 300 workers took part in Prague alone.\textsuperscript{683} Militias of armed workers were formed and took over factories and industrial centers.\textsuperscript{684} A Congress of Factory Councils was convened on February 22, pooling together representatives of almost all the factories in Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{685} The Congress in turn organized workers into groups called Action Committees, essentially militias. They were recognizable by their blue overalls and the guns they carried in their belts.\textsuperscript{686} A Central Action Committee was formed to oversee all the Committees. The Central Action Committee was attended by representatives of all political parties but the National Socialists, along with the commanders of the army. The military unit that had been sent to Slovakia to fight the Banderovci was recalled to Prague on the 20\textsuperscript{th} and on the 23\textsuperscript{rd} its

\textsuperscript{680} Wingfield, \textit{Flag Wars and Stone Saints}, 325–26, and King, \textit{Budweisers into Czechs and Germans}, 205.
\textsuperscript{681} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 264.
\textsuperscript{682} Zinner, \textit{Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia}, 211.
\textsuperscript{683} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 203.
\textsuperscript{684} Kavan, \textit{Freedom at a Price}, 44.
\textsuperscript{685} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 202.
\textsuperscript{686} Charlton, \textit{The Eagle and the Small Birds}, 75.
members took up positions guarding government members, public spaces, and communication centers. On the 23rd a further entity was formed, the People’s Militia, another armed group on top of the Action Committees, composed of KSČ members and charged with policing and maintaining order in factories. On the 24th public meetings of the parties whose members had resigned over the police crisis were banned. The night of the 24th to the 25th Gottwald presented Beneš with a proposal for the composition of a new government. Desperate to break the crisis and restore order, and also in the face of massive popular support, Beneš agreed.

The new government retained a handful of political parties and a constitutional framework but it was all overwhelmingly dominated by members of the KSČ and their supporters. Beneš throughout the February crisis was unsure of what exactly to do and was afraid of a civil war. As the situation developed, the choice for him broke down into either opposing the communists completely or giving in to their demands. The first option courted civil war and Soviet intervention. Beneš was tragically placed in an inverse of the situation he had been in years earlier with the decision of whether or not to resist the Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland after Munich. As with that time, Beneš chose to not see Czechoslovak blood be shed. Incredibly, there was only one violent incident throughout the crisis period. Students supporting the National Socialists held a demonstration on the 26th which led to a confrontation with police, during which a policeman’s machine gun accidentally went off and wounded a student. 687 On February 25, Gottwald spoke to a

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crowd of 50,000, declaring Communist control of the government.\textsuperscript{688} Stalin gave his full approval to the takeover, calling it a constitutional coup and a revolution from below. He even offered support in the form of Soviet troops if they were needed.\textsuperscript{689} In the coming months 28,000 people were dismissed from their government posts.\textsuperscript{690} In April 1948 it was decided that the Social Democratic Party and the KSČ would merge, a decision made by the KSČ leadership and whose terms were wholly accepted by the Social Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{691} Czechoslovakia could now dubiously boast that its workers were united as one once again.

In a fitting, if unintentional, heralding of the new era, \textit{Rude Pravo} on its front page of March 11, 1948, had two blaring headlines. “Action Program of the New Gottwald Government,” and “Jan Masaryk Dead.”\textsuperscript{692} Jan Masaryk had fallen from a window of the Černin Place, headquarters of the Foreign Ministry, the day before. There is still controversy over whether his death was a suicide, a murder, or an accident.

The Sokol had managed to survive the war and was on track to hold its first postwar revival \textit{slet} in mid-1948. As a result of the takeover, the \textit{slet} was a sad and pathetic affair that supported the ousted government. The Sokol was disbanded by the Communists and went underground. Another \textit{slet} would not be held until 1994.\textsuperscript{693} The Communist government attempted to co-opt the tradition of gymnastics in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{689} Swain and Swain, \textit{Eastern Europe Since 1945}, 67.
\textsuperscript{690} Frommer, \textit{National Cleansing}, 328.
\textsuperscript{691} Myant, \textit{Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia}, 225.
\textsuperscript{693} Nolte, \textit{The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914}, 180.
\end{footnotesize}
Czechoslovakia created by the Sokol by establishing in 1955 a mass gymnastics movement called *Spartakiáda*. *Spartakiáda* gathering events were held every five years, at which 10 to 15,000 people took part in mass synchronized gymnastic routines. *Spartakiáda* was meant to symbolize the unity of the people under communism and would last until the collapse of communism in Europe.⁶⁹⁴ A better example of the Stalinist dictum “Nationalist in form, Socialist in content” i.e. the usage of nationalist tradition against itself, would be hard to find.

Beneš hung on as President until June after the takeover, broken in spirit. Right up until the takeover itself he had believed the best of the Communists. Edward Táborský recalled in an interview that Beneš in the three postwar years before the takeover regularly granted Communist requests for political placements and rarely if ever criticized the party.⁶⁹⁵ In poor health, he resigned on June 8th and retired to his villa in the countryside south of Prague. He died there on September 7th. Before his death there were covert plans to smuggle him out of the country and turn him into a cause célèbre against the Communists. Beneš is reported to have initially agreed to these plans but then quickly changed his mind and refused to leave the country, on grounds of sickness.⁶⁹⁶ Perhaps there was also an element of duty involved, that of the captain going down with the sinking ship.

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Two weeks before he died he sent a secret message to various Czech political exiles who were close to him, including Ferdinand Peroutka: “They are all liars – without exception; that is the common trait of all Communists, especially the Russian Communists. My greatest mistake was that until the last moment I refused to believe that Stalin had kept lying to me, cold-bloodedly and cynically, in 1935 as well as later on, and that his assurances to me and Masaryk were an intentional and purposeful fraud.”697 In the coming decades the Communist government would discourage any study of the immediate three year postwar period.698

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697 Peroutka, Was Eduard Benes Guilty? (1950), 10–1, Masaryk papers.
698 Frommer, National Cleansing, 4.
Conclusion

To reiterate the basic argument, economic forces drove Czech and Slovak speakers into conflict with German speakers, from whence competing nationalist movements grew and destabilized the Habsburg Empire, as well as consolidating the very identities of “Czechoslovak” and “German” in the Bohemian lands. These forces resulted in an independent Czechoslovak state, economically strong and still retaining ethnic conflict with a German minority. This became an emphasis of Nazi ideology, with an eye on Czechoslovakia’s economic strength, with the accompanying occupation of World War II as a result Czech nationalism, holding a distinct strain of philo-Russian Pan-Slavism, evolved under these conditions to embrace the possibilities of socialism and even communism as a desirable political movement.

Is there anything to be learned from all this? Czechoslovak history post 1948 is fairly well known, defined by the events of 1968 and 1989. 1968 certainly should be viewed anew in light of the Czechoslovak socialist movement in the first three postwar years and the history behind it. Dubček’s call for “socialism with a human face” is nothing more than a call for a return to the “special” Czechoslovak road to socialism. Pan-Slavism as well deserves a more central place in the history of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. Largely forgotten today, the evidence points to its importance in the self-conception of the Czechs and Slovaks, a driving force behind antagonism to the Habsburgs, the Germans, and the Nazis.
But beyond mere tracings of ideological continuity, there may be two points that can be learned from the above work. Firstly, it is that the reader will beware of grand historical narratives that are used to justify violence, dominance, and cruelty in the name of a supposed greater good or assurance of safety. Appeals to history are moral quick sands that swallow up those who tread them. History itself is amoral, a framework that humans have invented in order to make the world we live in seem slightly less chaotic than it is. Secondly, the great insight of Milan Kundera, “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.” Europe at the time of this writing is in a state of willful forgetfulness. A natural response to past horrors is to act in the present as if they didn’t exist. This does little favor to the living and none to the dead. The streets of Prague today bustle with tourists from all over the world, a testament to the city’s charm. But for those who know where to look Prague tells a dark story. Hopefully this thesis has shed some light on that story.
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