

Germany as a Factor of Differentiation in Czech Society

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Abstract: Czech-German relations and the dialogue between the two countries have developed against the background of a historical 'delay' in the modernisation process in Czech society. The debate on the causes and results of the transfer of most German-speaking inhabitants of the Czech Lands directly after the end of the Second World War is also lagging. The historical dimension of Czech-German relations has gained new relevance with the demands of the homeland associations of the Sudeten Germans who were expelled (*the Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*) on the bilateral relations between Germany and the Czech Republic, and this is complicating the process of integrating the latter into Euro-Atlantic structures. On both sides there are fixed stereotypes of the former enemy who has become a partner since 1989. Fears of German dominance are also reinforced by the inequality of the two systems. Germany is at one and the same time an integrating and a differentiating factor in Czech society.

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The Czech Republic is very late in entering the process of European integration and with the handicap of several decades isolation from the modernisation which western Europe underwent following the Second World War. The country which saw the most dramatic changes was Germany, where the entirely new systems of the German Federal and Democratic Republics were set up with considerable support from the victorious Allied powers. Development in the two parts of the divided Germany, and in the Czech Republic (within the former Czechoslovakia), differed widely in the post-war period, resulting in differences in the level of social awareness. This has greatly complicated the process of Czech-German reconciliation since 1989.

The diametrically opposed characteristics of the market economy and its centrally regulated counterpart meant that the experience of West Germans in their relations with their neighbours in the western coalition was fundamentally different. This was characterised by the gradual removal of resentment and tensions in their relations. The growing friendship between former enemies within the western alliance was helped by the Cold War situation and the sense of a threat from the Soviet empire. This held back Czech-German reconciliation, so that the experience with the grand ideas of the French-German reconciliation is of only limited assistance.

Germany is a source of both integration and differentiation on the Czech political scene. This was the case in recent history and is even more so since the split of Czechoslovakia and the reunification of Germany. Traditional fears of a powerful neighbour are ever-present in Czech minds, although now in a slightly different form, relating to those Germans expelled from the Czech Lands after the Second World War. The prevalent attitude towards Germany in Czech society can, with some degree of simplification, be

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described as 'guarded friendship'. It is the result of a series of parallel and opposing factors which will be discussed below.

The debate around the preparation and signing of the Czech-German Declaration was wide-ranging and at times emotive (particularly in the closing phase of the preparation of the text). It showed clearly how sensitive Czechs were on the question of the Germans as a direct neighbour and partner. In Germany the Czech Republic is generally seen as a difficult and problematic partner (particularly but not exclusively by authors from the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*), and this is equally the case in the reverse direction. On the individual level there is a certain touchiness in the way that Czechs view the behaviour of the relatively well-off visitors and business partners from neighbouring Germany. In border areas in particular, there are regular outcries against the purchase of cheap property through 'pawns'¹, fears of becoming 'strangers in one's own land' and so on.

At the level of inter-state relations, the state of social consciousness is at least partly reflected by the media, which tend to show some reservations in reporting on the real picture of Czech-German relations (in 1996, 87% of those living in border areas felt that coverage by the Czech mass media was partly or completely inadequate in their articles on Germany). Surveys of people's attitudes towards Germany reveal clear emotional expressions in relation to the definition of the border between Germany and the Czech Republic (existing border – state border), in the interpretation of recent historical events (the concept of transfer/expulsion, the role of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia between the Wars and their part in the fall of the independent republic, etc.). The conflict is often related to pairs of concepts (e.g. transfer/expulsion), the definitions of which lead to diametrically opposed interpretations of the problem.

If the thesis of a close link between the internal and foreign policies of a state is valid, Czech-German relations provide a model situation which is, moreover, characterised on the Czech side by a tendency to irrational reactions and an overly emotional attitude. This recalls K. Boulding's [1988: 200] comment that a nation's image of itself and other nations is significantly influenced by, among other factors, specific historical events. In the Czech case there is the latent presence of the syndrome of the Munich Agreement. While it may have directly affected only that generation whose lives it directly touched, the experience of being forced to accept a loss of sovereignty and national identity has come to hold a place in the social consciousness of later generations [see Kural 1996].

The opening of the borders and the possibility for Czechs *en masse* to see the political and economic circumstances of West Germany at first hand helped to remove many prejudices and misconceptions. At the same time the development of the Czech-Sudeten German dialogue since 1989 has created clear rifts between Czechs and has confirmed a large part of the population and of the new political elite in the opinion that the demands of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* (the right to a homeland and self determination, the annulling of the Beneš decrees, the recognition of the expulsion as unjust, etc.) present a threat to the stability and integrity of the Czech Republic. The reawakening of historical resentments have been a negative influence on the relations of Czech society with Germany.

¹) Individuals acting on behalf of not strictly legal capital interests.

The development of Czech public opinion on the role of Germany has of course not been shaped purely by the negative experiences of the recent past. Since 1989 this development has been extremely rapid and it is clear that Czechs are capable of shaking off the historical deformations and the partial stereotypes of the powerful neighbour. Surveys of Czech public opinion show that Czechs tend to see Germany as a close (and welcome) economic partner and political ally, with which close collaboration should be maintained. The Czechs' attitudes towards Germany since 1989 have been influenced by the euphoria of the sudden reunification of the two parts of Europe with the fall of the Iron Curtain. Germany in particular, with its obviously successful economy, offered Czechs a picture of prosperous well-being and aroused somewhat naive expectations that by rejecting the totalitarian system, they would soon and easily become part of this. At the same time, this uncritical wonder and naive faith in a historical miracle (which also affected the political elite, as shown by statements that within ten years Czechoslovakia would be an inseparable part of Western structures and would share their economic wealth), created the conditions for the subsequent disillusionment which Czech society is witnessing at present. This is not, of course, limited to its relations with Germany, as Czechs now have adopted a degree of reserve towards Euro-Atlantic political, economic and military structures. This is notable in the assessment of the Czech Republic's entry into NATO and, to a lesser degree, of the role of the European Union.

The situation is further complicated by the Czechs' somewhat undermined "national self-consciousness", the scepticism with which the Czechs look at not only other nations and international institutions but also at themselves. This is certainly partly due to the decades of isolation from the world of developed western civilisation and the traumas of 1938 (the Munich Agreement), 1948 (the failure of the democratic parties and politicians) and 1968, when the Soviet invasion put a stop to a process which might have led to modernisation and consequently to the country moving closer to Western Europe.

Instead of the continuous development of the national economy and gradual incorporation into supra-national structures of integration, accompanied by the development of a pluralistic democratic system including the gradual adaptation of the legal system, 1948 was followed by the destruction of the structures of civil society, accompanied by the disappearance of entire social groups and classes (i.e. the peasants and the middle class) which were fundamental to the political structure and a factor in the cultivation of the social-political environment in Czechoslovakia at that time. With respect to Czech-German relations it is worth noting that a large part of the Czech political elite was destroyed under the Third Reich's occupation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. In addition, a considerable part of the Jewish community in the Czech Lands was part of the German language and cultural community, or was at least bilingual. This community could have played a positive role in the search for a *modus vivendi* between the Czech and German environments after 1989 [Suda 1995: 49]. The Jews could have had a positive influence on events in the Czech Lands after the war (including the expressions of aggressive anti-German feeling), had they not been the target of the Nazi holocaust. This drastic attack on the continuity shaping social structures in the Czech Lands removed an important social group which had played a major role in the creation of the specific cultural environment of the Czech Lands and which had for centuries acted as a intermediary with the German lands. This is one of the sources of the still existing conflicts between Czechs and Germans.

Germany (or more precisely West Germany) has obviously come a long way since 1945, first under the tutelage of the occupation forces of the western Allies² and then as a result of the rapid developments in the market economy and the pluralistic democratic parliamentary system. The principle of "co-operative federalism" is generally accepted and represents the practical implementation of one article of the German constitution, which demands "centralised political direction and decentralised administration". German federalism is now an instrument for the protection of regional autonomy and its vertical distribution of power also creates a further control. This principle preserves a functional central authority (the Federal Government), while distributing a considerable part of authority to the lower units of the political system.

The result of this principle in practice is various mechanisms for ensuring the democratic nature of the decision-making process in Germany. The question is whether the Czechs are fully aware of how far this change has gone in Germany since the war, and public opinion surveys of Czechs' view of Germany indicate that, at best, they have only partially realised it. This is partly the result of a lack of information on the mechanism of the decision-making process in German politics, but the expelled Sudeten Germans and their organisations have also played a role in this, as it is they who represent Germany in the eyes of the Czech public. It is the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* that are to be thanked for the repeated appearance in Czech-German relations of the ethnic-cultural view of the nation, in the sense of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which contradicts the "patriotic constitution" (J. Habermas). With a certain degree of exaggeration it can be said that these associations keep the poles of the Czechs and Germans apart. At the same time it is clear that on the German side the exiles are seen as a link between the Czech and the German situations, while Czechs (except in exceptional circumstances) see them in the opposite light.

Germany and Czech National Identity

An attempt to define the present attitude of Czechs towards Germany one cannot avoid at least a brief look at the history of their relations in the modern era, as certain elements of these attitudes are rooted in this. Czech-German relations are closely linked on the Czech side with the Czechs' search for their own identity, the sense of their existence as a state and the role of the Czech Lands in Central Europe. There is ample proof that these relations were already competitive and conflictual within the multi-national Habsburg empire. The conflicts of the second half of the 19th century contributed greatly to the political, economic and cultural rivalry of the Czechs and 'their' Germans in the Czech Lands, which were a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was the background against which the relations between Czechs and Germans have developed.

The geographical and social-political relations of a large part of Europe were so complex that, without any need to move, the people living there could well feel that they belonged to an ethnic majority or minority, depending on whether they were thinking of a system or a state, a group of countries or a region, a district or a town. Neither the Czechs nor the Germans in the Czech Lands were satisfied with the position of a national politi-

²⁾ "The German federalist structure was completely recreated after the Second World War; on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement the allied powers reconstructed the independence of the territorial units in the hope they would contribute to democratisation" [Schubert and Wagner 1997: 74].

cal minority and they used all possible means to guard against this eventuality [Kořalka 1996: 143].

The Czechs became an ethnic group with all the attributes of their own national identity at the turn of the 20th century, by which time the social structures here included all the basic groups and classes of a modern society [Ibid.:113]. This national society also had a developed and varied political leadership. The raised self-awareness of a part of the Czech society allowed them to move from a 'defensive' nationalism to actively developing their own approach to solving problems of learning and culture, which also contributed to international comparisons. "All basic political solutions (under the Habsburg monarchy) contributed to the worsening competitiveness between ethnic Czechs and Germans in the Czech Lands" [Ibid.: 124]. It is worth recalling the opinions of Z. Suda [1995: 42], that Czech consciousness is "overly historicised" in the sense that the idea of a continual shared historical experience has played an important role in preserving the solidarity of modern Czech society (as, for instance, with the national myth of the three-hundred-year-long subjugation of Czechs under the Habsburg monarchy). There are few nations (with perhaps the exception of the Poles) for whom a sense of historical tradition has been such an important factor in the sense of a national identity. As Suda says, asking Czechs to see their long past, both glorious and tragic, as a closed chapter in the interest of starting a new partnership with a view to the future, must seem to many of them like a threat of the loss of their collective memory. The difficulty does not lie only with the Czechs and their historically rooted identity (in which myths undeniably play their role), but also in the historicising arguments of the *Landsmannschaft*. While it is true that democratic Germany today is a very different partner than in the era of National Socialism or the Weimar Republic, the main problem Czechs face in their relations with Germans is the groups of Sudeten Germans who were expelled. These are however only a segment of German society and, moreover, not all of them accept the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* (with their claims) as their representatives.³

The Sudeten question constantly draws Czech-German relations back into the past, attracting too great a share of interest. "The concentration on the Sudeten problem means placing an undue emphasis on conflict and lack of understanding. Czech-German relations are wider-ranging than this and are not limited only to the Sudeten question" [Rupnik 1995: 8].

The constant interpreting of Czech-German relations in the light of the Munich syndrome, of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and the post-war expulsions has greatly complicated (and delayed) the redefinition of Czech national identity in a European context. The argument of historical consciousness, in combination with Germany's economic strength has reinforced the national stereotypes of Czechs' attitudes to Germans. Research has shown [Haagendorn 1997] that the growing sense of inequality is leading to the reinforcement of negative stereotypes and to an increased sense of threat.

³⁾ According to the sociological surveys carried out by the EMNID agency at the request of Spiegel magazine in Bavaria in February-April 1996, 8% of respondents said they were belonged to the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* and 28% said that they considered the association to represent them. 10% expressed a wish to return to the old country, 83% wanted to break with the past. 37% of Sudeten Germans and their children have never visited their former country since. The results of the survey are of course only an indication, as the pool of respondents (418 expelled Sudetens and their children) was not representative [Bulletin... 1996].

Haagendorn [Ibid.] shows that the conflictual nature of inter-ethnic relations is influenced by factors of ethnic "rivalry", which involve a combination of strength of numbers, social position (economic, political and cultural strength), historical role and international links. Czechs' relations with Germans are undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Germans are seen as former 'rulers', political, economic or cultural rivals, and even as representatives of a 'fifth column' (in the case of the Sudeten Germans).

Research into the role of stereotypes in inter-ethnic relations (as with Czechs' attitude towards Germans) has shown the stereotypes more or less represent images which reflect the specific characteristics of the target group. Comparisons between Czechs and Germans, together with a sense of relative deprivation (arising out of the Czechs' sense of economic 'insufficiency' symbolised in a simplified form by the exchange rate between the Deutschmark and the Czech crown), reinforce latent nationalistic attitudes and negative stereotypes. In this respect they more or less represent the social reality [Ibid.]. An interpretation of the attitudes of Czechs towards Germans cannot of course be straightforward, since expressed opinions need not purely represent tendencies to defensive nationalism but may express a certain patriotism which can be considered a positive emotion, expressing a sense of solidarity and an identification with the language, nation and culture - i.e. as an expression of national identity [Scruton 1989: 75].

The complexity and multiple levels of Czechs' attitudes towards Germans are clear in the search for a deeper structure to the opinion with a view to the factors which shaped them [Houžvička, Zich and Jeřábek 1997: 52].

Aspects of Relations with Germans on the Individual Level

After 1989, the formation of attitudes towards Germans was affected by a series of geopolitical changes following the fall of the Iron Curtain. The most important of these was possibly the decline of Russian influence over Central Europe (symbolised by the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact) and the unification of the two parts of Germany in October 1990. Germany began the process of a return to the role of a European power, a process which was accelerated by its economic power and by its major role in the integration processes of the community of Western European states. The new outlines of the situation in Central Europe were of course interpreted by the people of the Czech Republic in the context of their historical experience with their German neighbour. At the beginning there was a clear sympathy which Czechoslovakia showed for the first stages of the unification process (which in fact began in the then Czechoslovakia in summer 1989, when dozens of cars were abandoned on the streets of Prague by East Germans seeking asylum in the West German embassy) and this was also clear in 1990 in the unconditional support for unification shown by Czechoslovak foreign policy.

As the weight of the German neighbour has grown, it has been ever more possible to hear Czechs ask, "But won't a united Germany regain control over Central Europe, albeit by peaceful means, and then use this to support its own interests?" [Handl, Kural and Reiman 1997: 153].

Although sympathy for Germany in the Czech Lands has continued since 1989 (being repeatedly expressed, with varying intensity, by two thirds of those surveyed), it is possible to identify certain factors that have often given rise to concerns and prejudices [Wagnerová 1995: 10]. The most important of these is the already mentioned historical experience with the German neighbour.

Table 1. Assessment of the Development of Czech-German Relations
1994-1996 (in percentages)

| In this period relations between the CR and Germany have | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|
| | September | February | February |
| improved considerably | 9 | 9 | 2 |
| improved | 40 | 37 | 12 |
| stayed the same | 30 | 37 | 45 |
| worsened | 9 | 8 | 26 |
| worsened considerably | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| don't know | 10 | 8 | 10 |

Source: Continuous Survey by IVVM 1994-1996

Confirmation of the weight of history on Czech-German relations can be gained from an analysis of articles on the subject in the national daily newspaper *Lidové noviny* between 1991 and 1993. Relations are most often viewed through the prism of the Sudeten German question and the dominant representative of this question is the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* and their representatives.⁴ The most frequently mentioned issue is that of reciprocal compensation, which accounts for one third of the published articles. The basic view is retrospective and this creates a certain media stereotype [Šmídová 1995: 41]. It is possible to agree with the idea that the media interpretation of Czech-German relations is overly-historicised, for reasons which have been shown.

On the level of individual citizens, historical experience is not the only factor influencing relations, since the relative size of the two countries, their position in Europe, and their different cultural and historical development are also important. The socio-demographic features of the various social groups also play a role, particularly the political orientation of the respondents and, to a lesser degree, their age and level of education. Supporters of the political right tend to feel more positive towards Germany and see the trend in relations with the western neighbour as positive [Houžvička, Zich and Jeřábek 1997]. Age and level of education have a somewhat lesser affect on attitudes to Germany (with people under 30 and university graduates having a more positive attitude).⁵

⁴⁾ In this period there was a clearly tendency towards a strengthening of historicising arguments which eventually peaked in the debate over the preparation of the Czech-German Declaration.

"The Sudeten Germans were an important subject in Czech-German relations in the first two years after November 1989, and they are now becoming overriding as the effort to come to terms with the common past and put it in perspective gathers strength. On the other hand, even in rhetorical terms it is not easy to remove the Sudeten German problem from this collectivist national concept in which it developed and of which it is both epilogue and offspring. Even so, the press is often ready to argue with the ideas of ideologues such as Franz Neubauer, whose arguments show such a classic nationalist approach that the counter-arguments are 'naturally' in the same style."

It is difficult to provide more accurate reasons why the Czech-Sudeten German dialogue continues within a tight circle. The author's call for a de-ideologised, non-nationalistic reinterpretation will apparently not be met for some time. [Šmídová 1995: 40].

⁵⁾ The more tolerant attitudes to Germans of those with a higher level of education is confirmed by e.g. a qualitative survey carried out among students of the Philosophical and Pedagogical Faculties of Charles University in Prague (100 respondents). Two thirds of respondents saw Czech-German relations as good or very good, and 59% said that they understood the position of the Sudeten

While there have been no dramatic changes in attitudes to Germany, certain trends can be traced in their development, and these clearly follow the course of the Czech-German dialogue which peaked after 1989 with the signature of two fundamental documents: the Treaty of Good Neighbours and Friendly Collaboration in 1992 and the Czech-German Declaration of 1997.

Both documents aroused and polarised not only public opinion in the Czech Republic, but also the political elite. Before looking at the opinions of the elite, it is worth looking at the attitudes of the general public as shown from the continuous survey by IVVM, which shows a change to a more sceptical attitude towards Germany on the part of the Czechs. In view of the fact that the first knotty point in Czech-German relations in 1992 was untangled in the rather different circumstances of federal Czechoslovakia, I will concentrate on the second 'crossroads' in the Czech Republic's relations with Germany, i.e. the Common Declaration.

The independent Czech state came into being on 1 January 1993. Czechs were virtually taken by surprise and a large part of the population was hesitant about the split of the state that had been founded in 1918 and re-established in 1945 and which many people saw as the fulfilment of centuries-long aspirations towards an independent state. Without going into the circumstances in detail, it is clear that the split of Czechoslovakia was seen as a failure of the new political elite [Jičínský and Škaloud 1996: 111], a view which was shared by many foreign observers (including some German politicians from the FDP and SPD). The later moves away from a European orientation on the part of the governing coalition in Slovakia did however soften the originally harsh assessment of the split.

While in many respects the new Czech Republic continued in the political tradition of Czechoslovakia, the sudden and largely unwanted revival of the Czech state brought new problems of national identity. Czechs' social consciousness, which was already strained by the deep-reaching economic and political changes brought by the transformation, was forced to absorb the fact of the new state as something imposed on them by circumstances and to return to those roots which Czechs' dependence on history made them aware of but whose current form and significance they were less aware of. There are at least two reasons for the problems with Czech national identity in relation to Czech-German relations.

The first is that a large part of Czech society saw its identity as interwoven with the Czechoslovak state. This was clearly one of the reasons why the Czech political elite had difficulty in understanding the Slovak arguments as to why Slovaks should withdraw from the joint state which they were apparently unable to identify with. The new political elite found it difficult to come to terms with this situation, and it was even more complicated for individual social groups and classes. There is, in fact, still a part of Czech society which has not yet managed to do so.⁶ The second reason why identity was important is the fact that Czechs have always tended to define themselves in the context of their relations to Germany. There are of course many stereotypes which arise in the relations to

Germans. A surprising 46% said that their opinion of Germany was partly or completely influenced by its National Socialist past [Prager... 1997: 9].

⁶) See, for example, the repeatedly expressed opinions of Petr Uhl, who among other things insists on his right to retain both Czech and Slovak citizenship. He has a considerable number of reasons for this, both objective and subjective.

Germany and Germans and these are rooted in the underlying strata of opinions and attitudes.

The basic problem of Czech national identity lies in the fact that all basic factors have changed. First and foremost, there is now a united Germany (a developed democratic state with a series of safety valves built into the political system to protect it against any possible re-emergence of the nationalist past), a new geopolitical situation (Germany has moved from being an enemy to an ally) and finally changes in Czech society itself, although there has as yet been no deep structural change in the social consciousness and there are signs of a continuing adherence to the past (as with the attitudes to Germany found in public opinion surveys).

Research into Czech national identity [Kostelecký and Nedomová 1996] has identified certain basic features of Czech society in its relations with foreigners, which have doubtless influenced relations with Germany as well.

The first point is that Czech society is unusually homogeneous (94.8% of the population claim to be ethnic Czechs), partly as a result of the expulsion of German-speaking inhabitants following the Second World War. A 'typical member' of Czech society is a Czech-speaking ethnic Czech of Czech descent, who has spent most of their life in the place they were born and is closely tied to the place they live, without any intention of moving anywhere and without any direct personal experience of life abroad. The predominant feelings towards foreigners are naturally "concern, caution and suspicion" [Kostelecký and Nedomová 1996].

There is also a 'defensive structure' which attempts to lessen foreign influence. This may be a result of having twice lost national sovereignty in modern times, rather than an expression of a desire to build a 'splendid isolation'. These defensive mechanisms in the social consciousness are now directed particularly against Russia, as the heir of the Soviet Union, which people see as presenting the greatest threat to the safety and sovereignty of the Czech state. Second in the ranking of threats (although seen as so by only half the number of respondents) is Germany.

It is also interesting to note that people do not tend to see any difference between nationality and citizenship in practical life. A 'real Czech' is seen as someone who automatically has both Czech nationality and Czech citizenship. If this tendency is confirmed in the future, it will contribute to an increasing tolerance.

Features of the Czech national character (leaving aside the justifiability of this concept) which are manifest in attitudes expressed are pragmatism and scepticism. As in other surveys (e.g. the repeated surveys in border areas) [Zich 1996], it is clear that Czechs have a highly critical view of themselves. It appears that one of the main causes for the low opinion of their own nation is the lack of direct personal experience with people of other nationalities [Ibid.: 20]. It is clear that Czechs see clear distinctions between different nations and the images of nations or ethnic groups vary widely. The national aspect (in the neutral sense of the word) in people's ideas and attitudes, as expressed by the concept of 'national character', can therefore be seen to be relevant.

Both the National Identity Research Project and the surveys in the border areas have shown that the common consciousness of the Czech people exhibits a syndrome that may, with some exaggeration, be termed 'undermined national self-consciousness'. People are highly critical of the inherited features of the Czech 'national' character and also of their state. The main source of pride is the history of the Czech state, and Czech art and

literature, followed in third place by sporting successes.⁷ Targets of considerable criticism are economic performance and the army (as a symbol of the state etc.).

The trends of the surveys show clearly that a close examination of the structure of Czech national consciousness will reveal that there are two basic sources of 'self consciousness'. The first is the *cultural type* (history, art, literature, sport, science, technology), i.e. everything which is a result of the long-term development of the society and is relatively independent of the government and the political system. The second type of pride arises from an *evaluation of the current state* of the Czech Republic. The intensity with which these feelings are expressed depends on the personal characteristics of the respondent.⁸

This plays a role in the formation of Czechs' attitudes towards Germans. The personal characteristics of the respondent (age, level of education, social position, political orientation) contribute greatly to the degree of tolerance of Germans (and of foreigners in general). The changing pattern of Czechs' attitudes exhibits an overly critical view of themselves and a pronounced admiration of Germany, which was influenced by the post-revolutionary euphoria after 1989 and thrust historical resentment and past conflicts into the background (albeit for a limited period). A world of prosperous well-being and functioning democracy had opened up, and this was accompanied by a somewhat naive belief that the rejection of the totalitarian system would soon make the Czech Republic a part of this. Czechs also fell prey to the illusion of a lack of conflict (which recalls Fukuyama and his *End of History*), abandoning the image of Germany as an enemy and seeing Germans as confident, clever, educated, rich, reliable, honest and so on. This uncritical admiration was strongest among those aged under thirty. Czechs' view of themselves, on the other hand, incorporated a whole range of negative characteristics, amounting to a virtual self-flagellation. Czech saw themselves as a mass of negative qualities (bad, disobliging, unreliable, poor, timid, etc.) [Zich 1996: 18]

The Czech media played a certain role in this 'self-examination' by offering Czechs a rather one-sided view of themselves. A typical example is an article by P. Příhoda [1990], *Naši Němci* (Our Germans), on the ethical aspects of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. I see no problem in his asking questions about the ethical core of this expulsion (or forced resettlement as it is termed in the Declaration). What is more of a problem is the interpretation of the expulsion in the light of present-day ideas of human rights, removing it from the historical context, seeing expulsion as an act of genocide and even talking of the collective guilt of the Czech people. The article also confuses three different levels of the fact of resettlement: the concrete historical fact, the moral one and the present-day political one [Kučera 1994: 369]. Příhoda leaves to one side the fact that the trauma of the expulsion had been preceded by the no less dramatic trauma of a threat to the very existence of the Czech nation as a direct result of the disappearance of independent Czechoslovakia.⁹

⁷) Results of *Borderlands 91-96* and *Czech National Identity 95* surveys.

⁸) *Czech National Identity 95*, p. 10.

⁹) "Specifically, the Czech trauma of the disappearance of the Czech nation, which was pursued by the revisionist generation prior to March 1938, was common throughout the Czech world after 1939, as they knew that a German victory would mean the end of the nation's existence." From a letter by R. Luze to Z. Hejdánek. In [Česi, ... 1990: 162].

The extensive and exhaustive discussion of the expulsion in dissident circles in the late 1970s and early 1980s and on the pages of the exile review *Svědectví*, which saw it as a key question of post-war relations between Czechs and Germans, was unfortunately not repeated to the same degree after 1989. The greatest publicity was given to opinions calling for a unilateral revision of the post-war resettlement of the Czech Germans. Here I quote Příhoda again: "It may be asked how a nation of Central Europe with a thousand years of Christian tradition fell in the course of a few weeks to a level of pagan barbarity and at the same time to a state of impersonalised thinking, characteristic of the contemporary totalitarianism. This is the question which we Czechs should be asking ourselves today. And we should not be content with a purely scientific explanation." [Příhoda 1990: 22]

The generalisation of this statement must be rejected. On the one hand it was not the whole nation that fell, and on the other we should not forget the causal connection with the occupation by the Nazi regime. Were there not similarly motivated expressions of retaliation in liberated France? Like other nations, Czech society underwent a rupture as a result of the Nazi crimes, and this meant a step into the post-modern era. The classic ideals of European humanism went up with the smoke from the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Ideas of critical self-examination came to the forefront in a society whose previous value system had collapsed and which had not yet had time to formulate a new one. The chaos of ideas and doubts concerning the legitimate sovereignty of the state were deepening among large groups of society. Such "self-examination" may have acted as a catharsis if Czech society had shared the characteristics of a partner with such self-confidence as Germany (social well-being, a functioning democracy, the social structures of civil society, decades of continuity in the development of the pillars of the middle class and the power elites, etc.). These were, and still are, lacking in post-1989 Czechoslovakia (and later the Czech Republic), for reasons that are only too well known.

A similar view is given by E. Hahnová, who says that, "Traditional stereotypical fears (...) prevent Czechs from looking at Germans confidently, as political partners. (...) If Czechs could cease to see themselves as a nation that has been oppressed by Germans for centuries, overthrown at White Mountain and sold to Hitler's Germany by their German-speaking fellow citizens, they could perhaps perceive the culturally and politically diverse society of Germany today and stop viewing the Bonn government as a power centre on whose will the solution of the Sudeten German problem depends." [Hahnová 1996: 216]

Surveys show that opinions of Germany and the displaced Sudetens are becoming more diverse. While there is a greater openness and tolerance towards Germany, there are still reservations about the demands of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*, which claims to represent all those who were expelled. There is a certain rationality to this position, however, (even if there is a dash of stereotyping present in it), as Hahnová, as a historian, is undoubtedly aware. At the same time, the post-1989 dialogue between Czechs and 'their' former Germans can be seen to have had a degree of success, in that there is now a greater variation of opinions among the formerly monolithic Sudeten German society (the Circle of Friends of Czech-German Understanding in March 1998, for example, claimed that the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* include only 8% of expelled Sudetens, and rejected them as exclusive representatives).

It should also not be forgotten that the results of current surveys show some signs of tolerance of former Czech Germans, as with the repeated statement by almost three quarters of respondents that they would have no objections to the presence of Sudeten German families as neighbours [Houžvička et al 1997]. The rejection of the demands of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* (by more than three quarters of those surveyed) should not therefore be seen as proof of mass anti-German feeling in Czech society. Quite the reverse, it is a sign of the ability to distinguish between the different aspects of Czech-German relations. Proof of the relatively objective assessment of relations between Germany and the Czech Republic can be seen in the following view of what obstacles there are in the way of good relations.

Table 2. Obstacles in the way of Czech-German Co-operation (in percentages)

| factor | 1993 | 1994 | 1996 | 1997 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| differences in language | 44 | 39 | 47 | 43 |
| differences in national character | 52 | 46 | 50 | 55 |
| differences in purchasing power of the currencies | 85 | 77 | 82 | 82 |
| differences in prices | 81 | 69 | 78 | 76 |
| historical events | 40 | 44 | 57 | 62 |
| political system | 30 | 34 | 30 | 45 |
| poor transport links | 41 | 33 | 26 | 25 |
| lack of information | 55 | 30 | 25 | 27 |

Source: Special research team, Border Areas 1993-97.

In the eyes of the people of the Czech Republic, economic inequality in their relations with Germany had pushed the historic factor into second place. The clear priority placed on the influence of the difference in the purchasing power of the respective currencies and on the price differentials shows that everyday contacts with the richer neighbour were seen in a very pragmatic light.

There are two trends indicated in the table that are worth noting. First, the marked rise in the importance of historical events (the so-called reminiscence factor), presumably caused by the raising of the topic of expulsion by the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*. The second notable shift shows how much more informed people were about Germany.

The change in the Czechs' originally tolerant attitude towards the demands was probably due to the delays in the preparation of the Declaration and to the debate itself. One model of the way in which the opinions of both public and elite gradually became critical in the discussions on the 'Declaration' is the commentary in *Lidové noviny*.¹⁰

¹⁰) To mention only some [Třeštík 1995: 8], or [Putna 1996: 2].

Ideas on the German problem were developed by V. Bělohradský in particular. He refers to the dilemma of finding an identity for a united Germany and its connection with the new Czech national identity that is now taking shape (as a direct result of the split of Czechoslovakia and the emergence of an independent Czech state) in the following way: "Will the united Germany become part of a non-centrist Europe, a western, relativist and liberal 'demos', or it will fall prey to its former demons which will whisper that it should be the 'empire of the centre' in which Europeanism is primarily something 'ethnic'? I think that Germany's neighbours should support those Germans who see their country's orientation towards the West as liberating and definitive. We

Václav Havel's speech on Czech-German relations at the Karolinum on 17 November 1995 brought new momentum to the Czech-German (but also primarily the Czech-Czech) discussions. Following this there was the challenge by 165 Czech and German intellectuals, largely of Christian orientation, calling on the Czech government to negotiate directly with the Sudeten German organisations. Petr Pithart defended this challenge on the pages of *Lidové noviny*, saying "Negotiations at the government level with the political representatives of the Sudeten Germans would certainly be a far from a standard move, just as what happened between us was also far from standard" [Pithart 1995: 8]. The basic idea of the challenge, i.e. direct negotiations between the Czech government and the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*, was rejected by all the major Czech political parties.

People living in the border areas of the Czech Republic have a different view of the expulsion of the Germans and almost 90% of those questioned see the Sudeten German question as still open (at least in part). Opinions about the simple fact of the expulsion of the German-speaking inhabitants of the Czech Lands are still changing.

Table 3. Opinions on the Expulsions (in percentages)

| Answer | 1991 | 1994 | 1996 | 1997 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Justified, since the Sudeten Germans destroyed the Republic | 27.0 | 28.1 | 30.3 | 27.3 |
| Justified, but I have reservations about the way they were carried out | 39.5 | 37.0 | 42.8 | 41.4 |
| Sudeten Germans broke up the Republic, it was the powers that decided | 6.2 | 10.8 | 10.1 | 12.6 |
| They were unjust | 6.4 | 4.7 | 2.3 | 4.1 |
| They were unjust and cruel | 3.2 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 3.7 |
| Don't know, no opinion | 14.0 | 12.6 | 7.9 | 6.4 |

Source: The survey of borderland team.

From the comparison it is clear that the number holding each point of view is more or less stable, although the number of those justifying the expulsions has risen slightly. This can imply that this tendency was supported by the repeated demands of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*. Political orientation is a more important influence on opinions than is age, as almost three quarters of those describing themselves as left wing consider that the expulsions were just, while those on the right tend to fall into the group of agreement with some reservations.

The opinions of people living in the border areas as to the possibility of resolving the Sudeten German question are a crucial factor in the Czech-German settlement.

Czechs are however stopped from doing so by the Iron Curtain which the Sudeten German attempt to monopolise the dialogue has erected between us and those Germans." [Bělohradský 1993: 6].

"The idea of a political concept of the German problem and of the need to keep a joint watch over it has split Europe along entirely new lines, into those countries which apparently support the ethnic principle (Germany) and the rest. It would mean the disintegration of everything that has been built in Europe with fifty years of joint effort." [Doležal 1995a]

Table 4. Possible Solutions to the Sudeten German Question (in percentages)

| Variant of solution | 1991 | 1994 | 1996 | 1997 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| An apology is sufficient | 23.6 | 21.4 | 55.1 | 47.8 |
| Concede to all demands | 0.6 | 0.1 | 0.1 | x |
| Restitution of property | 1.7 | 4.9 | 2.5 | 3.1 |
| Allow them to purchase property | 14.4 | 23.6 | 20.2 | x |
| Provide financial compensation | 3.4 | 7.1 | 6.8 | 8.6 |
| Compensation only if reciprocal | 47.4 | 59.0 | 63.4 | x |
| Do not negotiate at all | 17.7 | 19.6 | 18.1 | 17.4 |
| Everything will sort itself out | 17.8 | 23.0 | 10.4 | 23.0 |
| Everything will be solved | | | | |
| by the CR's entry into the EU | x | 19.0 | 12.6 | 17.5 |
| The Declaration is the basis of a resolution | x | x | 33.4 | 13.0 |

Note: x – the question was not posed.

Source: The survey of borderland team.

It is interesting that the number of supporters of Václav Havel's apology has more than doubled over a five-year period, although it is somewhat limited by the fact that this generous gesture was not reciprocated on the German side.

One specific response to the raising of the Sudeten German question on the Czech political scene was the foundation of a voluntary association, the Czech Borderlands Club (KČP). Since 1992 a number of organisations have appeared throughout the whole area of the Czech-German border, aiming to "protect" the Czech border areas from the pressure of Germanisation. A regular publication – *Českomoravský hraničář* (Czech-Moravian Frontiersman) – is the principal media platform of the association, whose ideas can be seen from their position on the Czech-German Declaration:

- The Declaration should be aimed purely at the future.
- The Potsdam Agreement put a full stop to the past.
- The Beneš decrees are a pillar of the legal system.
- The property claims of the Sudeten Germans should be rejected, together with other demands. (Shortened) ["K otázkám..." 1995].

According to the secretariat of the KČP, it has between 35 and 40 thousand members and sympathisers in the border areas. The *Borderlands 96* and *Borderlands 97* surveys show that 5-6% of respondents agree with the platform of the KČP, although only one third of all respondents were aware it exists. It is not impossible that the Club's opinions, which are patriotic and markedly left wing, are shared by more people than the surveys indicate. Fears of being seen as political extremists or nationalists could lead some people to alter their responses.

Thus the whole course of the debate preceding the signing of the Declaration confirmed that Czech politics and public opinion are far from united on the subject of Germany and the expulsions [Bednář 1996: 8].¹¹

¹¹) "The post-war transfer of a large part of the German minority, which had posed a political threat to democratic peace in Europe since the second half of the 19th century and was at the root of two world wars, cannot be seen as morally ideal but rather as a historical punishment. The moral impetus behind it came from the democratic Allies and the Czech resistance. If the German

The second factor (obstacle) which changed considerably between 1993 and 1997 is the degree of knowledge about Germany. Table I shows that the number of those seeing a lack of information as an obstacle to Czech-German relations fell by a half. This essentially positive trend must of course be placed against other factors showing that the majority (more than 70% in 1996) have some reservations about the way in which the Czech mass media report on relations between the Czech Republic and Germany. There is also the question of how reliable this self-analysis by the public actually is. Certain facts indicate that there is in fact a lack of information – in 1995 only 17% of Czechs could name the German president [Naumann and Gabal 1995]. At the beginning of 1995 there was a survey aimed at determining how aware Czechs were of German politicians [“*Jak známe...*” 1995: 23]. The best known were Helmut Kohl (81%), Erich Honecker (45%), Willi Brandt (37%), Richard von Weizsäcker (32%), Hans Dietrich Genscher (24%), Klaus Kinkel (21%), Konrad Adenauer (21%), Franz J. Strauss (17%), Walter Ulbricht (13%) and Franz Neubauer (11%). It is interesting that the list of those who respondents named lacked such important figures in German politics as the former West German Chancellors (Ludwig Erhard and Helmut Schmidt).

In the light of these facts, it seems that the Czech public tends to over-evaluate its level of knowledge about Germany. This ultimately confirms the idea that more information about life in Germany could improve relations [Naumann and Gabal 1995], a view that has been repeatedly held by almost 80% of respondents.

Another sign of contradictory tendencies in attitudes to Germans is the conflicting degree of sympathy which Czechs feel towards Germany and their preferences for it as an economic and political partner. While in April 1997 Germany was tenth on the list of the most attractive countries in the world [“*Sympatie...*” 1997], it should be noted that the level of sympathy for all countries fell from its 1995 level, in the case of the USA by 17%, compared to Germany's 7%. The first three places are always taken by France, Austria and Great Britain.

On the other hand, other surveys from 1995-1997 [Kostelecký and Nedomová 1995; Houžvička 1996, 1997] show Germany as having a clear margin in first place among countries with which the Czech Republic should collaborate in the political and economic spheres.

public and the political elite cannot recognise this, reconciliation in a European spirit is immaterial.” [Doležal 1995b]

There may be different opinions of the post-war expulsions. Some (including myself), for example, disagree with Havel and maintain that the expulsions were an atrocity that can to some degree be explained by the past (as a man may explain his murdering his unfaithful wife by saying she was unfaithful), but under no circumstances justified.

Table 5. Who Should the Czech Republic Work with Most Closely in the Economic Sphere (in percentages)

| Country | Identity survey | Borderlands survey | |
|----------|--------------------|--------------------|------|
| | 1995 (nation-wide) | 1996 | 1997 |
| Germany | 73.3 | 45.4 | 41.4 |
| USA | 33.9 | 17.3 | 17.8 |
| Austria | 33.7 | x | x |
| Slovakia | x | 6.5 | 10.8 |

Source: [Kostelecký and Nedomová 1995; Houžvička 1996, 1997]

Table 6. Advantageousness of Political (Military) Collaboration between the Czech Republic and Germany (in percentages)

| Country | Identity (nation-wide) | Borderlands | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|------|------|
| | 1995 | Country | 1996 | 1997 |
| 1. Germany | 56.6 | 1. Germany | 25.8 | 30.1 |
| 2. Slovakia | 34.1 | 2. USA | 17.3 | 27.7 |
| 3. Austria | 33.7 | 3. Slovakia | 6.5 | 10.8 |

Source: [Kostelecký and Nedomová 1995; Houžvička 1996, 1997]

It is primarily the younger generation and those that sympathise with the political right who consider Germany to be both a valuable and also the closest partner for the Czech Republic. All surveys, however, indicate that around half of all respondents consider Germany to be a potential threat to the sovereignty of the Czech state (putting it second after Russia). The number of people who are afraid of Germany's possible moves towards dominance of Central and Eastern Europe is notably higher among older age groups and left-wing voters.

People's attitudes towards particular aspects of the partnership between the Czech Republic and Germany indicate that they are aware of the importance of collaboration but are at the same time 'on their guard' about Germany's policies towards Central and Eastern Europe. This combination of respect and circumspection is also evident in their assessments of the role of the German economy. In 1995, 15% of respondents considered that the entry of such major German firms as Volkswagen or Siemens into Czech industry should be supported, 39% felt that no moves should be taken for or against it, and 40% thought that moves should be taken to limit their involvement [Naumann and Gabal 1995].

In 1996, almost half of those questioned ['Mínění... 1966] considered that Germany had a negative effect on the Czech economy. Such attitudes clearly reflect the opinions of some economists and politicians that the Czech Republic is in danger of becoming an 'assembly line' for the German economy. In spite of this, research by the borderlands team in 1996 into the share of companies with some foreign capital did not find any grounds for these fears, and indeed found that in their sample of twenty towns on the Czech-Saxony and Czech-Bavarian borders the presence of German capital was less than expected. Both representatives of the local administrations (mayors, clerks, council members) and of the management of companies working in the area were in agreement on this fact.

Czechs' views on the role of the German economy can be seen clearly from the following overview.

Table 7. Assessment of the Influence of Germany on the Czech Economy
(in percentages)

| German influence | February 1995 | February 1996 |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Decidedly favourable | 12 | 9 |
| Favourable | 36 | 30 |
| Unfavourable | 18 | 23 |
| Decidedly unfavourable | 21 | 25 |
| Don't know | 13 | 13 |

Source: [Kostelecký and Nedomová 1995; "Minění..." 1996].

It is clear that Czech social consciousness is well rooted in the historicising stereotypical ideas of the aims of German politics, although this is often a direct reaction to the arguments of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* and the pressure of the German economy. The figures given above can be interpreted as the result of a certain rigidity in attitudes towards Germany and of the closed Czech environment. Similar concerns about Germany are however to be found in other countries, such as Poland.¹² There are also similar fears about the aims of the German economy from British politicians. We need only recall Margaret Thatcher's regular confidential discussions with leading British and American historians, in which she sought to determine whether the new Germany is in fact different to the old. Similar concerns regularly emerge among some politicians, intellectuals and businessmen in France, Britain and the Netherlands [Berghahn 1996: 2]. People are afraid that the bankers and businessmen of the new Germany are continuing with the earlier concept of *Grossraum Politik*. These concerns are however generally thrust into the background by the fact that German economics and foreign policy represent many partial interests which often cancel one another out so that no single aim of German dominance in Germany has yet been identified. The fears of Germany's neighbours are more an extrapolation of historical experience with Germany's expansive idea of its role in Europe.

In France, the debate on the 'German question' gained new intensity at the end of the 1980s (having in fact continued uninterrupted since 1945). Relevant here was the approach of German diplomats on the eve of the collapse of Yugoslavia, as well as the proposal which F. W. Christians (Deutsche Bank) made to Edvard Shevardnadze in 1988 that Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg – East Prussia) should be "Europeanised" as a centre "for the exchange of people, ideas, capital and goods". The ever suspicious French press saw there wide-ranging ambitions, particularly in connection with the suggestion that this city could be attractive to returnees from among the Volga Germans (deported to Central Asia and Siberia by Stalin) [Ibid.: 31].

Although many German academics, intellectuals and politicians, and particularly the fully functional pluralist democratic political system, are proof of the real rebirth of Germany, doubts still remain. Here the reservations of parts of Czech society are by no means unusual in the European context.

¹²) The increasing demands of the German minority in Opole Silesia, which is already well represented in the administration and many of whose demands were met by the Polish-German Treaty, are very badly regarded by Poles in general. The latter are aware of the surprising disproportion in the fulfilment of treaty obligations on the German side towards Poles living in Germany [Lesiuk 1994: 132].

Czechs' attitudes towards Germany vary widely and exhibit a number of contradictory values. While at first sight this may make them seem a muddle of inconsistent opinions, in fact they more or less realistically reflect the characteristic features (partial constants of the German character) defined by the German sociologist, W. Hellpach in 1954: compulsion to work, thoroughness, orderliness, lack of courtesy, inflexibility and romanticism [Musil and Suda 1995: 25]. Similarly, students from the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University and the Central European University found in 1994 [Ibid.: 25] the following positive features of Germans: orderliness, reliability, precision, talent for organisation and willingness to work hard. The most commonly mentioned negative characteristics were aggressiveness, expansionism, arrogance, noisiness and pessimism linked with irrationality. The results of surveys in the Czech-German border area (a belt of 18 districts directly bordering on Germany) [Zich 1997: 49] showed that the largest number of respondents agreed with the statements that Czechs should show greater pride in their dealings with Germany, and that it is possible for Czechs and Germans to live together in peace and calm.

In summary, it can be said that the attitudes of people living in the Czech Republic towards Germans are a complicated mix of fear, admiration and pragmatic tolerance. They are the sum of the negative experience of the historical consciousness, reflecting the conflicts between Czechs and Germans in the past (Palacký's association and conflict, Rádl's War between Czechs and Germans) and direct social experience with present-day Germany's developed economy, functioning system of parliamentary democracy and civil society. At the same time there is a degree of equivocation, a swaying backwards and forwards between a lingering sense of threat, the influence of a powerful neighbour whose very presence and size arouse a sense of challenge, and a dominance, which, thanks to the geopolitical connections, is seen by Czechs as a link to the Euro-Atlantic structure and the circle of Western civilisation.

Final Note

The past conflicts of Czech-German coexistence are still latent in attitudes today and form the background to current Czech-German relations. This is particularly true of older people whose personal experience of the Nazi era has done much to shape their attitudes. Czechs apparently distinguish between relations with Germany (its culture, economy, political system) and the problem of the Sudeten Germans expelled from the former Czechoslovakia. Two types of attitudes are becoming more and more embedded: a positive view of Germany, and a rejection of the demands of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft* (in both cases accounting for 65-70% of respondents).

The most important factor in determining relations with Germany is political orientation. People tending to the right have a notably more positive attitude towards the role of Germany and to collaboration with it (the difference between supporters of the right-wing ODS and of the Social Democrats is between one-third and one-half). The degree of openness and tolerance of Germany also depends on age (particularly those under thirty), with younger and more highly educated people (university graduates) being much more positive towards the Czech Republic's western neighbour. People inclined towards the left, on the other hand, are more likely to express reservations and even some doubts about the advantages of collaboration between the Czech Republic and Germany and about the ultimate aims of the latter's foreign policy and economic activity in Central Europe.

It is clear that the polarisation of opinions is dependent not only on the 'Sudeten problem', but also on the course of the transformation of Czech society. The economic inequality between the two systems is increasingly important in relations with Germany, being approximately twice as important in the minds of people living in the border areas as is the weight of historical memory of the conflicts between Czechs and Germans in modern times (the disappearance of independent Czechoslovakia, the occupation under the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the expulsion of the German-speaking inhabitants of the Czech Lands).

Germany is seen as a politically and economically important country with which it is both necessary and desirable to work. At the same time, the majority of respondents expect that any collaboration will be in a context of the sovereignty and partnership of both countries. Relations with Germany, and particularly with the states of Saxony and Bavaria which share borders with the Czech Republic, will continue to be a divisive factor among both Czech politicians and the general public. This should be reflected in the timing and content of the different phases of Czech foreign policy in drawing closer to NATO and the European Union.

Translated by April Retter

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Course Dates: July 5-July 16, 1999

Course Directors: Professor Arthur C. Helton, Director, Forced Migration Projects, Open Society Institute, Adjunct Professor of Law, New York University
Professor Boldizsár Nagy, Associate Professor, Eötvös Loránd University, Recurring Visiting Professor, CEU

Resource Persons: Professor Alastair Ager, Queen Margaret College (Edinburgh)
Bernadette A. Brusco, Consultant: Open Society Institute
Professor Danièle Joly, University of Warwick
Professor Will Kymlicka, University of Ottawa
Professor Gil Loescher, University of Notre Dame
Nuala Mole, Director, AIRE Centre (London)
Marina Murvanidze, Consultant: Open Society Institute
Professor Vello Andres Pettai, University of Tartu
Professor Endre Sik, Budapest University of Economics

Course Description: Purpose

The aim of the course is to offer an intensive interdisciplinary review of the law (with a focus on human rights) and other social sciences related to the refugee (forced displacement) phenomenon. Centred around a comprehensive approach to the process from forced displacement and its causes to durable solutions, the lectures present insights from a variety of disciplines – including law, political science, international relations, sociology, social psychology, and other interdisciplinary inquiries such as the study of nationalism.

The course is designed for an audience with varied backgrounds. Scholars who are used to broad statements about “refugees” will investigate the law and associated values at the universal level, with significant regional dimensions. Practitioners will become acquainted with the sociological problems of integration, and the psychological complexities of traumatised, isolated persons. After the course, each participant should have a deeper knowledge of forced displacement in his/her own field and a clear understanding of the interrelationships between the fields. They should have the resources to develop a curriculum, conduct research and analyse issues of forced migration.

Course level and target audience

Because of its interdisciplinary character, the assumption is that participants will have at least a basic level of knowledge of the topic within their own field of specialisation, but have little or none in the other aspects of forced displacement. The course is designed for a varied audience with different professional backgrounds, who nevertheless have common characteristics: they are educators or researchers associated with educational institutions, or graduate policymakers in their early to middle careers.

Course content

The course is issue oriented, combining insights on forced displacement from different disciplines. It introduces the participants to classical and current relevant literature, theories and documents necessary to develop and support the capacities of university faculty, professionals and policy-makers in the areas of human rights and forced displacement.