Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans: Influence on the Socialization of Czechoslovakia

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12/14/2012

History 400

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"All teachers, clerks, and businessman – step forward!" Languishing in the Jagersdorf

German internment camp at the beginning of June 1945, Hubert Schutz was lined up against a

demolished public building for labor selection by a Czech political squad known as a National

Committee. This Committee, a squad formed some three weeks prior as the Soviet armies

liberated the Bohemian city of Ostrava, was now responsible for guarding thousands of Germans

in the camps. A fellow German internee designated as a labor commander asked Schutz for his

identification documents. Upon producing his *Reichdokuments*, proving Schutz to be a town

mayor lacking any formal technical skill, he was led to a truck where he would be sent to the

Witkowitz iron foundry for manual hard labor as a coal hauler. After three months of little food

and backbreaking labor, Schutz devolved pneumonia and dysentery and was designated for

expulsion to Soviet occupied Silesia.[1]

Schutz's situation was fairly common in the ethnically German Sudetenland in the

aftermath of the Second World War. The iron foundry he worked for had recently been

nationalized, like most other Sudeten industries, and forced labor was instituted to run the

economy until Czech settlers could arrive. Similar expulsions would transform the

demographics, economics, and social foundation of the Sudeten territories. In order to

accomplish the massive demographic feat of moving over 30% of the population of the Czech

lands, the government sanctioned the use of homegrown Czech partisan groups in order to lead

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[1] Wilhelm Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* Munich: Munich University Press, 1953. 413.

the administration of expelled territories. These Czech partisans, known as the Revolutionary Guards, flooded into the territory in the wake of the advancing Soviet armies and became the administrative authority over approximately 3 million ethnic Germans and the lands they were forced to vacate.

The German expulsions would inspire massive shifts in the political orientation of the Sudetenland with drastic consequences for the Czechoslovak state. Within just a year the Sudetenland would shift political allegiance decisively towards the Communist KSC party. In the 1946 general elections, the KSC captured over 75% of the Sudetenland votes[2] and had become a bastion of Communist support.[3] The Sudetenland would become one of the centerpieces of Communist political strategy into the late 1940's and spearheaded many reforms that would enter the entire country following the 1948 Communist coup. However, why did Communists benefit so greatly from the tremendous shifts that occurred in the territory? What was the greater role of the Sudetenland in the spread of Communist enthusiasm to the Czechoslovak country as a whole?

The Communists support can be drawn back to a number of critical developments in the post-war period. Communist local support was able to take root in the Sudetenland through the implementation of local power structures known as National Committees. This was dictated in the Czechoslovak governments rebuilding program that directed inclusion policies that allowed the Committees to lean heavily Communist in the Sudetenland. This local power structure was able to influence wave after wave of incoming Czech Sudeten settlers towards the infectious reforms of the Communist KSC party. Moreover, the vast amounts of now uninhabited former-

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[2] For reference, in the 1946 general election the KSC captured just over 40% of the entire vote in the Czech lands with roughly 50% of the KSC votes coming from the Sudetenland. The electoral success in Czechoslovakia was the best electoral success a communist party in Europe would receive by a large margin.
[3] Miloslav Bernášek, "Czechoslovak Planning 1945-1948", *Journal of Soviet Studies* 22, no. 1 (July 1970), 97.

German territory precipitated a mass resettling of the Sudetenland by ethnic Czechs who sought a better economic and social future in the region. To this end, a large proportion of those who arrived were in favor of reforms such as collectivized agrarian policies and nationalization of industries. These policies were enacted on a large scale in the Sudetenland and generated significant support for the Communist party that advocated for them. Fundamentally, the Czech people genuinely expressed Communist enthusiasm after the aftermath of the Second World War that Communists captured with their economic and political campaign in the Sudetenland. The Communists were not seen as extremists and a successful propaganda campaign enhanced their mystique. Communism began to be seen as the logical savior of the nation where previously capitalism and fascism had failed them and were enthusiastic about the changing future of the country. Communist leaders did all they could to convince the Czechoslovak people that Communists were both homegrown and dedicated to furthering economic opportunities. The Sudetenland would inevitably become one of the most reliable Communist bastions in the years following the German expulsions. One of the greatest benefits to the Communists was the socializing influence the Sudetenland would produce on the entire country. It seems the coup that later occurred under the direction of Deputy Prime Minister Klement Gottwald coincided with socialization of the Sudetenland and the rest of the country thereafter. The demographic shifts in the Sudetenland territories as a result of the German expulsions would foster the inundation of Communist support throughout Czechoslovakia that would eventually ease the path to power during the 1948 communist coup.

The Sudetenland has always maintained an important position in most scholars' discussions on Communist support in Czechoslovakia, but only to the extent that such support existed as an enclave. Dialogue is sparse on the magnitude of the Sudeten contribution to the

transition of Czechoslovakia to a Communist state and almost non-existent on the nationwide socialization encouraged by the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.[4] Until recently, historiography on Communist Czechoslovakia as a whole was largely dominated by the Western democracies interpretation under the ideological filter imposed by the Cold War. Works written before the end of the cold war attribute the Communist takeover to a group of power-hungry leaders that consolidated power with the direct support of the Soviet Union. Karel Kaplan, one of the leading historians on Czechoslovak Communism during the Cold War, explains the coup was imposed by a combination of liberating Soviet armies and local security forces. Kaplan observes the undercurrent of some political support for Communism before 1948, but explains the success of the coup can be limited "to one, and the decisive side - power politics."[5] Under this interpretation, political power was snatched from a disorganized democratic opposition by a small handful of Communists with overwhelming force. Communist strategy developed to outmaneuver the democratic process and not to attract support within its structure. Kaplan's tone is further reflected in authors written accounts that use words such as "subversion" and "conquest" to describe the transition to Communist power.[6] The Cold War analysis of the events in post-war Czechoslovakia, embodied by Karel Kaplan's work, would dramatically change after the fall of Czechoslovak Communism in 1989.

Current historians have attempted to eschew the one dimensional Cold War works in favor of a more balanced approach that claims Communism in Czechoslovakia was the result of

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[4] Authors do not examine a general socializing influence from the Sudetenland to other parts of the country let alone the extent the German expulsions produced in this effect. Many works, such as Joseph Korbel's, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia*, do explain the Sudeten electoral support afforded to communists and the ability of communists to achieve greater national political power through the disproportionately large Sudeten Communist vote. However, this approach focuses on the national power structures and not local socialization.

[5] Bradley Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism.* (London: Rowan and Littlesfield Publishers, 2004), 4.

[6] Josef Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948: The Failure of Coexistance.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 3.

both seizures of power and a function of groundswell popular support that lent the coup legitimacy. The examination of a great deal of archival evidence previously unavailable to researchers from Czechoslovak archives helped challenge the Cold War consensus. Recent Literature redefines the popular support that the Communists enjoyed on their rise to power.[7] The Communists maintained broad post-war enthusiasm as the best political party for the future for the nation and were able to successfully foster the "revision of the national character".[8] The Communists translated modest popular support into a weapon against a fragmented democratic opposition by gaining at least partial acceptance of the Communist interpretation of a Czechoslovak democracy. This interpretation included the initiation of more socialist programs, greater Communist influence in key policy decisions, and installation in certain key positions of power. Though strong-arm tactics did play an essential role in the 1948 coup, it was by no means the only reason they were able to take power. The popular support they had created weakened the post-war Czechoslovak democracy as more power was concentrated under their control. The coup may have succeeded with the help of the military, but by that point the battle had already been won by the Communists.

The assertion of Communist popular support can help explain the events during the 1948 coup and the socialization of the Czech lands as a whole. It seems the Sudetenland unintentionally acted as one of the major catalysts for the creation of widespread Communist acceptance. Sudeten regional support would be funneled into the Czechoslovak interior though a variety of Communist sponsored political, social, and economic policies that gained them popular recognition. The ethnic German expulsions would indirectly begin an unstoppable

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[7] New literature on Czechoslovak popular support first arose in Czech historian Alex Kusak's *Kultura a politika v Ceskoslovensku 1945-1956*. There were a variety of other works that followed and Bradley Abrams book *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation* presents a compelling case for this argument.
[8] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism,* 62.

process of socialization that ballooned Communist political support in the region.[9] The intensive demographic shifts that resulted by the German expulsions presented the Czechoslovak Communists with an incredible opportunity to transform the political orientation of the nation.

The Path to Expulsion

The frictions between Ethnic Germans and Czechs began well before the occupation by Nazi Germany necessitated the expulsions. The Czech lands, encompassing the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, had undergone intensive periods of Germanization in politics under Austrian Habsburg rule since 1620. The Czech language was forbidden from state administration and the Catholic German nobility sponsored religious persecution against Protestants who formed 95% of the Czech population.[10] Germanization only began to subside after the 19th century Czech National Revival movement pushed for the official restoration of the Czech language in the Czech lands and provided for more Czech political incorporation. Yet despite minor tensions, ethnic coexistence had always been a foundation of the Czech lands. Ethnic Germans had remained an important facet of the local population since their migration to the Slavic realms in the early 13th century. German and Czech society was well integrated and while political tensions were usually divided along ethnic lines, this did not reflect any major societal unrest. However, the breakup of the Austrio-Hungarian Empire after World War I signaled a shift in the ethnic dynamic. The newly created First Czechoslovak Republic was relatively stable

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[9] Czech works upon the German expulsions are sparse perhaps because Czech sentiment is still wary of history on the topic. The best works on the German expulsions come from West German studies critiquing the inhumanity of the Czechs. The works have an undercurrent of German bias but they do provide excellent views into the German perspective of the situation.

[10] Robert John Weston and Mark Cornwall, *Czechoslovakia in a nationalist and fascist Europe: 1918–1948*. (Oxford University Press, 2007), 34.

but centralized political control meant nationalism simmered amongst non-Czechs throughout the interwar period.[11] Czechs dominated both the central government and most national institutions and nationalist movements began to form in the early 1930's aimed towards the formation of broader political autonomy.

The Sudetendeustche Partei (SpD) formed in 1932 under Konrad Henlein and became increasingly vocal for federalization of the Sudetenland within Czechoslovakia. Sudeten Germans felt marginalized by the political system and believed the strong industries in the Sudetenland were subsidizing less developed provinces. By 1935, the Sudetenland also faced economic stagnation and 12 percent unemployment that contributed to the general unrest.[12] Sudeten dissatisfaction was reflected in the elections of that year where the SdP captured 68% of the German vote and over 15% of the entire parliamentary vote to make them the strongest party in Czechoslovakia. Feeling increasingly emboldened, Henlein began to gather ties to the National Socialists in Hitlerite Germany as a powerful ally to push for Sudeten interests.

Hitler first proposed plans for the annexation of the Sudetenland to Germany during his first meeting with Konrad Henlien in mid-1937. There he expressed his ultimate goal to bring the Czech lands under a greater Germany in line with his slogan, "one people, one empire, one leader!"[13] During the meeting Henlein agreed to urge the 1.35 million members of the SdP to demand for a self-governing Sudetenland within Czechoslovakia in order to create a crisis. Thereafter, Henlein issued an ultimatum under conditions dictated by Hitler that were impossible to meet without compromising Czechoslovak national sovereignty. Under pretexts of diffusing

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[11] The First Czechoslovak Republic attempted to maintain a middle road between ethnic groups. The republics initial stability was a large result of the personal character of its founder Tomáš Masaryk that acted as a Czechoslovak national hero.
[12] Weston and Mark Cornwall, *Czechoslovakia in a nationalist and fascist Europe: 1918–1948*. 67.
[13] Under "Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer" Hitler sough to expand a the racial ideology through his military and diplomatic means.

the crisis, Hitler urged action on the Czechoslovak issue within the international community. The

successful annexation of Austria to Germany earlier that year had met little western criticism and

Hitler believed Britain and France would surely fold under German pressure. British Prime

Minister Neville Chamberlain and French president Albert Lebrun were determined to avoid

another European war and duly conceded to German demands for the annexation of the

Sudetenland. The Czechoslovak government had little choice but to accept the German

ultimatum for annexation of the Sudetenland and the resulting rump government was too weak to

challenge German demands in 1939 that forced the Czech lands into a protectorate under

German authority.[14] With the entirety of Czechoslovakia now under his control, Hitler set out to

make the Sudetenland an "entirely German homeland" and began transferring ethnic Czechs to

the protectorate. This established a precedent for ethnic expulsions during the 5 years of German

occupation and greatly antagonized ethnic Czechs desire for retribution after harsh occupation

rule.

Czech nationals regarded the abandonment of their western allies as a 'stab in the back'

that had undermined their national sovereignty. The Czechoslovaks were now faced with the

reality that alignment with western democracies was no guarantee of territorial protection. Faced

with the occupation of the entire country, the Czechoslovak government formed in exile in

Britain until Czechoslovakia could be liberated.[15] Once the government was setup in London,

rebuilding policies began to foment for the expected liberation of Czechoslovakia. One key

debate amongst Czech politicians centered on the issue of how to handle the ethnic Germans that

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[14] Under the direction of Hitler, a small Slovak patriot group under catholic priest Josef Tiso declared an independent Slovak republic that existed as a German puppet state. Hitler used the declaration as a pretext for a general German military invasion that met no resistance and established Bohemia and Moravia as a subsidiary state within the German Reich.

[15] The new Government-in-exile became the allied representative of Czechoslovakia and was constituted under former president Edvard Beneš who had resigned after the Munich agreement. The communists were not officially included in this exiled government.

had betrayed the nation. Initial plans discussed how ethnic Germans might be accommodated in a new state structure. For instance, the president of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Beneš, initially resurrected the idea of cantons that would be ethnically homogenous within Czechoslovakia and could accommodate ethnic Germans.[16] However, an increasing number of Czech nationalists believed no solution was possible and were in favor of the radical cleansing of the entire nation of all Germans. The demands of this group coincided with the escalation of the war on continental Europe and the ferocity of German occupation and forced Beneš to consider more radical proposals. Beneš agreed that the Sudeten German population had essentially perpetrated treason by agitating for the alignment with Nazi Germany that occurred in the 1938 Munich agreement. Despite centuries of coexistence, many believed the wounds would be too deep to heal amongst the Czechoslovak people that demanded justice for occupation. Moreover, Beneš wanted to eliminate all possibility of future claims by Germany upon Czechoslovak territory that could result from a remaining German minority.[17] Beneš decided the best option available would simply be to expel Ethnic Germans from the Czech lands into Germany. The proposal was given full allied support and the German population would be transferred out of Czechoslovakia at the wars end to create a homogenous nation for the Czech people.[18]

The inclusion of the Soviet Union in the war in June 1941 was critical in the formation of a post-war rebuilding policy that included the expulsions. Many Czechoslovak Communists had fled to Moscow after the occupation of the country and created a Czechoslovak Communist delegation there. There the Czechoslovak Communists sought to foster dialogue between the

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[16] Josef Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948: The Failure of Coexistence,* 214.
[17] Afred-Maurice De Zayas,. *A Terrible Revenge: The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950. (*New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 78.
[18] The British government, eager to weaken the Germans by any means possible, were amenable to the idea of a German population transfer as early as 1940. American and Soviet quickly approved of the idea after their entry into the war in 1941. Official legality of the expulsions was drawn up during the Tehran Conference in 1943.

Czechoslovak government-in-exile and the Soviet government in order to influence the political orientation of a liberated Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London had also sought to increase ties with their Soviet counterparts as the Soviet Union would undoubtedly become the liberating force for the whole of Eastern Europe. In December of 1943, the Czechoslovak Communists in Moscow signed a formal declaration of friendship, ratified by Edvard Beneš, announcing "close and friendly cooperation after re-establishment of peace"[19] with the Soviet Union. The declaration included members from both the government-in-exile and the Communist delegation and bound the signatories into a pact of cooperation. In order to prepare the liberating government in 1944, the Soviet Union mediated the creation of the Czechoslovak governmental organization that gave positions of power to both voices of democracy and Communists. Once Czechoslovakia was liberated, the government would be a coalition of democrats and Communists that would implement the reconstruction and administration of the country.

The result would be the so called Beneš Decrees and the Kosice Program. Of primary importance for returning President Eduard Benes was the complete redesign the Sudetenland territory with the mandate of the Allied forces in Europe. Beneš had explored the idea of German expulsion for those who were disloyal or who were proven fascists. However, British Foreign secretary Anthony Eden warned Beneš that individual guilt would put a "restrictive mechanism on the number of expellees" and instead any expulsions should occur under the collective guilt of being ethnically German.[20] Thusly, the Kosice program did not distinguish between ethnic Germans and allowed Czechs to see all Germans as national enemies. Only those who could

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[19] Godfrey Lias, trans. *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Benes: From Munich to New War and New Victory. (*London: George Allen & Unwin ltd, 1954), 250.
[20] *'Memorandum of the Czechoslovak government on the transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia'* (Vondrová 1994), 303-8.

prove their loyalty to the Czechoslovak government would be allowed to stay. The consequences

would be felt in the harsh conditions German expellees would soon endure. The Czech

communists had a large say in the framing of the Kosice program and exerted a large amount of

influence in the actual actions on how the program would be carried out. The newly formed

Czechoslovak Interior Ministry, heavily staffed by Communists, sanctioned the use of violence

in against ethnic Germans. While moderates in the Czechoslovak government urged restraint to

halt an impending humanitarian crisis that could reflect poorly on the nation in the eyes of the

West, the more radical organs of government were encouraging the mob. Deputy Prime minister

Klement Gottwald continued to use terminology such as the "liquidation" and "cleansing" of

territories of German ethnicity.[21] The Communists within government sought favorable political

conditions in the expelled areas and sought the key provision on province administration. The

Communists were successful in petitioning the coalition government to add to the Kosice

program a provision detailing the "confiscation of landed estate and of the property connected

with it [to] be carried out without compensation by the competent National Committees."[22] This

provision became one of the linch pins of the Communist party's political gains in the

Sudetenland area. The provision distinguished that all confiscated properties would be

nationalized by the state pending its redistribution to Czech settlers. Many Czech came to equate

this initially popular provision with the Communists who had been so vocal about it benefits and

Communist leaders from the interior ministry became the figureheads of the program. The

Kosice program became the basis for the administration of Czechoslovakia and was further

critical in the development of the local National Committees for local administration.

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[21] Klement Gottwald, *Memoirs of Klement Gottwald,* (Prague: Orbis Press Agency, 1981)*,* 17.
[22] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 187.

Communist Utilization of the National Committees

The Kosice programs authorized the creation of National Committee's that became disproportionately staffed by Communist leaning groups and used this local power to consolidate provincial political control. During the following period of rapid changes, the reorganization of the political structure would be dominated by spontaneous generation of National Committees with encouragement from vocal Czech leaders. The new Czech cabinet called upon the local groups of citizens who had demonstrated "their worth as fighters against the invaders and traitors and [had] shown their true patriotic feelings" to form the core of these new local administrative groups.[23] Given this encouragement, National Committees grew around a core of local Czech partisans who had resisted Nazi occupation. In many cases, heads of National Committees in the Sudetenland had been the leaders of their local partisan groups who had instigated small-time sabotage. The committees were directly instructed to, "administer all public affairs within their spheres of competence [;] will, together with central authorities, take measures in the interest of public security [;] and will set up a democratic machine of officials, subordinate to themselves."[24] The National Committees would function under the umbrella of the Communist controlled interior ministry and were heavily responsible for the administration of the Sudetenland. One of the major initial challenges for the young Czechoslovak government was the patchwork of authority created by the chaos of liberation. Communist Prime Minister Klement Gottwald wrote that one of the intents of the National Committees was that the Czechoslovak government "could consolidate the state-political and state-power organs of the

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[23] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 161.

[24] PhillipTher and Ana Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948.* (Maryland: Rowan & Littlesfield, 2001), 203.

people, that is [through] the National Committees."[25] The decentralization of sources of power, especially in the liberated Sudetenland, became increasingly apparent upon the arrival of Eduard Benes and the official transitory government into Prague on May 13, 1945. The Kosice Program had articulated the structure, criteria, and design of the post-war administration of Czech provinces but their implementation was affected by the realities of liberation. It was through the method of liberation that the National Committees would become staffed with a vast majority of Communist supporters in key Sudetenland areas. It seems the joint American and Soviet thrusts into Bohemia had ramifications for the development of the National Committees and the political policies that followed in the Sudetenland.

The foundation of the National committees accelerated quickly on the heels of the Soviet Red Army thrust into Bohemia. The Soviet advance through Moravia and into Bohemia was swift and arrived in two waves. The first wave of combat troops was undisciplined in their advance on ethnically German areas. The Soviet Army under General Alexi Antonov had pushed into Czech lands from Slovakia and had faced German armies extensively in Ukraine. As such, many Soviet divisions planned to exact revenge upon ethnic Germans whom were seen as inhuman as depicted by Soviet propaganda. Many Sudeten Germans were immediately brutalized and sent to internment camps and German depopulation would occur rather swiftly within the next few months under Soviet supervision. The following wave consisted mainly of occupation troops who were equally undisciplined. Among this wave was the First Czechoslovak Army Corps who had previously been incorporated into the Soviet Red Army and had fought in Russia. This army was declared in the Kosice program as the basis for the national army of liberated Czechoslovakia that would institute order in tandem with Soviet forces. Accordingly,

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[25] Klement Gottwald, *Memoirs of Klement Gottwald,* 45.

the organization of the Czechoslovak army paralleled the Soviets and received every form of training, political education, and pro-Soviet propaganda that did a regular Red Army solider. President Benes and the government seated at Kosice decided this to be a necessary step in order to stamp out the reemergence of 'subversive elements' of Czech society such as collaborators. The Kosice program detailed that, "in order that [the] army be trained in a civic, democratic, and anti-fascist spirit, the government wishes to put an end once and for all to the so-called 'unpolitical army'."[26] Education officers, all communist due to the communist controlled interior ministry, were attached to every brigade. The result was an army heavily influenced by their socialist education and in charge of the reconstruction of the Czech lands. In figures released 6 months after the end of hostilities, over 2/3 of the army voted communist.[27] This would be transformative for more than just the military occupation of the country. Partisans were an actively encouraged element in the army formation and would be fully integrated into occupation once peace was achieved.[28] Homegrown Czech partisans were encouraged to participate in army functions and received similar political indoctrination under directive to conduct the "revolutionary phase" of the reconstruction. The partisans that had served under the First Czechoslovak Army Corp would arrive in many of the German areas of the Sudetenland before any other governmental groups. It seems the explicit state endorsement of partisan control meant that National Committees were constituted heavily of socialist former partisans who arrived with the Red Army. One German interned at the large Pankrac internment camp wrote one such National Committee member welcomed Germans into the camps as "comrades" and declared

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[26] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 178.
[27] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948,* 202.
[28] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948,* 203.

that they "are genuine communists here and woe to those who try to keep us out!"[29] Inevitably, this would shift the balance of power toward the Communists in many Sudetenland provinces.

Conversely, American military forces had advanced to the Karlsbad-Pilsen-Budweis line and set up military order in a much smaller 3,800 km triangle of territory in the west of the country. American occupation was very dissimilar from the Soviet occupation to the east. The Czech lands constituted a liberated allied nation and the US Army sought to remain temporarily to help rebuild and reorganize the territories. Retribution against Germans or political indoctrination did not occur to the extent that it did in the east. In Sudeten territories, National Committees worked alongside the Americans in administrative duties. The Committees that were established under American occupation were not a primary source of order in the Sudetenland but merely represented a political force. Initially, socialism was not introduced to American held territories under the external pressure like that of the east. Moreover, expulsions did not occur with the same ferocity that it did under the Soviets despite American occupied areas counting for some of the largest concentrations of Sudeten Germans. The Czechoslovak government even commented to the U.S. ambassador to Czechoslovakia that U.S. soldiers were "too friendly with Sudeten Germans in occupied areas".[30] In contrast to Soviet areas of the Sudetenland, Germans were only being expelled into American occupied sections of Germany incrementally from a variety of internment camps and the many remaining German towns and cities. However, following the surrender of Japan, the American presence began to quickly fade. In September of 1945, Germans began to be expelled in great numbers from the American section as Czech National Committees were handed control of local order. However, since few areas in the

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[29] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 383.
[30] Bryan Dickerson. "Ernest Harmon and the Challenges of Occupation*." The Journal of America's Military Past* (New York: 2000), 53-62.

Sudetenland contained a Slav majority, a number of local National Committees had to be constituted of immigrants from eastern Czech lands. By the end of the summer of 1945, the Sudetenland had been consolidated under the Communist interior ministry through the National Committees. Klement Gottwald expressed great pleasure at the initial socialization of the National Committees and secretly marveled that "[the democratic opposition] did not imagine the National Committees as an organ of government which would have wide authority" and "the National Committees are the main arena of political struggle."[31] The influence of the National Committees in Sudeten territories would be fundamental in the shift in political power towards increasing socialism.

Socialization of the Sudeten Economy

One major advantage of the powers granted to the National Committees was the implementation of the socialist economic policies that were envisaged by Communist members of the central government. Most Czech citizens had come to find capitalism and political fragmentation, evident in the inter-war Republic, as frontrunners of fascism and demanded an overhaul of the system. As Eduard Benes argued from Kosice:

> "Prewar democracy proved to have many deficiencies and in many countries it helped to a great extent to bring about the advent of totalitarian dictatorships. It will have to be reformed and fully regenerated. After [World War II] political democracy will have to develop systematically and consistently into so-called economic and social democracy."[32]

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[31] Klement Gottwald, *Memoirs of Klement Gottwald,* 30.
[32] Paul Zinner. *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1948.* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 104-105.

Benes certainly did not argue for the imposition of radical Communism upon the social and

economic foundations of the country, but instead sought a program for the "socialization of

modern society."[33] Most saw it as a matter of necessity as much as it was a function of lofty

political ideals. In the aftermath of the Second World War, no political party seriously

considered anything but a platform of radical social and economic changes.

Czechoslovakia had undergone an intricate process of structural economic

transformations during German occupation that were similar to those experienced by most states

incorporated into the *Reich*'s war economy.[34] In order to further their imperial ambitions,

Germans subjugated and incorporated the economies of its puppet states and allies. Consumer

goods industries were halted and redirected towards heavy goods and raw materials production

destined for Germany as the war demanded. The tremendous amounts of German capital that

flooded into the outlying states in the German sphere, especially the less developed countries in

Central and Eastern Europe, experienced sudden drastic economic growth and modernization.

Slovak Communist functionary, Gustav Husak, wrote a dispatch to Moscow evaluating that, "the

regime managed to solve economic problems to the surprise even of those who were favorably

inclined to the regime… the situation in Slovakia is better from the point of view both of real

wages and of the supply of goods."[35] However, the enormous economic growth came at the price

of local control of industry and almost all important sectors were expropriated from local control.

Thus, even before the influence of the Soviet Union style economies after the war, many Eastern

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[33] Zinner. *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1948,* 105.

[34] Germany sought to create a new European order partially on their racial ideology. German ethnicities existed at the top of the new Europe while Slavic people to the east would exist at the bottom. Economic integration with Germany commonly paralleled this racial order and countries towards the top of the racial pyramid were integrated to greater extent than those that were not. The economically valuable Czech lands were given a privileged position in the racial hierarchy despite their Slavic racial makeup and did well during the war.

[35] István Deák, Jan T. Gross, Tony Judt. *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 19.

European states were shifted away from western style capitalism and towards socialization. The attractiveness of planned economies after the end of the Second World War belies the acceptance of the shift towards a command structured economy that had already occurred under Nazi rule. Czechoslovakia would become a near monolith of central economic control during the war and would emerge as an essentially different economy then it had been pre-war.

The economic reforms that emerged after the war in Czechoslovakia sought to extend central control further and the Sudetenland became a key area of policy implementation. It seems the first phase of economic reforms accompanied the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. Forced expulsion would be immediately followed by the expropriation of German personal and public property and plans to resettle Czechs from the interior of the country. The three month period of rapid expulsion[36] and acquisition by National Committees had previously taken place under the auspices of the Kosice Program but property wasn't yet explicitly nationalized. The central government was able to accomplish this through the Decree for the Confiscation of Enemy Property and the Creation of a fund of National Renewal (FNO) on October 25, 1945 to begin the organized transfer of German property. The FNO further set up an administration to reprivatize the confiscated property in conjunction with the National Committees. The transfers of economic interests were intended to stabilize the Sudetenland and bring incentives for laborers to resettle the vacant territory.

However, the transfers would be massive and challenging. During their occupation of the Czech protectorate, German authorities had nationalized large amounts of property and forced the displacement or removal of over 100,000 native Czechs. In fact, by the end of the war an

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[36] The initial expulsions are characterized by their haphazard nature and the conspicuous absence of central government control. Expulsions were initially decentralized and characteristically violent in the first three months after liberation.

incredible 60 to 70 percent of the entire country's economic wealth was German-owned. Benes recounted that the "Germans expropriated all key industries and banks, and in this way automatically prepared the nationalization of Czechoslovak point of view… even though the decision to administer it was in accordance with the principles of private enterprise."[37] Inevitably, the confiscations and subsequent expulsions proved to be devastating to the economy of post-war Czechoslovakia. The Sudetenland accounted for 75% of Czechoslovakia's coal, 61% of its textiles, 76% of glass production, 38.5% of its chemicals, 55% of its paper, and it held a majority of many other crucial skilled industries.[38] The expulsion of the German industrial workers in these industries would have many immediate detrimental consequences.

The Czechoslovak government immediately realized the most pressing problem in the Sudetenland was the massive labor shortage it now faced. Klement Gottwald remarked that "following the transfer of the Germans, there will be a shortage of labor in industry of one-half million" and would be exacerbated by lack of housing. The lack of many skilled laborers and craftsman would shift the dynamics of the Czechoslovak economy away from traditional consumer goods. Instead, like the economies of the Soviet Union, the result was an increasing emphasis on the capital goods and other heavy industries that used unskilled labor. In many cases the effect of labor shortages was so drastic that Germans were pressed into compulsory labor for long periods of time and in a few cases even offered citizenship with German renunciation. Germans remaining in the Sudetenland, especially skilled ones, were required for "types of labour which fall within their own specialty" and were to become "the responsibility of the

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[37] Edvard Beneš,. "Postwar Czechoslovakia*". Foreign Affairs*, XXIV, No. 3(New York, 1945), 408.
[38] John Shute, "Czechoslovakia's Territorial and Population Changes", *Journal of Economic Geography* 24, no. 1 (January 1948): 37.

commissioner of the enterprise."[39] In many skilled enterprises, Germans served as the instructors

until the industry could become self-sufficient and then were duly expelled to Germany. All

other Germans would be transferred to heavy industry even if it did not suit them. One German

Professor from Prague sent to work the Sudetenland remarked in 1946 that "there were no

German workers in Prague - but the German intelligentsia of Prague was to be turned into

proletarians"[40] His comments emphasize the rhetoric of communism that was directly imposed

on all major industries in the Sudetenland. In dire straits, the central government believed the

problems could only be solved through resettlement and collectivization that were used to further

Communist propaganda from the interior ministry.

Considering the drastic drop that resulted from the loss of German skilled labor and the

seemingly insurmountable challenge of restoring pre-war efficiency, the resettlement of the

Sudetenland became the first priority. The resettlement of Czech laborers into the Sudetenland

mirrors the phases of the German expulsions. During the "wild transfer" (Divoky odsun), where

partisan bands and Red Army units immediately forced Germans to abandon their property, the

expulsion is characterized by the equally haphazard wave of Czech settlers. These settlers were

largely opportunists that hoped to participate in the spoils of expulsion and acquire lucrative

work in vacant industries. Those who arrived did so in the hopes of becoming part of either the

local National Committees or selection as a "national administrator" of enterprises. Officially

National Committees were responsible for the selection of candidates for these positions from

those who initially arrived in the territory. The Kosice Program detailed the necessity of

"competent National Committees to see to it that every plot of ground in the area is at once

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[39] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 306.
[40] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans*. 391.

exploited to the full, irrespective of its legal state of ownership."[41] However, due to the large

amount of businesses and enterprises to distribute, many enterprise administrators simply took

control of businesses on a first come first serve basis and were subsequently granted authority by

the National Committees. Oftentimes, the National Committees simply wanted to get production

restarted and would accept enterprise administrators on a temporary basis until a more qualified

employer could be found. This jockeying for better career position and standard of living became

one of the main reasons for settlers to arrive in the Sudetenland. By the end of this initial period,

80 percent of enterprises in the region had Czech national administrators representing some

12,000 plants, workshops, and enterprises.[42] In conjunction with the administration of the

National Committees, individual enterprise production was resumed very soon after German

confiscations.

The second resettlement period, during the "forced expatriation" (nucene vysidleni) of

German expulsions, accounted for the vast majority of the eventual Sudeten settlers. Almost 2

million Czechs would eventually settle in the Sudetenland during this phase as Germans began to

leave in greater numbers.[43] By the summer of 1946 over 900 workers a day entered Sudeten

factories and the Sudeten economy was recovering.[44] However, the extensive government

resettlement plans in place were not immediately executed despite the substantial amount of

Germans expelled during the 'wild transfer'. Benes government waited to implement centralized

resettlement plans mainly due to the severe deficiency of acceptable housing for settlers. Despite

nationalizing over 640,000 apartments and houses in the first 6 month period following

liberation, "some belonged to Czechs returning to the area, some were primitive even by interwar

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[41] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 188.
[42] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948*, 246.
[43] Zinner. *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1948.* 108.
[44] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948*, 244.

standards and others suffered war damage and needed reconstruction."[45] To facilitate the

reorganization of the Sudetenland, the Ministry of the Interior created the Settlement Office

(Osidlovaci urad) during the fall months. The Settlement Office was acutely aware of the mass

housing initiatives of the interwar period where "local, independent, and privately funded"

projects were often never completed or were no bigger than a single building.[46] The solution was

to use state supported building projects to create acceptable housing that was jointly owned by

the state and private enterprise. This action was compatible with Benes' plan to create a "modern

socialist state" and even the architecture of the buildings was required to be of a "socialist

design."[47] Until new housing could be constructed, the Settlement Office instructed Czech

settlers to move into hotels, provisional lodgings, or commonly into houses with the Germans

themselves. Most German families were required to open up the majority of their housing to

make room for Czechs.[48] The vast majority of the incoming Czechs would have to wait until the

housing situation was alleviated and this limited huge numbers of initial settlers.

By 1946 the completion of a number of construction projects and the fulfillment of the

bulk of expulsions had opened enough housing to allow for full-scale resettlement operations.

The central plan envisioned Sudetenland areas resettled up to 75% of their pre-war population in

all the most critical economic areas. The transfers had reduced Czech population by over 25% so

as settlers arrived in an area already at a population maximum, they were directed to find

settlement in a different district.[49] In this way the lucrative industrial areas were populated

quickly. However, total resettlement was nowhere near enough to compensate for the

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[45]Kimberly Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 11.
[46] Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-196,* 15.
[47] Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-196,* 36.
[48] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948*, 244.
[49] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948,* 245.

reinvigoration of the economy to pre-war levels. Part of this problem was the rootlessness of the

Czech settlers that arrived for factory work. Laborers were easily dissatisfied, had low-morale,

and were unwilling to put in the same work that Germans had put in. Moreover, having little

cultural or social connections to the area made leaving one job for another easily possible. As a

result the productivity per worker declined and contributed to the labor shortage as more laborers

were needed to reach similar output. The labor shortages had become so dire that even the

Czechoslovak army was forced to help out in the critical mining industry.[50] Shortages occurred

most heavily in industries that were labor intensive and these were often the foundation of the

Sudeten economy. For example, the Stalin Works near Litomerce in Sudeten northwest

accounted for 96 percent of domestic consumption of fuel and supplied a large number of

factories with its output yet shortages required German compulsory labor.[51] The Ministry of

Industry commissioned a statewide classification of industry to deal with the problem. Industries

were to be classified on their value and necessity to the Czechoslovak economy, their

productivity, and their profitability. Category A firms would represent critical industries for the

entire economy. Category B were those that were productive but could be shut down if required.

Finally, category C were marked as unproductive and scheduled for closure. The assets of

category C firms would usually be marked for distribution to other industries or even moved to

areas that could produce more effectively. Immediately, this became hugely unpopular to

laborers who settled under difficult conditions and feared the loss of their one benefit available in

abundant employment. Communist National Committees however were able to take advantage of

the impending plant closures by vocally advocating against them and in many cases simply

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[50] Eagle Glassheim. "Devastation in Czechoslovakia's Borderlands", *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 1(March 2006): 90.
[51] J.A. Steers, "The Middle People: Resettlement in Czechoslovakia", *The Geographic Journal* 112, no. 1/3 (July-September 1948): 34.

ignoring the directives of the Ministry of Industry. The closure of a plant within their administration would limit their power and hurt their prestige. Many laborers took note of the actions of the National Committees and attributed successes to the Communists.

It seems the economic transformation of the Sudetenland resulted in numerous political consequences that further reinforced the Communist position. The Communists celebrated their political inroads and Communist influence in the Sudetenland was a major factor in the success the KSC party garnered in the 1946 parliamentary elections. The Communist involvement in the National Committees and the subsequent socialist influence they were able to achieve in Sudeten areas was mirrored by their inroads into the successful economic policy. Gradually, the KSC party made significant gains in the Sudeten areas and their local communities and Communist patronage was rewarded in the 1946 parliamentary elections. The 1946 elections would prove the key watershed moment in transfer of Sudeten Communist enthusiasm into both electoral gains and general socialist influence throughout the country. The Benes government, with Communist prodding, issued a decree immediately before the elections in May requiring that National Committee representation be based upon the results of the general parliamentary vote. This would be critical for the consolidation of Communist rule throughout the entirety of the Czech lands as it allowed Communist votes in majority areas to overcome the democratic opposition's votes. The Communists were able to secure majorities in almost all of the Sudetenland in the general elections and in most cases the support was higher than 75%. The distribution of Czech electoral districts was such that the large proportion of Communist votes in the Sudetenland watered down the significance of the general slight democratic opposition majorities in the interior of the outer districts. The consequences for a democratic influence became immediately clear as Communists handily won 138 of the 163 districts in the Czech lands with 40% of the

vote.[52] The vote was all the more influenced by the recent implementation of land reform that

redistributed agricultural lands. Klement Gottwald hailed the historic vote for the KSC and

believed the "Communist party has such influence that it is able to assert itself."[53] The economic

transformation of the Sudetenland was generally seen as a success in the eyes of many Czech

commoners and the presence of Communists at all levels of the country lent them legitimacy.

The KSC could now approach issues in parliament with a majority and the democratic forces

were no longer on an even playing field in politics. Further, the majority of Communist support

came from the Sudeten areas and was able to redraw the electoral map by overcoming the

democratic support in many parts of the exterior. Sudeten support was a major factor in the

Czech lands shift towards direct Communist political control after the elections of 1946.

Shifting Czechoslovak Cultural Attitude

The socializing economic reforms attributed to the KSC and the overall progressive

appearance of the party tied in well with the general KSC campaign to capture the national

enthusiasm. The Communists were immediate in furthering political support once power had

infiltrated most Czech areas by launching an effective propaganda campaign designed to

convince Czechoslovaks of their 'socialist history'.[54] The communists sought to utilize the wave

of changing values and increased nationalism for the "revision of the national character."[55]

Aware that patronage and political influence could only further the communist cause to a degree,

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[52] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948,* 251.

[53] Klement Gottwald, *Memoirs of Klement Gottwald,* 59.

[54] The KSC launched a campaign in 1946 denoting the socialist nature of Czechoslovak national hero's such as the Tomas Masaryk and 16th century local protestant sect missionary Jan Hus. The campaign portrayed the history of Czechoslovakia as a people constantly under oppression from Austrians nobility, capitalist doctrines, and then Germans. This stifled the Czechoslovak inherent socialist Slavic nature. Bradley Abrams book *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation* lays out a decent overview of the socialized historical campaign.

[55] Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948: The Failure of Coexistance.* 176.

the communists sought to capture the sympathies of Czechoslovak people for political ends. It seems the elections of 1946 marked a turning point for the communist embrace of this shift in national character as an endorsement by the people. The ordinary Czech began to increasingly sympathize with the communists that offered "material rewards or power, or both, as compensation for the years of suffering."[56] The KSC had begun planning the elements for a culture campaign immediately after liberation but the legitimization offered by the elections meant political rhetoric could begin as well. The communist Minister of Information Vaclav Kopecky hailed the "new era of our new Czechoslovak culture" and the communist-leaning newspaper *Tvorba* called for "a critical revision of everything that seemed stable for ages… a great revaluation of all values."[57] For the Communists, a revision of the Czechoslovak perspective on issues both economic and political was necessary.

To this end, Klement Gottwald began using the "Czechoslovak road to socialism" to describe the economic and social transformations that the Communists had popularized. The class warfare and social upheaval of Marxism could be abandoned for the peaceful transformation of the Czechoslovak Communists. The introduction of the Two-Year Plan following the 1946 elections began the further application of the economic and social changes that were to form the basis for the ensuing political strategy. The Two-Year Plan instituted national targets on rebuilding economic and social structures and was similar to those policies implemented into the Sudetenland. Many communists were eager to institute these further reforms state-wide to Czechoslovakia that had now been tested and were so politically expedient for their cause. Communist Gustav Bares declared the plan as changing "not only the economy,

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[56] Zinner. *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1948,* 111.
[57] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism,* 93.

but also social relations, morality and the people themselves."[58] The acceptance of this was so great that even President Benes and the fragmented democratic opposition did not oppose programs that were clearly to their political detriment. Communist controlled state organs began to take advantage of this and began to actively engineer a strategy to impact the convictions of the masses. The end of party parity in favor of the communists following the 1946 parliamentary elections was used to strengthen communist's image as a non-radical party for general progress.

Moreover, the KSC began to become involved in extra-political organizations to increase their influence and sharpen their support. KSC leadership hoped to push for further nationalizations of Czech industry and the collectivization of farms. However, backlash from other political parties in the National Front remained stiff and plans to push greater socialist reforms had to be shelved temporarily. In order to continue communist reforms the communist government began to rely on the use of trade unions. Unlike the fragmented post-war trade union system that was split along party lines, the Nazi occupation favored consolidation and liquidation into a single trade union, the Revolucni Odborove Hnuti (ROH), which would be easier to control. The communists were immediately aware of the benefit of the ROH. The possible support of such a massive centralized trade union made groundswell support unnecessary as the organization had over 1.8 million members.[59] Moreover, ROH organization structure was organized by region and district instead of trade or industry so as to ensure the continued unity within the organization. Centralized control of the pyramid superstructure would mean coordinated organizational policy was easily achieved. By 1946 the communists had taken control of key positions in the ROH by the placement of National Committees and pressure from

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[58] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism,* 94.
[59] Zinner. *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1948,* 164.

the KSC party leadership. The ROH became a reliable arm of the Communist party from which they could institute further social changes.

The first such change took shape in 1946 as the Foundation Program was legislated in parliament under communist sponsorship to benefit the economy nation-wide. The program detailed the rebuilding of the national economy with special provisions for the Sudetenland to meet the somewhat greater challenges of reconstruction. Under this cover, the communist party was able to pass legislation that was essentially the same as the Eighth KSC Congress platform.[60] The program finalized the last of the German expulsions and the Czech resettlement and introduced programs to capitalize on the post-war patriotism of the workers. To compensate for the labor shortages, the workers would be encouraged to participate in the "national mobilization of labor" on the basis of patriotism and personal honor.[61] Zdanek Radvanovsky explains that the effect of the mobilizations returned "qualified workers to their occupations convince people without jobs to do productive work, ensure that the most important productive sectors would attract new talent, and increase the number of working women." The program went into effect during the spring of 1946 and seemingly produced an impact on the Sudetenland. The labor shortages began to slightly decline and the Sudetenland was able to meet the daunting industrial targets of 10% growth in 1946.[62] Laborers in the mining industry even organized "national shifts" on a voluntary basis that added extra working hours and work on Sundays. However, the program was not a compulsory program and the communist reforms required workers organizations and trade unions to inspire participation on the basis of civic duty. The Foundation Program in the Sudetenland may have only produced marginal economic benefits, yet the value

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[60] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948,* 252.
[61] Ther and Siljak. *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe 1944-1948,* 253.
[62] Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948: The Failure of Coexistence.* 159.

of the program might be better assessed as a means of communist participation. Within months

of the Sudeten measures, similar rebuilding efforts were launched through the ROH into other

Czech districts. This contributed to the view that the KSC was a patriot party above a communist

party and lent the party the critical support it sought to build heading into the 1948 general

elections.

Conclusion

The previous two and a half years had seen stunning victories for the KSC within the

democratic post-war confines. The Sudetenland was proven to be the centerpiece of their

stunning infiltration of political power and support at all political levels. The seizure of the

National Committee positions in 1945 as the German expulsions heated up had allowed the

communists to expand their base to over 1.5 million Czechoslovakians and the support largely

remained.[63] Moreover, the expulsion of the German population was exploited by communists

who realized the opportunity 40,000 sq. km of vacant land presented for the socialization of the

territory. The National Committees were often the first legal administrators that settlers and

partisans encountered upon entering the Sudeten territory from the interior. As such, the

Committees were especially responsible for the political indoctrination the incoming Czechs had

received. The influence resulted in the transformation of the borderlands a bastion of communist

support. The support of the Sudetenland was critical in turning the tide against the democratic

forces and introduced communist administrators into areas that had remained democratic until

that point.

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[63] Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans.* 104.

The communist local and state organs were able to proceed with their experimentation

with the socialization of the Sudetenland and this became a proving ground for economic policy.

Policy introduced into the Sudetenland as rebuilding measures would precede its introduction

into the rest of Czechoslovakia when the general introduction of such policies followed the

communist electoral victory of 1946. Moreover, the economy of the Sudetenland had come to

drastically change the perceptions that ordinary Czech held on various communist economic

policies and their place within Czechoslovakia. Czechs had come to view communists with

enthusiasm and believed they should become the legitimate authority of the people after their

economic success.

Of greater implication for the German expulsions in the Sudetenland and underlying

socialist agenda that took hold is the connection to the broader Eastern European Communist

experience. Communists groups in most countries liberated by the Soviet Red Army seized the

opportunity of wartime trauma at the hands of the occupying Germans to further their own image

and enthusiasm amongst the local population.[64] They trumpeted their valiant resistance during

state liberation in an active collaboration between the Soviets and Communist partisans. Much

like similar myths that permeated other countries throughout Europe, Czechoslovaks had a

significant interest in growing the fabrication of resistance towards an external German threat.[65]

Communists were especially motivated to carry out the expulsion of Germans from

Czechoslovakia to corroborate this myth amongst the Czechoslovak people. The collective guilt

ascribed to ethnic Germans made it significantly easier to indulge the Czechoslovak resentment

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[64] Deák and Gross and Judt. *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath.* 301.

[65] In most German occupied countries, there were groups that resisted and groups that collaborated but the overwhelming majority of citizens were not involved in either and simply tried to get by. Post-war governments actively tried to revise their image as nations of oppressed people who tried to sabotage German occupation. In France and Hungary for instance, 90% of the official list of those that resisted were Jewish residents destined for concentration camps.

and perhaps even embarrassment over German occupation. The expulsions in the Sudetenland became a vessel with which the Czechoslovakia could revise their national character while also homogenizing a multi-ethnic state.

The KSC became the heir to the post-war legacy in both organization and spirit which they actively encouraged. Citizens felt that Communist action was the only national recourse after the devastations that they believed democratic and capitalist values had brought them at the end of the interwar period. Communist influence was celebrated with enthusiasm as the progression in a long march towards normalization of the Czechoslovak territory. By the end of 1947, Klement Gottwald had built up enough political, popular, and economic capital that the democratic process could safely be discarded. The existence of a democracy was all but a farce as most real power positions were under communist control and the nation only needed a small push to send it over the edge. Prime Minister Klement Gottwald entered Prague's old town square in late February with the support of the military and from there communist revolution swept the country. Almost no violence accompanied the coup and democratic leaders resigned voluntarily further illustrating the general mood of acceptance toward communist rule. The Sudetenland became a watershed of communist change immediately after the liberation of the country and played perhaps the most important role in the transformation of the country. The territory was on the communist cutting edge of reforms politically, socially, culturally, and economically and would funnel communist values into the Czech interior. The Sudetenland served as the final puzzle piece that pushed the threshold of Communist support to the point where Communists could realistically realize their ambitions for power. Ultimately, the Sudetenland became the centerpiece of the KSC strategy to induce the socialization of the

entirety of Czechoslovakia and the drastic demographic changes there allowed the Communists

both opportunity and legitimacy necessary to achieve national political control.

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