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A Coercive Courtship: German Awareness of and Responses to the Sudeten Germans, 1929-1934

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Abstract

Following the end of World War I and the creation of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the Sudeten Germans sought to raise the awareness of Germans in Germany and Austria of their situation under Czechoslovak rule. In the period between 1929 and 1934, the public discourse in Germany altered, as Nazi control began to direct further concentration on the Sudeten Germans, away from broader discussion of their minority status to a German nationalistic perspective. The Nazis, however, were both manipulative and ambivalent in their awareness of the Sudeten Germans, treating them as an extension of the Nazi Party while also beyond their ability to help directly. By 1935 the Nazis had effectively controlled independent public narratives of Sudeten German awareness, as those discourses came to be controlled by the Nazi Party and its affiliates.

Keywords

Sudeten Germans, Nazism, 1929-1934

Disciplines

Eastern European Studies | European History | Political History

Comments

History Senior Seminar paper for HIST 418: Nazism

A COERCIVE COURTSHIP

German Awareness of and Responses to the Sudeten
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Following the end of World War I and the creation of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the Sudeten Germans sought to raise the awareness of Germans in Germany and Austria of their situation under Czechoslovak rule. In the period between 1929 and 1934, the public discourse in Germany altered, as Nazi control began to direct further concentration on the Sudeten Germans, away from broader discussion of their minority status to a German nationalistic perspective. The Nazis, however, were both manipulative and ambivalent in their awareness of the Sudeten Germans, treating them as an extension of the Nazi Party while also beyond their ability to help directly. By 1935 the Nazis had effectively controlled independent public narratives of Sudeten German awareness, as those discourses came to be controlled by the Nazi Party and its affiliates.

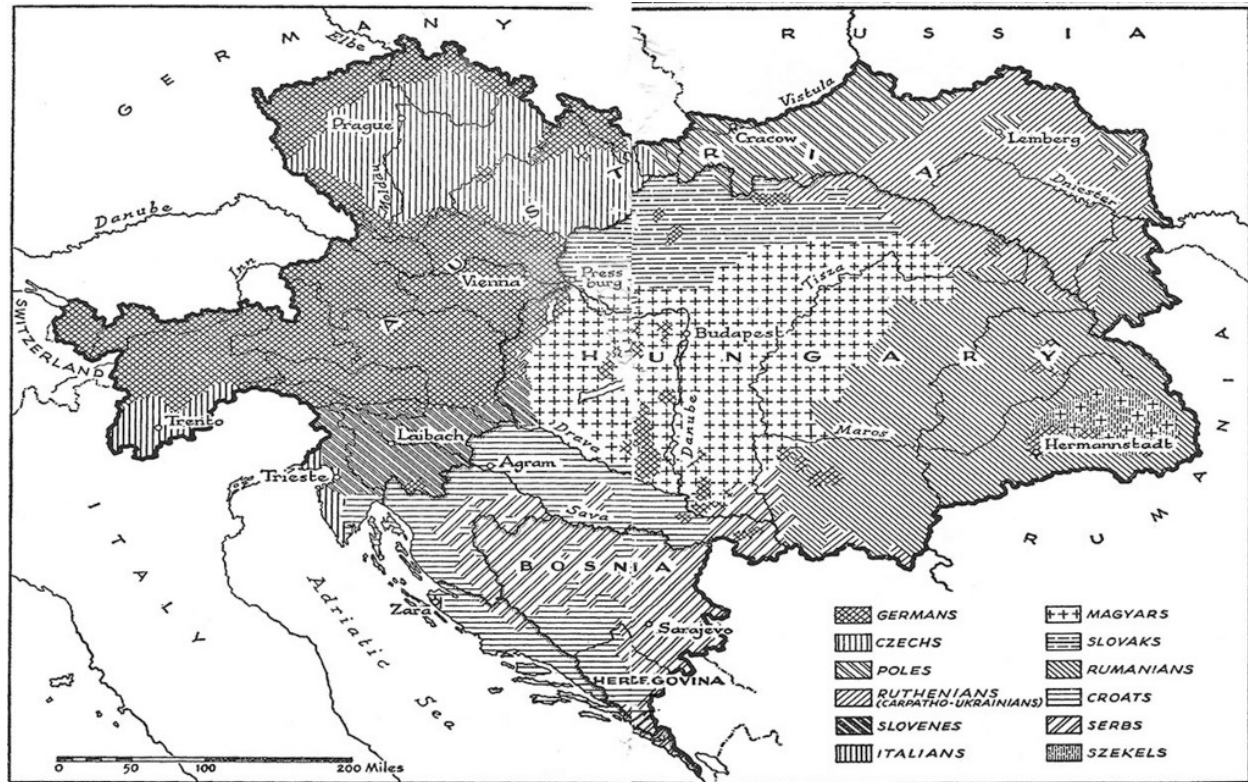
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Professor William Bowman, History 418: Nazism
18 March 2016

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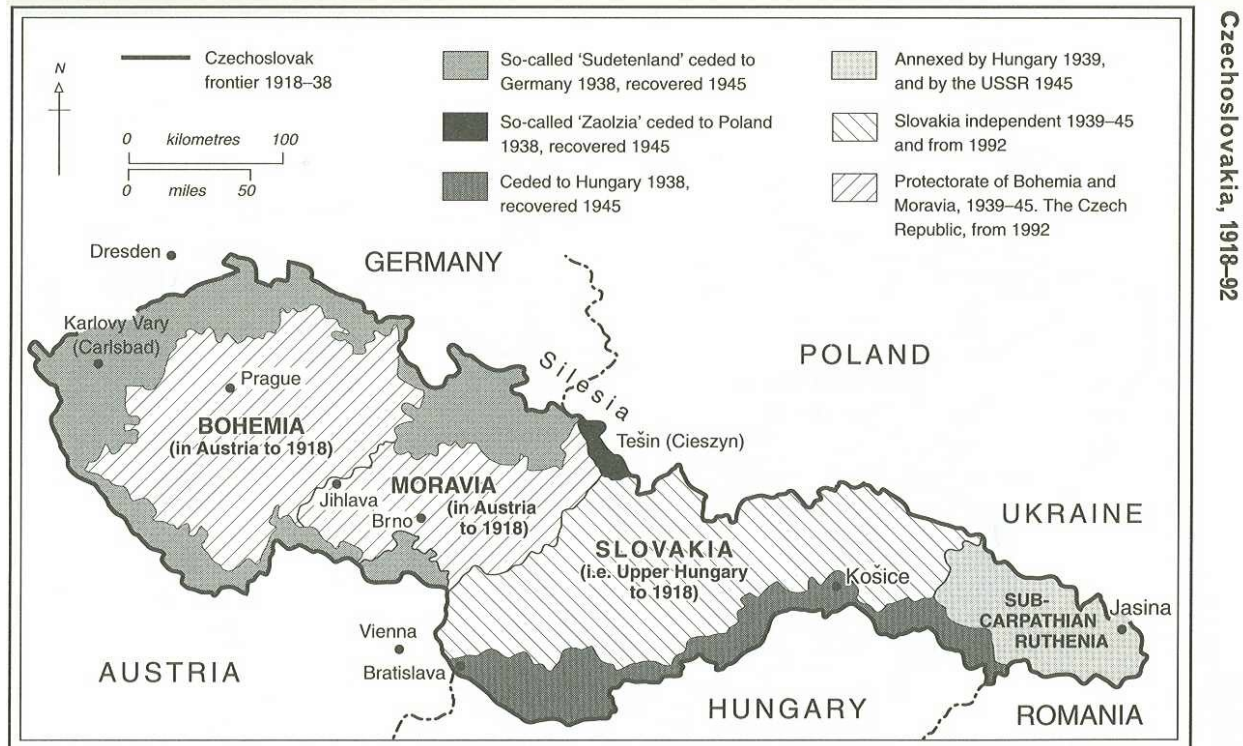
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Maps



I. Map of the Habsburg Empire and its ethnic populations before its breakup in 1918. The German regions around Prague in the northwest corner of the map are the populations that would make up Czechoslovakia's German minority.¹

¹ "Map of the Habsburg Empire," Institute for Research of Expelled Germans, accessed 14 April 2016.
<http://expelledgermans.org/sudetengermans.htm>



II. Czechoslovakia in the interwar period, showing the latter historical development of Czechoslovakia from the annexation of the Sudetenland to the dissolution of the state in 1992 into today's Czech Republic and Slovakia. The German majority regions are labeled as the 'Sudetenland' on this map.²

² Dr. Paul Werth, "Czechoslovakia 1938-1939", History 446: History of Europe since 1815 Geo-Quiz, University of Nevada, accessed 16 March 2016, <https://faculty.unlv.edu/pwerth/466.html#geoquiz>



III. Map of the German-speaking areas of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia in the majority Czech region of Czechoslovakia. Eger, the publishing center, and Aussig, the industrial city, are located in northern Bohemia.³

³ "Areas of the Czechoslovakian state founded in 1918 where the German-speaking parts of the population were a majority," Multicultural Interdisciplinary Handbook, accessed 14 April 2016, <http://grial4.usml.es/MIH/reignTerror/en/resource1.html>

Introduction and Thesis: Sudeten German Awareness in Germany

In the midst of the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I, the Czechs of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia in north-central Europe succeeded in founding the state of Czechoslovakia together with the Slovaks to their east.⁴ The Germans living in the Czech lands, however, protested the development, desiring autonomy or union with Austria or Germany. While tensions between the two groups simmered for much of the 1920s, the world economic crisis beginning in Czechoslovakia in 1930 would end what mutual Czech-German political toleration existed through uneven economic impact and discriminatory work projects.⁵ The Nazi-influenced *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (SdP) captured the largest number of German votes in 1935 and in 1938 the SdP leader Konrad Henlein issued his Carlsbad Ultimatum, calling for autonomy for the German majority in the so-called Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia that would essentially result in an alliance with Nazi Germany. The September Crisis and the Munich Agreement that followed would result in German occupation of the Sudetenland and the end of the first Czechoslovak Republic.⁶

The period between 1929 and 1934 offers an opportunity to see how German awareness of the Sudeten Germans, as the Germans of Czechoslovakia were then called, changed. The question is relevant for the reason that enthusiasm-gap that appeared between Hitler and the German people in the fall of 1938. Hitler and the Nazi Party had an enormous influence on the SdP, as evidenced by the coordination between Hitler and the SdP in 1938 and Henlein's flight into Germany before the annexation.⁷ Yet letters written to Hitler by ordinary Germans after the

⁴ Patrick Crowhurst, *A History of Czechoslovakia Between the Wars: From Versailles to Hitler's Invasion*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 18-22

⁵ Václav Houžvička, *Czechs and Germans 1848-2004: The Sudeten Question and the Transformation of Central Europe*, (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2015), 148-149.

⁶ Houžvička, *op. cit.*, 246.

⁷ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 211-212.

annexation reflect more relief that war was averted than joy that the Sudeten Germans were joined to the German nation.⁸ A concern for Sudeten Germans was therefore not on the minds a significant, vocal part of the German population, while it very much was a concern of Hitler's. Explaining this discrepancy requires examining the roots of Nazi influence in Sudeten German nationalism and how the Nazis built the narrative of Sudeten German suffering to necessitate annexation.

Yet the debate over the Sudetenland goes further than questions of agreement between Hitler and the German people at a critical moment in world history. The 1920s and 1930s represented complex understanding of who was German and what German responsibilities towards the Sudeten German people were. Discourses in Germany on German minorities abroad and the actions of the Nazi Party reveal both converging and diverging dialogues on how Germans defined themselves in the midst of changing national boundaries. Understanding how the Germans were aware of the Sudeten Germans allows for a more thorough examination of German identity before Hitler and the Nazi Party would redefine it in conquest and mass-murder.

The many different voices that made up this dialogue require a diverse set of sources. Limited to using available primary sources and only those in the German and English languages, this paper relies on case studies of sources, including minority magazines, encyclopedias, the diaries of Nazi officials, and official diplomatic communiques. Together, they provide an insight that points towards different ways of understanding Sudeten German awareness beyond the direct actions of political parties.

⁸ *Letters to Hitler*, ed. by Henrik Eberle and Victoria Harris, trans. by Steven Randall (London: Polity Press, 2006), 177-183.

Historical Context: A New Nation and an Aborted Revolt

In March 1919, the German-speaking people in the newly formed Republic of Czechoslovakia were struggling for their independence. Having identified with the Habsburg Empire and its imperial family during the nationalist struggles of the late nineteenth century, Germans saw their position within the territories of Bohemia and Moravia decline, as the collapse of the monarchy in November 1918 was preceded by a declaration of the new Czech government in Prague that October. Unlike the Germans, the Czechs were well positioned to take advantage of the collapse of the old Habsburg Empire. Tomáš Masaryk and his colleague Eduard Beneš had spent the war gaining support from the Allies for an independent Czech nation. The Czechs had also gained military prestige, as the Czech Legion, formed from captured Austro-Hungarian soldiers on the eastern front, fought its way across Russia after the Russian Revolution and managed to return to Europe in time to take part in the military victory.⁹ Now, with control of Prague, the Czechs had the necessary ingredients for a state.

The Germans viewed the situation very differently. The promise of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and its call for self-determination for ethnic groups in Europe was denied to them. Not wishing to live dominated by an ethnic majority who they regarded as inferior, the Germans sought to join with German Austria, the region they most identified with.¹⁰ This, indirectly, would have meant joining with Germany. The desire for a united German nation among German minority populations was widespread, and not just in the ruins of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the German Social Democratic Party and future

⁹ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 18-22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

first democratically-elected president of Germany, opened the Weimar Constitutional Convention in March 1919 with a speech in which he remarked on the Austrian convention which called for uniting with the German Republic.¹¹ In an address that was marked by partisan interruptions, he received general applause and agreement from the gathered delegates when he declared that “They [the Austrian Germans] belong to us and we belong to them!”¹² He called on the Allied powers to grant the nationalist dream of a united German nation, a move that would have potentially united German populations in Bohemia and Moravia into the German Reich.

But such a goal was far from the desires of the Allies. Having defeated Germany at a great human and economic cost over the past four years, Britain and France were not interested in making Germany stronger by uniting German Austria and Germany together. As for Czechoslovakia, Allied foreign policy experts noted that the German populations lived mainly in the border regions to the north, south, and west of the predominately Czech territories in mountainous regions that would provide natural defenses to the new state. France, seeking allies against a future German threat, wanted to ensure that the Czech position was as strong as possible to resist German incursion.¹³ Even Woodrow Wilson was far from interested in building a German state. For him, it was vital that national and historical boundaries be maintained while the ethnic majorities that had been suppressed by the great land empires would be given the right to chart their future. The ethnic majorities would be united with the ethnic minorities in identifying with the nation, rather than ethnic background, to make these new central and eastern

¹¹ *Die Deutsche Nationalversammlung im Jahre 1919 in ihrer Arbeit für den Aufbau des neuen deutschen Volksstaates*, herausgegeben von Geh. Justizrat Prof. Dr. Ed. Heilbron, 1. Band (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1920), 1-9. All translations unless otherwise noted are those of the author.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 26.

European states like the United States--a loyal melting pot reveling in the joys of independence.¹⁴

The Germans took exception to this vision. In an uncoordinated effort, predominately German regions in Czechoslovakia revolted against the new government. In northern Bohemia, a provisional government was declared. Germans in northern Moravia formed a territory they called the Sudetenland, after the mountain range that formed Czechoslovakia's northern border. To the south along the German Austrian border, towns seceded from the Czechoslovak state and joined Austria.¹⁵ The Germans in Czechoslovakia sought to force the issue through independence movements of their own. But the Czechs, their own nationalist goals so nearly accomplished, refused to let the resistance stand in their way, dispatching the Czech army to quell the rebellion. Backed by arms, experience, and nationalist drive, the Czech army was far superior to the German resisters.¹⁶ In some areas the rebellion was quashed peaceably. Near Reichenberg in northern Bohemia, thirty Germans dispatched to guard a nearby mountain were disarmed in the middle of the night by Czech troops.¹⁷ Elsewhere, the result was far more violent. More than fifty Germans were killed in clashes with Czech troops. Some Germans and German nationalist organizations fled across the border into Austria.¹⁸ It was an inauspicious beginning to the Czech-German relationship. The Germans in the new Czechoslovakia lacked many of the state-building resources that the Czechs had: a strong, organized military force, centralized leadership, and, most importantly, international support. With Germany preparing for the Paris Peace Conference and German Austria still recovering from defeat, neither was able or

¹⁴ Lloyd Ambrosius, "World War I and the Paradox of Wilsonianism," lecture at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, 2 June 2016.

¹⁵ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 25-26, 56-57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ Mark Cornwall, *The Devil's Wall: The Nationalist Mission of Heinz Rutha* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 101.

¹⁸ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 27.

willing to help the German minority in Czechoslovakia. Both the German elites and the masses in Germany turned a deaf ear to pleas from across the border.

Placing the Question: The Timeframe

How then did the abandonment of 1919 become the annexation of 1938? Most historians rightly point to the influence of Hitler and the Nazi Party in co-opting the German issues in Czechoslovakia to make territorial gains against a weakened enemy. Yet this interpretation does not explain alone why the Nazi government chose Czechoslovakia as a target or the enthusiasm gap between the Nazis and other Germans towards annexation. It also does not show how greatly the conversation within Germany changed after the Nazi seizure of power. The Nazis played a key role in redirecting the narrative in Germany about the Sudeten Germans, but it was a narrative that did not have everyone's agreeance, both outside and inside the Nazi government.

The period from 1929 to 1934 represents a period of profound change in how Sudeten German awareness was presented in Germany. The international Great Depression of 1929 struck Germany and Czechoslovakia during this time, helping to cause the collapse of the Weimar Republic and providing the opportunity for the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Czechoslovakia handled the economic decline better, but the huge impact of the Depression on the German territories, where the economy had not diversified and was dependent on the foreign export market, fueled a rise in political Sudeten German nationalism. Hitler's rise to power produced a substantial backlash in Czechoslovakia, as the government arrested and prosecuted members of the Nazi Party in Czechoslovakia, eventually banning of the party by the end of

1933.¹⁹ This would help clear the way for the rise of Konrad Henlein and his *Sudetendeutsches Heimatfront* (SHF), a cultural organization that evolved into the SdP.²⁰

German awareness of the Sudeten Germans, their struggles, and their aspirations shapes our understanding of the period in many ways. It illuminates how the discourse in Germany on the issues of minorities in Europe, particularly those of German populations living outside Germany, evolved under the Weimar Republic. The transnational nature of the Nazi Party and the support of the German government for Germans living abroad reveal a side of both official and unofficial efforts to shape German awareness of the Sudeten Germans. The Sudeten Germans also played a role in developing support for the Sudeten Germans still in Czechoslovakia. These dialogues within Germany entered into larger nationalistic narratives.

Historiography: Skirting the Topic

Most historians who have covered the topic of the First Czechoslovak Republic in the interwar years have not directly covered the topic of German awareness of the Sudeten Germans, the lone exceptions being the German historian Rudolf Jarowski and, to a more limited extent, the American historian Ronald Smelser. None have considered the topic within such a limited timeframe, particularly one that strenuously avoids placing the end of the period in 1933, when Hitler took power in Germany and the Czechoslovak government intensified its campaign against nationalist German organizations. The work of historians on the interwar Czechoslovakia have presented a variety of angles to examine the issue of Sudeten German awareness in Germany, while not yet addressing the bridge between the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany.

¹⁹ Ronald M. Smelser, *The Sudeten German Problem 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formulation of German Foreign Policy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University, 1975), 54.

²⁰ J. W. Bruegel, "The Germans in Pre-War Czechoslovakia," *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic: 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 182-183.

First, a background on the conflicted nature of Czechoslovakia's historiography would be in order. Milan Řepa, a Czech historian, compiled a historiography of Czech lands in his article "The Czechs, Germans, and Sudetenland: A Historiographical Dispute in the 'Heart of Europe.'" ²¹ Covering historians and their perspectives beginning with the Czech historian and politician František Palacký writing after the revolutions of 1848 and continuing through to the present day, Řepa casts the historiography as a question of state versus national history until World War II. With the onset of the Cold War, divisions between ideological and national perspectives emerged as exiled Czech historians and expelled Sudeten German historians in the West debated one another and Marxist Czech historians still working in communist Czechoslovakia. This led to tendencies among exiled Czech historians to seek to exonerate the Czechoslovak government from responsibility for the annexation, while the Sudeten German historians initially placed much of the blame on the Czechoslovak government. ²² The lengthening of the Cold War and the institutionalization of studying the subject, through such research institutes as *Collegium Carolinum* in Munich, helped bridge differences between the historiographies, while the end of the Cold War brought rapprochement on issues of historiographical debate between Czech and Germans, who decided on acceptable terms for events, such as the Sudeten German expulsion. ²³ However, not all historians have agreed with the rapprochement, even stating that the rapprochement was merely the continuation of the Czech narrative in a different guise.

One example of the rapprochement is the collaboration between Radomír Lůza and J.W. Bruegel. Lůza, one of the leading early historians of the postwar period, concentrated on political

²¹ Milan Řepa, "The Czechs, Germans, and Sudetenland: Historiographical Dispute in the Heart of Europe," *Disputed Territories and Shared Pasts*, ed. by Tibor Frank and Frank Halder (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 316-328.

²² Milan Řepa, *op. cit.*, 316-317.

²³ *Ibid.*, 316-328.

and economic dilemmas, using the rise of the Nazis in Czechoslovakia as a point of departure for talking more thoroughly about the developments of the 1930s.²⁴ Bruegel, who contributed to a volume edited by Luža, wrote on the political continuities from 1920 to 1935, with anti-Nazi parties consistently holding majorities in the Czechoslovak Parliament until the SdP's powerful showing in 1935.²⁵ These studies began to expose uneven periods of change between Czechoslovakia and Germany as well as the causes of the changes that did occur, but did not expand their focus much beyond participation in government and subversive activities.

Among the historians to expand upon the topics of institutionalized nationalism among Sudeten Germans and in Germany were Ronald Smelser and Rudolf Jarowski. Smelser sought to explain how the German nationalist institutions and organizations were transformed or sidelined by the Nazis for purposes of German expansion soon after their seizure of power.²⁶ Jarowski approaches the issue as one of identity: whether the Sudeten Germans are outposts of German culture and ethnicity belonging to wider "Germandom" or whether they are an ethnic minority in Czechoslovakia, intended to integrate into wider Czechoslovak society and Czechoslovak state identity.²⁷ Because Jarowski and Smelser focus on different decades, the 1920s and the 1930s respectively, links between their works are required to gauge the changes and continuities between the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany as well as their impact on society.

Historians such as Eagle Glassheim and Mark Cornwall show a trend in recent years to produce studies of groups within the Sudeten German population in order to better understand

²⁴ Radomír Luža, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 67-69.

²⁵ Bruegel, "Germans in Pre-War Czechoslovakia," 178-179.

²⁶ Ronald M. Smelser, *op.cit.*, 16-37.

²⁷ Rudolf Jarowski, *Vorposten oder Minderheiten? Der sudetendeutsche Volkstumskampf in den Beziehungen zwischen der Weimarer Republik und der ČSR* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1975), 10-11.

how they developed during the 1920s and 1930s to become avid supporters of the SHF.²⁸ Glassheim's short study of the Bohemian nobles after World War I and Cornwall's biography of Sudeten German youth leader Heinz Rutha provide microcosms of Sudeten German development and quests for awareness, emerging far before the arrival of the Nazis into nationalistic dialogues and aspirations.²⁹ These narratives, however, have yet to be united into a single study comparing the changes during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Řepa also has added to the discourse on Sudeten German awareness through his exploration of historiography during the interwar period. Řepa argues that the Sudeten Germans actively built a new identity based on German nationhood after the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire. He then proceeds to detail the role Sudeten German historians in creating that identity, first writing on the history of arts and literature before branching into their role in the history of the German people.³⁰ Řepa demonstrated how the intellectual elite of the Sudeten Germans helped create the Sudeten German perspective on other Germans and Germany, while leaving open questions as to how this historiography played out to an audience inside Germany.

Patrick Crowhurst and Václav Houžvička represent the latest historians in the realm of Czechoslovakian history. Crowhurst accuses Czech historians of leaving the Sudeten Germans out of the history of Czechoslovakia and sees his goal as to restore them to a place as actors in the history of the First Czechoslovak Republic.³¹ Yet he focuses primarily on the older themes of economic displacement and the influence of the Nazi Party. Houžvička has taken a broader approach, exploring the issues from the context of the 1848 revolution to the present. He makes use of Louis de Jong's study on the influence of ethnic German minorities in Germany to make

²⁸ Eagle Glassheim, "The Birth of a Sudeten German Nobility, 1918-1938," *The Germans and the East*, ed. by Charles W. Ingrao, and Franz A. J. Szabo, 270-276. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

²⁹ Cornwall, *op. cit.*, 104-105.

³⁰ Řepa, *op. cit.*, 309.

³¹ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 12-13.

his case for continuity between the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany.³² While this approach provides the broadest understanding of the question, his study does not fully answer the question of how the Sudeten Germans played a role in their fate.

The historiography has, for the most part, approached the question of awareness of the Sudeten Germans from the perspective of the history of Czechoslovakia or the approaching annexation. It is therefore worthwhile to study the documented and probable actions of the Nazi Party in isolation to determine their interest in Sudeten German awareness.

Narratives in Germany: *Kulturwehr*

The dialogues in Germany were concentrated in publications and organizations concerned with minorities in Europe. One of these was the journal *Kulturwehr*, the “Institution of the Federation of National Minorities in Germany,” the most readily available and well-known forum concentrated solely on European minorities.³³ The organization brought together Danish, Friesian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Sorbian minorities, and its journal reflected its diverse interests, with general articles on minority issues, articles pertaining to specific minorities in Germany as well as specific minorities in other European countries, relevant news articles from both German and foreign newspapers and magazines, and book reviews. Originally started in 1925 as *Kulturwille*, the magazine changed its name and adopted its long-term organizational structure in 1926. Graf Stanislaw von Sierakowski served as publisher. Described on the cover page as living at Groß Walpitz in East Prussia, Sierakowski was the first president of the Union of Poles in Germany, one of the founding organizations of the Federation.³⁴ But the chief writer and editor

³² Houžvička, *op. cit.*, 181-183.

³³ Original German title: Organ des Verbandes der nationalen Minderheiten Deutschlands.

³⁴ Peter Jan Joachim Kroh, *Nationsozialistische Macht und nationale Minderheit: Jan Skala(1889-1945): Ein Sorb in Deutschland* (Berlin: Kai Homilius Verlag, 2009), 204, fn.3.

of the magazine was Jan Skala, a member of the Sorb minority in eastern Germany.³⁵ Skala engaged in a very public battle for the rights of minorities. He was taken to court in 1928 on defamation charges and he attempted to exercise his right to use the Sorbian (also known as Wendish) language in court.³⁶ Skala's activism and the background of the publishing organization precluded any association with German nationalism. Instead the journal presented an internationalist view to the German public and with an open minded nature to the issue of minorities in Europe, reflecting the diverse background of the organization's supporters.

By 1929 *Kulturwehr* was publishing ten times a year and continued to follow the news of minorities in Europe. Articles on Czechoslovakia focused on German issues but also presented articles on Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, and Jews.³⁷ The seventh volume, published in 1931 serves as a case in point. No less than fourteen articles appear in the table of contents, four in the June issue and four in the November issue. Eight of the articles concerned themselves specifically with the Germans. Yet two cover the Hungarian minority, while three could have been addressed to the minorities in Czechoslovakia as a whole. The June issue's article "The Language Right after the Census of 1930," an October article on "The Position of the National Minorities in the Czechoslovakia," and an article in November concerning "The Anniversary Donation of President Masaryk." This last article discussed how Masaryk was granted 20 million Czech crowns, which he divided into smaller amounts for "different cultural and philanthropic purposes," with 2 million Czech crowns for "the German Society for Science and Art in

³⁵ The Sorb minority has an independent language and history and existed primarily in Bohemia and eastern Germany. Today Jan Skala is one of the key heroes of that community for his resistance to the Nazi regime.

³⁶ Gerald Stone, Review of *Nationalistische Macht und nationale Minderheit. Jan Skala (1889-1945): Eine Sorbe in Deutschland*, by Peter Jan Joachim Kroh, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 89, no. 2 (April 2011): 364-365, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.89.2.0364>.

³⁷ *Kulturwehr* (1929), 6.

Czechoslovakia” as well as a million crown to create a similar Hungarian institution.³⁸ The presentation of the Czech government sharply contrasted with the article on Sudeten German Nazis. In a section for excerpts from and analysis of other newspapers and journals, the writer begins “Sudeten German swastika men for a ‘Bloc of unliberated minorities’; that is the new slogan of the negativists!”³⁹ Comparing the political parties and factions of the Sudeten German and German communities, the writer notes that the political factionalism among the Germans in Czechoslovakia is “very exactly the same many-sidedness like the party sample cards of neighboring Germany.” In other words, the division among Social Democrats, conservatives and National Socialists was similar to the greatly divided political identities in Germany. Believing the Sudeten German Nazis to be a weaker form of the party in Germany, the writer dismisses them, saying “on the whole really more amusing than dangerous.”⁴⁰ The end of the article is marked “ska”, suggesting that Skala himself had written the article. Skala had a personal connection to Czechoslovakia, too, and had served as an antagonist to the Germans in Bohemia. He had participated in a sit-in at the Wendish Seminary in Prague in 1923, protesting the efforts of the Bishop of Messien to close the seminary as part of the efforts of Germanization.⁴¹ Skala was willing to risk challenging the right-wing extremists in order to promote democracy.

What is also notable about the journal is the Roman font. Graf von Sierakowski would have spelled his first name Stanislaus in German, yet on the covers of *Kulturwehr* until 1932 his name was spelled in the Polish manner, Stanislaw. The same went for the spelling of Czechoslovakia. *Kulturwehr* would consistently (again, until 1932) spell the country’s name as

³⁸ “Die Jubiläumsspende des Präsidenten Masaryk,” *Kulturwehr*, vol. 7, no.11 (November 1931), 418.

³⁹ The original German title: “Sudetendeutsche Hakenkreuzler für einen “Block der unzufriedenen Minderheiten”; das ist die neueste Parole der Negativisten!”

⁴⁰ „Block der unzufriedenen Minderheiten“, *Kulturwehr*, ed. by Jan Skala, 7, no. 6(Berlin: der Verband des National Minorities in Germany), 184.

⁴¹ Stone, *op. cit.*, 364.

“Čechoslovakei,” a German spelling that came closest to a Slavic spelling, requiring a caron. This symbol was unavailable in the German Fraktur calligraphic script.⁴² As Fraktur came to be used exclusively for German during the nineteenth century, any author citing a text written by a Czech author or a Czech text would have to switch fonts in order to spell the name.⁴³ This created a visual separation between Czech and German on the printed page, suggesting nationalistic differences and values. The accommodation of the German language with Czech spelling was more than convenience, but a political statement of independence from German intellectual nationalism.

But in the next year represented a change. In 1932, the journal’s lead organization changed its name to Institution of the Federation of National Minorities in the German Reich.⁴⁴ Instead of its regular 10-issue publication schedule, the journal published quarterly during the year. While a great deal happened politically in Czechoslovakia, only three articles that year directly concerned Czechoslovakia and only one on the Germans.⁴⁵ It is not clear what happened to *Kulturwehr* during this time, but the political crisis in Germany may have played a role in creating uncertainty at the organization. Changing the organization’s name to the traditional name for Germany, reminiscent of the Wilhelmian Empire and nationalistic ambitions, the new name might have been an effort to protect the organization from German conservatives and nationalists, particularly the Nazis, as they gained strength in the national government. That they did not seek protection from the Communists might show the conservatism of the members or a recognition of changing political winds.

⁴² Fraktur is a Gothic calligraphic script

⁴³ Tomasz Kamusella, "Central Europe from a Linguistic Viewpoint," *Age of Globalization* No. 2 (2010), 24.

⁴⁴ Original German name: Organ des Verbandes der nationalen Minderheiten des Deutschen Reiches

⁴⁵ “Inhaltsverzeichnis“, *Kulturwehr*, ed. by Jan Skala, 8 (Berlin: Verband der nationalen Minderheiten im Deutschen Reich, 1932).

The Nazis, however, do not appear to have been convinced by the name change. Following the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, *Kulturwehr* did not publish between January and June of 1933. When the June issue was published, one of the first articles was a long summary by Jan Skala of recent events and a call for democracy, while the next article was about the Jewish plight in Upper Silesia.⁴⁶ Skala had lost none of his courage in challenging the regime, but articles now discussed only German minority populations outside Germany. Jan Skala's name began to appear as chief writer and the subtitle of the magazine changed from "Magazine for Minority Culture and Politic" to "Magazine for Nationality Questions."⁴⁷ Czechoslovakia was the topic of fewer articles and now they concentrated solely on the German population.⁴⁸ These changes from the pre-1933 topics suggest Jan Skala was under pressure from the Nazi *Gleichschaltung* in the press, forcing a concentration on issues of German minorities. The Nazi agenda had clearly singled out the Germans of Bohemia as being worthy of concentration.

The *Gleichschaltung* appeared in stages.⁴⁹ Hitler issued a decree requiring coordination of all activities in the Third Reich on June 30, 1933. Specifically for the Ministry of the Interior, he granted jurisdiction over "General public enlightenment on the domestic scene...the press...the radio, the German Library in Leipzig, Art, Music..., Theater, Cinema..." References to this new policy had already appeared in a speech by Goebbels in the *Reichsgesetzblatt* on

⁴⁶ Jan Skala, "Nationale Revolution—Nationale Minderheiten," *Kulturwehr*, ed. by Jan Skala, 9, no.1 (Berlin: Verband der deutschen Minderheitenkultur und –Politik, 1933), 3-11; "Die Beschwerde der jüdische Minderheit Preussisch-Oberschlesiens vor dem Völkerbund," *Kulturwehr* ed. by Jan Skala, 9, no.1 (Berlin: Verband der deutschen Minderheitenkultur und –Politik, 1933), 11.

⁴⁷ Original German name: *Zeitschrift für Minderheitenkultur und –Politik; Zeitschrift für Volkstumsfragen*

⁴⁸ "Inhaltverzeichnis," *Kulturwehr*, ed. by Jan Skala, 9, no.1 (Berlin: Verband der deutschen Minderheitenkultur und –Politik, 1933).

⁴⁹ *Gleichschaltung* is the official term for the coordination of all activities in Germany under the control of the NSDAP after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933.

April 11, 1933.⁵⁰ This would suggest that Hitler wished to place emphasis on the act and its role in reshaping Germany to meet his vision for the new German Reich. Later in October, the role of editors in the new regime was clarified by the Editor's Law.⁵¹ Under the section titled "Editor's Profession," the law stated:⁵²

Those in the main occupation or for the reason of appointment to chief editor carry on contribution on the creation of intellectual content of in Reich territory edited newspapers and political journals through word, message or image is one in the professional obligation and right of the state regulated published editions through this law. Those responsible are called editors. No one may call themselves an editor who after this law is not authorized for that purpose.⁵³

The law went further to state that the editors were under the jurisdiction of the Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Josef Goebbels. The law also strictly stated in "“Licensing to the Editor's Profession”:

§5.1. who possess German membership in the Reich,
 2. who have not lost civic rights and the ability to wear public office
 3. is of Aryan descent and is not married to a person of non-Aryan
 descent...⁵⁴

That Jan Skala continued to publish *Kulturwehr* until 1938 leads to several conclusions about his actions. He quite possibly continued to publish despite pressure from the state, boldly declaring his defiance as he published his name as chief editor on the cover of the 1935 volumes of his journal. The state might not have been able to fully enforce the law and could not punish him immediately or it allowed some form of accommodation despite his Slavic roots. Perhaps Skala himself chose to limit his outspokenness and maintain the semblance of legality to allow the journal to continue to operate. Whatever the case, it seems highly unlikely that the Sorb, who

⁵⁰ "Hitler's Decree for the *Gleichschaltung* (Coordination) of All Activities in the Third Reich, June 30, 1933," *Hitler's Third Reich: A Documentary History*, ed. by Louis L. Snyder, (Chicago: Nelson, 1988), 129-130.

⁵¹ Original German name: *Schriftleitergesetz*

⁵² Original German name: *Schriftleiterberuf*

⁵³ "Schriftleitergesetz vom 4. Oktober 1933," *Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente 1933-1945*, edited by Walter Hofer (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1957), 90.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

publicly protested Germanization in Czechoslovakia, would of his own free will publish in the July-August 1935 edition the speech of Konrad Henlein to his voters after the SdP's successful Czech Parliament election in May 1935, in which he declared "The people have decided, the idea of the people's community has won!"⁵⁵ Somehow the voice for the defenseless minorities of Germany had begun publishing the speeches of German nationalists.

German Narratives: The Encyclopedias

The effects of bringing newspapers and journals under direct Nazi government control may be seen in more than a cultural magazine that had already tread close to the edge of legality during the Weimar Republic. The seventh edition of the Meyers Lexicon, an encyclopedia published by the Bibliographisches Institut in Leipzig, had its first volume published in 1924, and in 1929 the eleventh volume was released with the definition for "Sudeten," "Sudetendeutschum," and "Sudetenländer." The first referred to the mountains of "lower, upper Silesia, and Czechoslovakia (Bohemia, Moravia, and former Austrian Silesia." The population is described as being "predominately German, on the south side also Czech (density 100 to 150 per square kilometer) operate mixed farming, forestry, wool, cotton, linen weaving mills, produces glass and porcelain. The *chief industry areas* are the coal fields of Waldenburg and Schatzlar." *Sudetendeutschum* is defined as "the old Austrian designation for *Deutschum* in the Sudetenlands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, since 1919 for the *Deutschum* of the whole of Czechoslovakia." The citation referenced *Deutschum* abroad in its suggestions for further reading. The *Sudetenländer* definition is even shorter: "new name for the former Austrian crown

⁵⁵ "Aufruf Henleins an der Wähler der 'Sudetendeutsche Partei,'" *Kulturwehr*, ed. by Jan Skala, vol. 10, July-August 1935), 658.

lands of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, having a share of the Sudetens.”⁵⁶ This definition gives at best limited emphasis to the region and even further limited reference to the Sudeten Germans themselves, going into little explanation of the region.

The same year F.A. Brockhaus in Leipzig released the second volume of its new updated lexicon, to replace the edition written in the late 1890s. The city of Aussig, located in Bohemia north of Prague, was included. It was described as the “administrative center of the political district of Aussig,” the region having a population of 117,840, mostly Germans, and the city itself being the second largest city in “German Bohemia” with a population of 39,830, of which 30,850 were German.⁵⁷ The description goes on to talk about the city’s role as the “the most significant transportation hub of North Bohemia, the busiest port in Bohemia and the Elbe until Hamburg, the most significant transfer site in Czechoslovakia for soft coal, sugar, chemicals, fruit.”⁵⁸ While entries such as this explain the significance of this industrial Sudeten German city, the dominance of the German population, and show a geographical connection to a major German city, it does not appear to reflect a specific agenda. Despite Sudetenland becoming a popular description for the region by this time, the term is not used, and neither are the city’s inhabitants referred to as Sudeten Germans. Instead the more historical term of German Bohemia appears. The editors also appear to show no qualms about referring to the city’s significance to Czechoslovakia, nor seek to deny Czechoslovak claims to it. Later on in the description, no reference is made to the formation of Czechoslovakia as being significant to the city’s history, and all works referenced predate the First World War and were written in German.⁵⁹ The description is thus conservative, avoiding mentioning recent political struggles, emphasizing a

⁵⁶ Meyers Lexicon, 7th ed., vol. 11, (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institute, 1924), 1114.

⁵⁷ Original name: Deutschböhmen

⁵⁸ Der Große Brockhaus, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1929), 117.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

predominant role for the Germans without calling for German ethnic unity either within Czechoslovakia or to the German state. .

By 1934, when the nineteenth volume of *Der Große Brockhaus* was published, the picture has changed. Two maps show Czechoslovakia without mentioning it by name. Maps 56 and 56a, show the “Sudeten- und Karpathenländer,” the first concentrating on the geology, the second on tectonic plates.⁶⁰ These maps are scientific, concentrating on these geographical features rather than politics. Prague is relegated to the top right corner, excluding western Bohemia entirely, while the Hungarian capital of Budapest lies closer to the center. Map 56b follows the same geographic parameters but concerns itself with the “natural resources” of the region. This time the borders are marked, seeming to emphasize the petroleum fields of eastern Czechoslovakia and central Romania. But map 57a shows a different understanding of the region. Referring now to the industry of Bohemia, Moravia, and Czech-Silesia, it focuses on the industries that predominantly relate to Sudeten Germans: glass, porcelain, chemicals, and textiles. The orange shading, however, reflects this economic map in an ethnic perspective, showing the “German settlement areas,” extending over the borders of the German Reich and Austria into Czechoslovakia, blurring the political borders.⁶¹ It represents more than a claim to the economic and cultural prowess of the Sudeten Germans. The map lays claim to the Sudeten Germans as having a place in *Deutschtum* and, perhaps, in a greater Germany.

The entries that follow in *Das Große Brockhaus* volume show the change yet more starkly. Gone are references to *Sudetendeutschtum*. “Sudeten,” filling a nearly a full page in the Meyer’s Encyclopedia just five years earlier, now is reduced to less than half a page. The other half-page is taken up by “Sudetendeutsche,” the “collective name of Germans living in the

⁶⁰ Original German term: Sudeten- und Carpathian-lands.

⁶¹ Deutsche Siedlungsgebiete; *Das Große Brockhaus*, 2nd ed., vol. 19 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1934), 128-129 .

Sudetenlands, some 3.3 million.” The description identifies the Germans living Bohemia and Moravia not to a broader group of ethnic Germans living both inside and outside the Reich, to the universal *Deutschtum*. Instead they are their own independent ethnic group within Czechoslovakia connected to Germany by ethnicity.⁶² It goes on to explain that “[they] themselves belong tribally moderate after speech, convention, and fashion” to distinct areas: the Böhmerwald, Egerland, and the “language islands” in Silesia. It also claims that “the Sudeten Germans came into the country in the general line of the East-Middle German colonialization, primarily since the twelfth century.” It makes reference to their place in the *Volksstum* and the variety of organizations the Sudeten Germans formed, including some from the 1920s.⁶³ Unlike *Meyers Lexicon*, the literature cited is recent and the authors are Sudeten German. Emil Lehmann, one of the authors cited, was also a frequent contributor to another source listed, the *Sudetendeutsches Jahrbuch*, a Sudeten German publication printed in Eger in western Bohemia as well as in Munich.⁶⁴ The writers of *Das Große Brockhaus* deferred to the writings of the Sudeten Germans themselves in seeking to describe them.

Other entries also reflect the change in the “Sudetendeutsche” entry. “Sudetendetsche Heimatfront,” “Sudetendeutscher Landbund,” and the “Sudetenländer” focus on specific Sudeten German organizations and identify a Sudeten German geographical area. Of the three, perhaps most surprising is the *Sudetendeutsche Heimatsfront* (SHF), which, as the entry notes, had only been founded the year before the publication of the volume, on October 1, 1933. The SHF is called “the political movement of the young Sudeten German generation.”⁶⁵ What it does not mention is the organization also absorbed remnants of the German National Socialist Workers’

⁶² “Abroad,” the term for Germans living in border regions is *Grenzlanddeutsche*.

⁶³ *Das Große Brockhaus*, 2nd ed., vol. 19 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1934), 324.

⁶⁴ Original German title: Sudeten German Yearbook

⁶⁵ *Das Große Brockhaus*, 2nd ed., vol. 19 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1934), 325.

Party (DNSAP). Transnational Nazi Party influence and Sudeten German nationalism had collided in the *Das Große Brockhaus* entry.

The influence of the Nazi Party after a time shaped the awareness in Germany of the Sudeten Germans. The sudden rise in references to the Sudeten Germans and their interests appears more than an accidental move, showing a close correlation between the publication date and the coordination of German cultural life under the Nazi regime. What is also clear, however, is that Sudeten German speeches and texts are now available in Germany and are in scholarly use for understanding the German minority group. This would suggest an inordinate interest by Nazi censors in the nationalistic opinions of Sudeten Germans. What the opinions of two German officials on both sides of the Czechoslovak border would show, however, was that Nazi interest was both nuanced and constrained.

Nazi Party: A Transnational Influence before 1933

“Straight to Prague, where tonight I speak before the students,” Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary on February 3, 1930. “Hopefully they will not arrest me. Nothing is to be put past the Czechs.”⁶⁶ Goebbels was visiting Prague at the invitation of the university *Volkssport*, the youth movement of the DNSAP.⁶⁷ While officially the party was not connected to the Nazi Party in Germany and officially pledged loyalty to the Czechoslovak state, Goebbels’s invitation and participation in Prague showed the party’s true affiliation. Goebbels’s visit also reflected how the Nazi Party and one of its most prominent leaders was aware of the Sudeten Germans.

The DNSAP had long ties to German politics and Hitler’s movement. Rudolf Jung, an engineer and a leader of the DNSAP, wrote a book published in Aussig in 1919 called *National*

⁶⁶ Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: sämtliche Fragmente*, ed. by Elke Fröhlich, 1 (New York: K.G. Saur, 1987), 494.

⁶⁷ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 88.

*Socialism: its Basis, its History, and its Goal.*⁶⁸ In 1922 the book was republished in “revamped” form in Germany. Jung, who is described on the cover as “Deputy, Member of the Prague House” or deputy in the Czechoslovak Parliament in this edition, held many of the key tenants of the Hitler movement in Germany: the racial conflict between Germans and Jews, the Jewish roots of Marxism and the racial betrayal by socialists of their German roots. In response to these threats, on March 20, 1920, at Salzburg in Austria, “National Socialists in German Austria, the German Reich, and Czechoslovakia” united to become the “National Socialist Party of the German People.”⁶⁹ Jung quotes a speech at the “constitutional convention of German Austria” delivered on October 21, 1918, by Deputy Hans Knirsch: “Only in a united German state could we Germans of the Eastern Marches hope for the realization of every basic principle of state socialism, which will heal the wounds of this war and lead our eighty million people of work and activity towards a happy future. Long live a free, social All-Germany!”⁷⁰ For the Sudeten German National Socialists, the ideology of National Socialism offered an agenda that would unite the German regions of Czechoslovakia with a greater Germany. This plea appears to have found an audience in Germany: the publisher was the *Deutscher Volksverlag* in Munich. Jung’s *National Socialism* would have found a home in the nationalistic atmosphere of Bavaria on the eve of Hitler’s Beer Hall Putsch.

By the 1930, both Jung and Knirsch were leaders of a changed and sophisticated DNSAP. During the 1920s, the DNSAP, like its fellow nationalist party, the German National Party (DNP), had opted to participate in parliamentary politics, while criticizing those German

⁶⁸ Original title: *Der nationale Sozialismus: Seine Grundlage, sein Werdegang, und sein Ziel*.

⁶⁹ Rudolf Jung, *Der nationale Sozialismus: Seine Grundlage, sein Werdegang, und sein Ziel*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1922), 81.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 87

“activist” parties who already had without demanding conditions for German autonomy.⁷¹ Knirsch had joined Jung in the Czechoslovak Parliament as a representative, holding one of fifteen seats by the time the DNSAP was dissolved in 1933.⁷² The DNSAP, like many of the political parties at that time, was also running a youth organization, the *Volkssport* (People’s Sport).⁷³ When registered in April 1929 with the Czechoslovak government, the *Volkssport* claimed to be a German cultural organization, devoted to outdoor activities. Steadily, however, the movement adopted the SA uniform and became increasingly militant.⁷⁴ It was this proto-Nazi Party in Czechoslovakia that invited Goebbels to talk to their organization.

Goebbels was not yet the master of propaganda that he would become. In February 1930, he was the Berlin *Gauleiter* and editor of the paper *Der Angriff*, a weekly propaganda paper.⁷⁵ A protracted dispute with the Nazi leaders Otto and Gregor Strasser brothers had prevented Goebbels from expanding his newspaper into a daily.⁷⁶ Around this time Goebbels scored a propaganda bonanza with the death of Horst Wessel, a young Berlin SA leader fatally injured by local Communists in a rent dispute. Using Wessel’s agonizing death and the song he had written called “*Die Fahne hoch*,” (Raise high the flag), Goebbels made Wessel into a badly needed martyr. The funeral on March 1, 1930, would begin a myth of Nazi courage and sacrifice.⁷⁷ An ambitious and prominent leader with an eye for utilizing events to his own advantage, Goebbels would be the perfect person to be made aware of the Sudeten Germans and their issues.

⁷¹ Houžvička, *op. cit.*, 146

⁷² Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 102.

⁷³ Full German title: *Verband Volkssport, Nationalsozialistischer Verband für Wandern, Radfahren, Spiel und Sport aller Art*.

⁷⁴ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 88.

⁷⁵ “Region Leader” and “The Attack”; Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany: A New History* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 225.

⁷⁶ Peter Longerich, *Goebbels: A Biography*, translated by Alan Bance, Jeremy Noakes, and Lesley Sharpe, (New York: Random House, 2015), 124. The Strasser brothers were at this time powerful members of the Nazi Party attempting to curtail the power of potential challengers, such as Goebbels. They were removed from power in 1932, before Hitler took power.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

Goebbels's reactions to the situation in Czechoslovakia is one that reflected the cautious attitude the Nazi Party in Germany took towards their Sudeten German compatriots. Arriving in Prague on the afternoon of the speech, he talked briefly with the students--"orderly young men...they are very ardent"—before taking a pre-speech nap. "Overflowing hall. A powerful success. An ostentatious approval." The Czech authorities ended the demonstration when two Jewish protestors interrupted the end of the speech and were ejected. "A fine pre-arranged game! Great commotion. Our chairman was well not aware to the situation."⁷⁸ Goebbels had fought street battles and protests in unruly "red" Berlin before this outburst.⁷⁹ The situation played well to his prejudices: Jewish collaboration with an oppressive Slavic government ruling over Germans, trampling their rights of free speech. He criticized the organization of the event that did not prevent the counterdemonstration in the first place. Goebbels expected discipline from the Sudeten German Nazis as he expected it of his Nazi forces at home in Berlin.

Goebbels made no mention of spending the night in Prague but instead appears to have left almost immediately after the interrupted rally. Before he did, he met with Deputy Knirsch "a calm, fine, trim and appeared to me as a capable man." Goebbels did not remark on anything passing between them in the way of instructions or advice. On the train ride home Goebbels also met with another DNSAP leader, "Deputy [Rudolf] Kasper. An intelligent worker. Told me a great deal about our Sudeten German movement." Summing up, Goebbels comments, "The head is probably Knirsch and Jung, who...make the outward appearance. A little sloppiness and podsnappery is also well present."⁸⁰ Goebbels did not attempt to stay on longer and help the Sudeten Germans organize themselves; he was more concerned about performing the task of an

⁷⁸ Goebbels, *op. cit.*, 495.

⁷⁹ Fischer, *op. cit.*, 202-203 .

⁸⁰ Goebbels, *op. cit.*, 495.

observer and envoy of the Nazi message. He was now leaving out of personal self-interest in his own security.

Goebbels does deign to make comments about what he has seen in the context of the great Nazi struggle against the Slavic races. He admitted earlier that when he first arrived in the city “of Prague I saw only less.” But he still has seen enough to conclude that the situation is part of a pattern. “That was a look at the German minority problem,” he begins.

The Germans build the cultures, and then the uncreative parasites diminish them. Prague is a German city, and the Germans therein still only suffer. How German it is, it appeared to me on a carriage excursion—there is still have [carriage rides] there—to the gathering. About Wenceslas Square. Laid out very German. But with Czech signs. Disgusting! Had the German always in the past had so much powerful political will, as they had culture, we would today be rulers of Europe, perhaps even the world.⁸¹

Goebbels’s world view is on full display. He places what he sees in Prague into the context of a wider German struggle for supremacy against inferior nations and races. His reaction to the carriage ride is one of urbanity taking note of provincial attitudes. For Goebbels, the Sudeten Germans are one of many German groups part of the larger struggle of Germans against the inferior races, part of the wider Nazi struggle to gain supremacy in Europe.

The Ambassador’s Dilemma: Official Awareness after the Seizure of Power

Dr. Walter Koch, the German ambassador in Czechoslovakia, sent a message to the Foreign Ministry on October 10, 1933 to summarize the events of the preceding days. Entitled “Situation of the Sudeten Germans,” Dr. Koch detailed the dissolution of the DNSAP and the DNP that he had previously reported on October 5, the collapse of plans for a “Popular Front” and a “People’s Council,” and Henlein’s efforts to save the newly formed SHF from Czech persecution. When noting the terror of the Sudeten German population towards the Czech

⁸¹ Goebbels, *op. cit.*, 495.

crackdown on all organizations with any affiliation to the Nazis, Dr. Koch also remarked on the Sudeten German attitude towards the Germans. “On the Sudeten German side,” he noted to his superiors in Berlin, “there is, moreover, the feeling that all that has been going on has not made a sufficiently deep impression on the Reich German public and press and that no help is to be expected from Germany. The rather indiscriminate nervousness...with which the Czech authorities carry out their measures, increases the general insecurity even more.”⁸² This perspective of the Sudeten German community reflects not only an awareness of German attitudes towards them, but how Sudeten German awareness in Germany or lack thereof could affect the morale of Sudeten Germans.

In the wake of Hitler’s election in Germany, the Czechoslovak government elevated their prosecution of the Sudeten German Nazis on charges of treason and colluding with a foreign power. Already having plans to prosecute the Nazi Deputies in the Czechoslovak Parliament when their parliamentary immunity expired, the Czechoslovak government now sought to reduce any attempt to challenge the authority of the state. A first response was the passing of a state of emergency on June 9th, giving the government the ability to pursue the DNSAP and the DNP more thoroughly.⁸³ New press laws had already resulted in bans on ninety-eight Reich German newspapers, preventing Sudeten Germans from receiving news or propaganda from Germany.⁸⁴ Trials against Sudeten Germans and Reich Germans in the western Bohemian town of Asch proceeded on charges of participating in Nazi rallies in Germany before the German Reichstag

⁸² “Minister in Czechoslovakia to the Foreign Ministry—10 October 1933,” *Documents on German Foreign Policy: 1918-1945*, edited by Paul R. Sweet, series C, 1, no. 488 (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1957), 906.

⁸³ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*,

⁸⁴ “The Minister in Czechoslovakia to the Foreign Ministry—19 June 1933”, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, series C, 1, no.326, 584.

elections in March.⁸⁵ The rigorous Czech offensive was posing a threat not just to Sudeten German Nazis but to Reich Germans living in Czechoslovakia.⁸⁶

All of this posed a particularly difficult dilemma for Dr. Koch. He was not, as Crowhurst claimed, a career diplomat in the sense that he had emerged from the civil service at the *Auswärtiges Amt*, but a National Liberal politician appointed in 1921 as Minister in Czechoslovakia and who continued to serve until 1935. J.W. Brügel describes him as having “extraordinary knowledge of the Czech political situation and a shrewd power of analysis with no trace of a pro-Czech attitude....”⁸⁷ This judgement suggests that Dr. Koch is a mostly neutral but strong observer of events in Czechoslovakia. He had thoroughly condemned the efforts of Sudeten German nationalists in the 1920s and urged Berlin to do so as well, even receiving support from the influential Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann for his views, while welcoming the move by German activist parties to join the Czechoslovak government in 1926.⁸⁸ Dr. Koch was also no friend of the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Beněš, although his personal relationship apparently had no influence on the policies of the German government.⁸⁹ Dr. Koch, in other words, was an influential voice in the German Foreign Ministry who did not follow the nationalist line.

It is from this professional and political standpoint that Dr. Koch, while probably disguising his true political colors, gave cautious advice to the new Nazi government on how to proceed. In a December report on possibly giving financial support to those connected with the now-defunct DNSAP, he recommended that only financial support could be given, and carefully,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 584, fn. 1.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 584.

⁸⁷ J.W. Brügel, “German Diplomacy and the Sudeten Question before 1938,” in *International Diplomacy*, 37, no. 3 (July 1961), 323.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 323-325.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 323-325.

as the Czechs would most likely retaliate against the Sudeten Germans in prison. The financial aid could also only be given through trusted men, whose names Dr. Koch felt comfortable in passing along through the official message itself, as well as relying exclusively on the “the party and trusted members.”⁹⁰ This is the cautious advice of a diplomat attempting to help Sudeten Germans without embarrassing his country in a difficult political time.

Yet there is also a sense that Dr. Koch is aware of other discourses in the Sudeten German community, rather than just the single viewpoint of the DNSAP or the Nazi regime across the border. His diplomatic note on June 19 mentions that the measures taken against the nationalists “not only find approval of the German Government parties; it is also noticeable that German opposition parties like the Christian Social party or the Labor and Economy Group do not oppose this legislation with any elementary resistance, but merely display a lame sort of opposition.”⁹¹ The rest of the Sudeten German political community is tacitly united behind the suppression, suggesting that the terror Dr. Koch describes later either reflects that these parties lack popular support among the Sudeten Germans or that the Sudeten German community itself was divided on supporting the Nazis. His awareness of this strained political situation would suggest that official German awareness realized that the Nazis lacked full support in Czechoslovakia as did the German political opposition.

Dr. Koch also takes particular exception to plans against the German University in Prague. With some disgust he writes “[the Czechs] are even considering converting the University from a German one into a university for all national minorities of the state (thus including Jews and Hungarians). In this way any element of a consciously German character of

⁹⁰ “The Minister in Czechoslovakia to the Foreign Ministry—17 December 1933”, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, 2, no. 132, 236.

⁹¹ “The Minister in Czechoslovakia to the Foreign Ministry—19 June 1933”, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, 1, No. 326, 583.

the University would be finished for good.”⁹² A cultural awareness and protectiveness seems to make Dr. Koch particularly protective of the university.

The Foreign Ministry appears to have concurred with Dr. Koch, both on a practical and nationalistic level in regards to the plight of the Sudeten Germans. A message sent to Dr. Koch on November 23 set forth the policy that “both sides should strive at least to normalize again the outward relations of Czechoslovakia as soon as possible.” When dealing with the arrests both in Czechoslovakia and the retaliatory arrests in Germany of Czechoslovak citizens, the Foreign Ministry asked Dr. Koch to request from the Czechoslovak government “a list of the Reich German citizens sentenced in Czechoslovakia since the revolution; this list would also have to contain in detail the offenses charged against them and their punishments.”⁹³ The concern of the Foreign Ministry was thus the well-being of German-Czech relations on an international level and the protection of citizens of Germany. The Sudeten Germans were taking second place when it came to considerations of all Germans.

The Nazi government, with these priorities in mind, also began to move to coordinate their policy towards the Sudeten Germans. The *Volksdeutsch* Council (VR) member Dr. Steinacher in a meeting with the Foreign Ministry, began to take full control of the Sudeten German issue for the German government.⁹⁴ The reading of the situation, given by Dr. Steinacher, stated that they would be unable to help organized Nazi Party institutions in Czechoslovakia and “For years the Sudeten Germans would have to hold out by their own strength.”⁹⁵ All further questions as to the Sudeten German policy would be directed to the VR. As a final recommendation “it was too made clear once again that there was a general ban

⁹² Ibid., 583.

⁹³ “The Foreign Ministry to the Legation in Czechoslovakia—23 November 1933”, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, 2, No. 83, 147.

⁹⁴ Original German name: *Volksdeutschrat*

⁹⁵ “Minute by an Official of Department VI—March 19, 1934” 2, No. 330, 617.

applying to all party authorities on activities outside the borders of the Reich in foreign countries, and also that on principle Germans abroad were not to be admitted to the SA and the Labor Service.”⁹⁶ The Nazi government had made a double-move: by stepping in through the VR, the Nazi government gained more direct control over assisting the Sudeten Germans; at the same time, official Nazi policy put distance between Germany and the Sudeten German Nazis to await a better opportunity.

Abroad Organizations: An Overview

While the VR was a recent organization for German government to use towards greater control over Germans abroad in general, Steinacher and his organization, the Association for *Deutschtum* Abroad (VDA), was not.⁹⁷ Originally founded in 1881 as an association specializing in founding schools for German ethnic communities outside the German Reich, it had expanded after 1918 into a cultural and political organization with representatives in twenty-seven countries. After 1933, the Nazis created a more official role for the VDA. Dr. Steinacher, a German nationalist with a reputation as a fighter for German minorities everywhere, was made leader in April of 1933 and the VDA changed from an association to a People’s Federation, a term more popular for German nationalistic aspirations.⁹⁸ Steinacher was not someone who fully followed the Nazi Party line; he was frustrated with Hitler’s focus on Germany alone and would lose his position in 1937 when he opposed Hitler on leaving South Tirol and its German population under Italian rule.⁹⁹ Differences in opinion, however, do not appear to have been of

⁹⁶ Ibid., 618

⁹⁷ Original German name of VDA: *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland*.

⁹⁸ Smelser, *op. cit.*, 16-17.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 18-19.

too great a concern to the Nazi government in 1933, when Rudolf Hess, a longtime associate of Hitler and already Deputy to the Führer, took charge of all issues relating to Germans beyond Germany's borders, announcing the creation of the VR under a Munich university professor Dr. Haushofer. Hess gave Steinacher "primary responsibility for representing the *Volksdeutsch* Council abroad." A clause of this order also made the organization secret.¹⁰⁰

It is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper to explore the issues of all German nationalistic organizations in Germany as well as to explore fully how these organizations and their awareness of the Sudeten Germans changed during this period.¹⁰¹ It is, however, worthwhile showing that the Nazi *Gleichschaltung* brought changes to all organizations dealing with the Germans abroad. The VR had emerged from talks involving the VDA as well as the German Protection Federation, the German Foreign Institute and the German Academy.¹⁰² Personal connections among the leadership and a desire to promote centralization led to the creation of the VR.¹⁰³ This ultimately meant turning their educational and cultural institutions into a tool for the Nazi Party.

Sudeten German organizations in Germany, however, were sidelined. One example is the Sudeten German Homeland Federation (SHB), formed from Sudeten German refugees and becoming a militant organization running rallies calling for the secession of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia. In 1933, the SHB attempted to expand in coordination with the Federation of the German East (BdO) and benefitted from the flight of Hans Krebs, one of the leaders of the DNSAP in Czechoslovakia. The movement, however, when found to be out of line

¹⁰⁰ "Record of a Decision by the Deputy of the Führer—October 27, 1933," 2, No.31, 49.

¹⁰¹ For further study, Ronald M. Smelser's *The Sudeten German Problem* and Radomír Luža's *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans* give detailed summaries, while Rudolf Jarowski's *Vorposten oder Minderheiten?* gives the most through account.

¹⁰² Original German names: *Deutscher Schutzbund*, *Deutsches Auslandinstitut*, and *Deutsche Akademie*.

¹⁰³ Smelser, *op. cit.*, 23.

with the VR, was reduced in access to political power by Hess. The SHB and other Sudeten Germans would carry on but as a “nuisance.”¹⁰⁴ Organizations that did not fit the narrative promoted by the Nazi Party were kept from the planning rooms that would decide the fate of their communities in Czechoslovakia.

Conclusion: A Controlled Narrative

In 1935 two German cigarette companies, collaborated on making a cigarette card album. Announcing in their forward that their inspiration had come from the recent plebiscite in the Saarland that had returned the region in western Germany to formal German governance, the patriotic corporations sought to both remind and celebrate the events of the past fifteen years. The album gave places for the consumer to paste the cigarette cards with images from each month from the events of the November Revolution of 1918 to January 1935, along with descriptions of the events of that month on the opposite side. The album reflects a Nazi propaganda outlook: no mention is made of defeats along the Western Front in 1918 and the murder of Ernst Röhm and the leadership of the SA by Himmler and the SS in the Night of the Long Knives on June 30, 1934 is cast as a foiled coup and the picture for June 1934 is of Goebbels’s negotiations with Poland.¹⁰⁵

The Sudeten Germans are not mentioned for much of the album until November 1934, when two events are noted. The first is the order of a German court in Eger to conduct business

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁵ *Die Nachkriegszeit 1918-1934*, Eckstein-Halphaus und Waldorf-Astoria (1935), 7; Smelser, *op. cit.*, 93.

only in German and clashes between German and Czech students in Prague.¹⁰⁶ The second was the yielding of the German University to demands by the Czech government to turn over its old insignia.¹⁰⁷ The timing and choice of events appears strange. These are not events that appear to have stood out to contemporaries and are not singled out by many of the histories written later as particularly significant to Sudeten Germans.

Yet the choice suggests an insight into what had happened to Sudeten German awareness in Germany by 1935. With Henlein leading his SdP into the elections, the Nazi government felt comfortable covertly providing funds to the election campaign.¹⁰⁸ The SdP's victory that year turned the party into the largest single party in the Czechoslovak Parliament.¹⁰⁹ With a willing and powerful ally in Czechoslovakia, the Nazi government may have finally felt willing to give the Sudeten Germans greater focus in its propaganda.

The propaganda album also shows a selective view of history. Without any mention of the trials and tribulations of the Sudeten Germans during the 1920s and early 1930s, it might appear to an uninformed reader that oppression of the Sudeten Germans had only just begun. Like the references to the SHF in *Das Große Brockhaus* and the republishing of Henlein's triumphant speeches in the formerly independent *Kulturwehr*, the appearance of the Sudeten Germans in popular literature appears deliberate and engineered to bring the Sudeten Germans to the popular conscience. Coming at a moment when Nazi censors controlled the information within Germany and Czech restrictions, along with the strength of SdP, controlled what is coming out of Czechoslovakia, the Nazis were now fully in charge of the dialogue about Sudeten

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁰⁸ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 113.

¹⁰⁹ Crowhurst, *op. cit.*, 123.

German awareness both at home and, mostly, abroad. It would allow them to sharpen a message leading to the annexation in 1938.

The annexation resulted in the short-lived Second Czechoslovak Republic. On March 15, 1939, Nazi Germany occupied what remained of Bohemia and Moravia, putting Czechs under German occupation for much of the war.¹¹⁰ After the war, a newly liberated Czechoslovakia expelled the Sudeten Germans, sending most of the population into the Allied occupation zones in Germany and Austria. The lingering resentment and hostility between Czechs and Sudeten Germans would continue into the Cold War.¹¹¹ But as the events of 1929-1934 show, the Sudeten German awareness had been a forced issue, especially within Germany. Ultimately, it was the Nazi control of the press and their ambivalence towards directly helping the Sudeten Germans that shaped the evolution of more diverse and open discourses about the Sudeten Germans into a more controlled narrative that reflected the priorities of the Nazi state. In such circumstances, the Nazis were building from little long-term public support and from an inconsistent for annexing the Sudeten Germans. When public opinion failed to back a war over the Czechoslovakia, it showed that controlling public perception of the Sudeten Germans could not sway public perception itself.

¹¹⁰ Theodor Prochazka, "The Second Republic, 1938-1939", *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, ed. by Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, 255-270 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 270.

¹¹¹ Houžvička, 361.

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