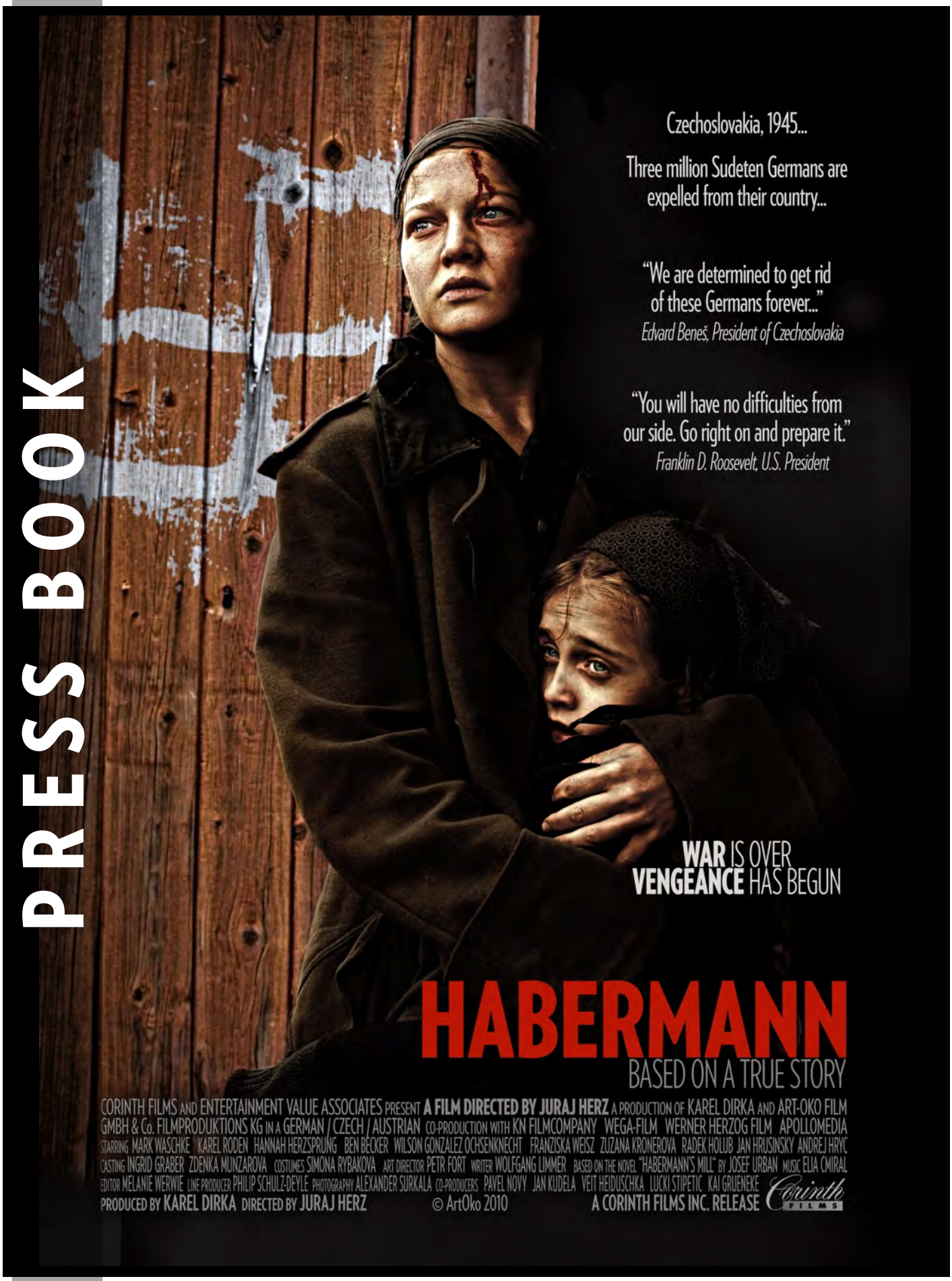
PRESS BOOK


Czechoslovakia, 1945...
Three million Sudeten Germans are expelled from their country...
"We are determined to get rid of these Germans forever..."
Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia
"You will have no difficulties from our side. Go right on and prepare it."
Franklin D. Roosevelt, U.S. President
WAR IS OVER
VENGEANCE HAS BEGUN
HABERMANN
BASED ON A TRUE STORY
CORINTH FILMS AND ENTERTAINMENT VALUE ASSOCIATES PRESENT A FILM DIRECTED BY JURAJ HERZ A PRODUCTION OF KAREL DIRKA AND ART-OKO FILM GMBH & Co. FILMPRODUKTIONS KG IN A GERMAN / CZECH / AUSTRIAN CO-PRODUCTION WITH KN FILMCOMPANY WEGA-FILM WERNER HERZOG FILM APOLLOMEDIA
STARRING MARK WASCHKE KAREL RODEN HANNAH HERZSPRUNG BEN BECKER WILSON GONZALEZ OCHSENKNECHT FRANZISKA WEISZ ZUZANA KRONEROVA RADEK HOLUB JAN HRUSINSKY ANDREJ HRYC
CASTING INGRID GRABER ZDENKA MUNZAROVA COSTUMES SIMONA RYBAKOVA ART DIRECTOR PETR FORT WRITER WOLFGANG LIMMER BASED ON THE NOVEL "HABERMANN'S MILL" BY JOSEF URBAN MUSIC ELIA CMIRAL
EDITOR MELANIE WERWIE LINE PRODUCER PHILIP SCHULZ-DEYLE PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDER SURKALA CO-PRODUCERS PAVEL NOVY JAN KUDELA VEIT HEIDUSCHKA LUCKI STIPETIC KAI GRUENEKE
PRODUCED BY KAREL DIRKA DIRECTED BY JURAJ HERZ
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A CORINTH FILMS INC. RELEASE
Corinth FILMS

CONTACT INFORMATION

A CORINTH FILMS PRESENTATION

HABERMANN

PRESS BOOK

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PRODUCTION NOTES

HABERMANN

PLOT SUMMARY
German mill owner spends WWII trying to save his wife, daughter and Czech workers from Nazi terror, but faces his own tragic end in an unexpected way. Based on true events surrounding the expulsion of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia in 1945.

YEAR OF PRODUCTION 2010

GENRE Period Drama

CO-PRODUCTION Germany, Czech Republic, Austria

LANGUAGE German with English subtitles

LENGTH 104 minutes

Director Juraj Herz
Screenplay Wolfgang Limmer
Based on the novel *Habermann's Mill* by Josef Urban
Director Of Photography Alexander Surkala
Editor Melanie Werwie
Production Design Petr Fort
Music Elia Cmiral
Producer Karel Dirka
Line Producer Philip Schulz-Deyle

AWARDS Bavarian Film Award 2010 (Best Director & Leading Actor)

SYNOPSIS

HABERMANN

Based on true events HABERMANN is the first major motion picture to dramatize the expulsion of 3 million Germans from Czechoslovakia. It was an action that also resulted in in the deaths of thousands of German civilians, and is still a controversial subject today.

The story begins in 1937 and follows the life of August Habermann, a German sawmill owner who lives in a small village near the northern border of Czechoslovakia. Well respected and rich he marries Jana, a young and beautiful Czech woman. Within a year they have a daughter.

Habermann's best friend is Jan Brezina, a Czech forester. He is married to Martha, a German, who is similarly a loyal friend to Jana. Their once comfortable lives undergo increased tension, however, when the region is annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938. For Habermann, in particular, it signals the first of many encounters with the ruthless SS officer Major Koslowski.

Koslowski tolerates Habermann because he is German, but questions why he marries a Czech and hires mostly Czechs to work in his sawmill. His concern grows when some of Habermann's workers prove to have links to the Czech resistance movement.

But Koslowski is appeased by the fact that Habermann's younger brother, Hans, is a fervent Nazi supporter who joins the Hitler Youth and later the Wehrmacht to fight at the Eastern Front. He also knows Habermann is reasonably wealthy and, before the war is over, knows he can use this knowledge for his own gain.

When two German soldiers are mysteriously found murdered, and Koslowski discovers Jana was actually born half-Jewish, he seizes the opportunity to extort the kind-hearted Habermann. He informs Habermann that he intends to execute 20 Czechs to avenge the deaths of his two soldiers. He also instructs him to select which ones should die. If he doesn't, he will deport Jana to a concentration camp. Habermann offers Koslowski his entire family fortune to buy the lives of the 20 Czechs, but Koslowski betrays him. He takes Habermann's fortune, executes ten locals, makes it appear Habermann is responsible, and deports Jana and his daughter to a concentration camp.

As the Soviets advance into the region, Koslowski arranges his escape via the Ratlines and his troops retreat -- but the German population stay. This has been their home for generations. But after years of Nazi occupation, the Czech population yearns for vengeance. They blame all Germans for the terror of the last 7 years and set out to expel them all from the region. Those who chose to remain could face deadly consequences.

Habermann's life is especially in danger since many think he is responsible for the 10 Czechs executed by Koslowski. They are convinced he was actually a willing participant in the crime. Habermann is aware of this but refuses to leave. Having lost his family and many others he cared about, he resigns himself to whatever awaits him.

Unbeknownst to Habermann his wife and daughter were liberated by the Soviet army and survived the Holocaust. They return home to learn the truth of his tragic end. They also uncover a startling family secret that had been buried for years.

STATEMENT FROM DIRECTOR JURAJ HERZ

The events happened more than sixty years ago, but their effects can be felt even today. If we want to understand the present, we have to know what happened in the past.

The film starts with the expulsion: we know from the start how this story will end – there is no escape. Then we are shown the events that led up to it. The story of HABERMANN ends after the "expulsion" of the Germans from the Sudetenland area bordering Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1945, and remains today one of the darkest chapters in the relationship between Germans and Czechs.

The atrocities perpetrated in the course of the expulsion are a taboo to his date. Many Czechs do not want to be reminded of it, many Germans insist that they have been wronged bitterly at the time and that nobody has ever had to pay for this. There is now a new young generation that wants information about the past.

Juraj Herz directing a scene from his latest film HABERMANN

Juraj Herz was born in Kezmarok/Slovakia in 1934. He studied Photography in Bratislava and Puppetry at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. He then worked as a director and actor at the Semafor Theater in Prague before going to the Barrandov film studios in 1961 to become an assistant director.

Active as a director, actor and set designer, a selection of his films includes: The Junk Shop (1965), Oil Lamps (1971), Day for My Love (1976), Beauty and the Beast (1978), Bulldogs and Cherries (1981), The Magpie in the Wisp (1983), The Night Overtake Me (1986), The Frog Prince (1991), The Emperor's New Clothes (1994), Lara – My Years with Boris Pasternak (1994), and Habermann (2010), among others.

MARK WASCHKE

BUDDENBROOKS / DIE LUGE / AFTERNOON

Mark Waschke was born in 1972 in Wattenscheid, Germany. Since 1999 he's been part of the ensemble of the renowned theatre "Schaubiihne" in Berlin where he played roles like Shakespeare's "Macbeth" or in Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof". Since 2005 he's also starred in a number of high quality productions for film and television.

AUGUST HABERMANN lives in a small village near the northern frontier of Bohemia where he owns a sawmill. His best friend is the Czech Jan Brezina who was also best man at his wedding. His wife is Jana, a beautiful Czech girl. Descendant of German immigrants, he is greatly respected by the villagers. His German roots, however, is of no personal importance. He is not interested in politics. When the Nazis occupy the country, he endeavours to protect his family and friends from the constant threat of brutality.

HANNAH HERZSPRUNG

THE READER / THE BAADER-MEINHOFF-COMPLEX / 4 MINUTES

Hannah Herzsprung was born in 1981 in Hamburg, Germany. Since 2007 she has won 6 awards, including a Bavarian Film Award as Best Young Actress as well as an Adolf Grimme Award. She was named one of four Rising Stars at the 2007 Hamptons International Film Festival and Shooting Star at the 2008 Berlin Film Festival.

JANA HABERMANN is a young and beautiful Czech woman who grew up in a Catholic orphanage. She is married to August Habermann. Unbeknownst to her, her father was Jewish. The Nazis eventually discover her true ancestry, which threatens her and her daughter Melissa to the horrors of the Holocaust.

KAREL RODEN

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY / BLADE II / HELLBOY

Karel Roden was born in 1962 in Ceske Budejovice, Czechoslovakia. Several times Roden was nominated for the Czech Lion and he was honored with the prestigious Alfred Radok theatre award. Today, Karel Roden is arguably the most famous Czech actor.

JAN BREZINA, a forester, has been Habermann´s best friend for ages. Always loyal, when circumstances change for Habermann, Brezina supports and warns him the situation is becoming life threatening.

BEN BECKER

RED ZORA / COMEDIAN HARMONISTS / EIN GANZ GEWOHNLICHERJUDE

Ben Becker was born in 1964 in Bremen, Germany. He won the Adolf Grimme Award in 1991 and in 1994. In 1998 he won the Bavarian Film Award and the Audience Award "Goldener Vorhang". Besides his work as an actor for film and theatre, Ben Becker is also involved in music, audiobooks and live performances. His recent tour "The Bible - a spoken Symphony", a multimedia event with a crew of 75 people, has sold out some of the largest concert halls in Germany.

MAJOR KOSLOWSKI is a Wehrmacht officer who never hesitates in using vicious tactics to achieve his goals -- including financial gain. When Czechs shoot two German soldiers, Koslowski uses the opportunity to extort precious jewels from the wealthy Habermann. He tells Habermann to make an impossible choice – either help him select 20 villagers to be shot in retribution, or his wife Jana will be transported to a concentration camp.

WILSON GONZALEZ OCHSENKNECHT

GANGS / CHEEKY GIRLS / THE WILD SOCCER BUNCH

Wilson Gonzalez Ochsenknecht was born in 1990 in Munich, Germany. In 2004, he won an Udine Award as Best Debut. Currently, he won a Diva Award as New Talent of the Year 2008. In addition to his movie career Wilson Gonzalez released his first music album in 2008.

HANS HABERMANN, the younger brother of August Habermann, keenly welcomes the occupation of the Sudetenland and becomes an enthusiastic follower of the Nazi party. He enters into the Hitler Youth and voluntarily joins the Wehrmacht. Later he is heavily wounded at the Eastern Front and returns home with conflicting feelings about his former loyalty.

FRANZISKA WEISZ

HOTEL / DISTANZ / DER RAUBER

Franziska Weisz was born in 1980 in Vienna, Austria. Since 2004 she has won 3 awards, including the Udine Award as Best Young Actress, the Franz Hofer Preis and as Shooting Star at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival.

MARTHA BREZINA, the wife of Jan Brezina, is one of the few who resists being influenced by politics and ideologies. She stays true to her friendship with the Habermann's, but her German ethnicity poses a great danger when war ends.

HISTORY OF THE SUDETENLAND

October 3, 1938. The Sudeten German Free Corps receive flowers and refreshments in the city of Cheb.

The Sudetenland, where the story of HABERMANN is set, is an area of Bohemia in the Czech Republic adjacent to the German border. It was allocated to the new state of Czechoslovakia after World War I. The Sudetenland later became a major source of contention between Germany and Czechoslovakia. In 1938 the participants at the Munich Agreement, yielding to Adolf Hitler, transferred it to Germany. Six months after this agreement Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Shortly after the annexation of the Sudetenland the Jews living there were widely persecuted. As elsewhere in Germany many synagogues were set on fire and numerous leading Jews were sent to concentration camps. In later years the Nazis transported up to 300,000 Czech and Slovak Jews to concentration camps where 90% of them were killed or died. After World War II the Sudetenland was restored to Czechoslovakia, the majority of the German inhabitants (approximately 3 million) were expelled, and the region repopulated with Czechs.

October 10, 1938. German Nazis burn the synagogue in Opava.

CHRONICLE OF THE SUDETENLAND

"The events happened more than 60 years ago, but their effects can be felt even today. If we want to understand the present, we have to know what happened in the past." -- Juraj Herz, Director

The Sudetenland encompasses an area of 27,000 sq. kilometers (10,400 sq. miles) in Bohemia, Moravia and Sudeten Silesia. Sudeten refers to a mountain range some 200 miles long and approximately 20 - 40 miles wide.

The term "Sudeten Germans" has been in use since the beginning of the century to describe the 3 1/2 million Germans in the three provinces which used to be known as the lands of the Bohemian Crown. The Sudeten Germans are ethnically related to the Bavarians, Franconians, Saxons and Silesians, thus containing elements of the major German tribes.

For more than 700 years Germans and Czechs lived together peacefully. From time to time there were tensions and conflicts -- the Hussite wars in the 15th century, for example -- but they were fought for religious and social reasons rather than on racial grounds.

Bohemia and Moravia had for centuries been part of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation", and Emporers such as Charles IV and Rudolf II had their seat in Prague, the capital of Bohemia. Charles IV founded the first German university in Prague in 1348. In 1526 the lands of the Bohemian Crown, including the regions in which the Sudeten Germans lived, came under the rule of the Habsburgs. They thus became part of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" until 1806, and of the German Confederation from 1815 to 1866.

Sudeten Germans greet Nazi troops as they arrive in the Sudetenland in October, 1938.

In 1848 the Sudeten Germans were among those who elected members of the first German parliament, which met in the Church of St. Paul in Frankfurt. Until 1918 the Sudeten Germans were part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The end of WWI in 1918 resulted in the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian multi-national empire. The 6.7 million Czechs demanded a state of their own in which the highly industrialized Sudetenland (3.1 million Germans) was to be incorporated.

Even before the declaration of the independent Czechoslovak Republic on October 18, 1918, the Sudeten Germans invoked the right of self-determination and demanded that their homeland be united with Austria, which in turn expressed the wish to be united with the German Reich.

Under pressure from Hitler, and in accordance with the proposal of Britain and France, the Sudeten region was ceded to Germany. Czechoslovakia accepted this proposal on September 21, 1938.

After World War II approximately 3 million Sudeten Germans were fleeing or driven from their homes. Some wound up in Austria, but the majority resettled in war-torn Germany. About 270,000 officially remain "unaccounted for." Some insist they were all murdered in the process. While ample eyewitness accounts exists of such atrocities -- as well as motion film and photographic evidence -- the actual number killed remains in dispute.

Newly discovered film footage shows German civilians being executed in the Prague district of Borislavka in May 1945.

Afterwards the footage shows the bodies being crushed under the wheels of a truck. To date this is the only known footage of executions.

A particularly contentious issue is that the Czech government passed amnesty laws in 1945 – known as the Beneš decrees -- stating that Czech nationals committing a crime against a German will be exempt from punishment. These laws are still in effect today.

It has now been more than sixty years since the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, a historic event that is largely unknown to the rest of the world.

DID ROOSEVELT REALLY SAY THAT?

The North American poster for HABERMANN includes some startlingly historical quotes from Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia, as well as Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States.

Both quotes are documented in *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of the Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962, by Radomir Luza*, published in 1964.

The Beneš quote was derived from the following declaration he made in Tabor, on June 16, 1945: "In my speech of May 2, 1938, I called for tolerance, forgiveness. . . . The world today knows the German answer to this appeal of mine; their answer spelt terror, treason, concentration camps for us Czechs. . . . Can it therefore surprise anybody in the whole world when we say that **we are determined to get rid of these Germans forever**?"

The Roosevelt quote was initially eluded to in a section of Luza's book which states: "The official visit of President Beneš to the United States was highly successful. The conversations showed full agreement on all principal points. Beneš twice discussed with President Roosevelt the problem of the Czechoslovak Germans. On May 13, Roosevelt agreed to a reduction in the number of Germans in Czechoslovakia by way of transfer; on June 7, Roosevelt reiterated his agreement with the transfer of the German minorities from eastern Prussia, Transylvania, and Czechoslovakia....:

In the footnotes for this entry it states: *Beneš cabled to his government. "He [Roosevelt] agrees to the transfer of the minority populations from Eastern Prussia, Transylvania and Czechoslovakia. I asked him again expressly whether the United States would agree to the transfer of our Germans. He declared plainly that they would. I repeated that Great Britain and the Soviets had already given us their views to the same effect." There exists no minutes of the conversations of Beneš with Roosevelt in the Roosevelt files. The director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, Herman Kahn, wrote to this writer on Feb. 10, 1958: "We have been unable to find any documentation of the conversations with visitors, and only very rarely were any notes made of such conversations. Usually, our information on such matters has come from what President Roosevelt's visitors have said about their meetings with him." The biographer of Beneš, Compton Mackenzie, was told by Beneš in May 1944, that Roosevelt had stated to Beneš on the matter of transfer in 1943:* ***"You will have no difficulties from our side. Go right on and prepare it"*** *(Dr. Beneš, p. 293).*

PUTTING THE PAST TO REST

By P. Wallace
Time Magazine
March 11, 2002

In the anguished aftermath of World War II, almost 3 million ethnic Germans were forcibly expelled from what was then Czechoslovakia because of the majority's overwhelming support for the Nazis. The Sudeten Germans, as they have become known, lost their homes, land and livelihoods, and between 20,000 and 200,000 people — depending on which source you believe — died in internment camps and on the long march to Germany and Austria. Now the Sudeten question is once again stirring controversy in Central Europe, with fresh calls for reparations and demands that the Czech Republic be barred from the E.U. unless it makes amends.

The latest furor was ignited when Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman told the Austrian magazine profil that the Sudeten Germans were "Hitler's fifth column." "According to Czech laws," Zeman said, "many Sudeten Germans committed treason, a crime which at that time was punishable by death. If they were expelled or transferred, it was more moderate than the death penalty." The reaction from neighboring countries was swift. "Zeman's statement filled me with consternation," responded Edmund Stoiber, the conservative candidate for German Chancellor in the September elections. Stoiber is premier of Bavaria, where many Sudeten Germans settled, and his wife is from a Sudeten family. "The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans cannot be justified under any circumstances." In Austria, Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel said the Czech government should voluntarily compensate the Sudeten Germans. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban also joined the fray. Noting that tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians had also been expelled, from what is now Slovakia, he said: "This was another shameful event in the 20th century where Hungarians were on the painful, losing side."

In 2002 Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman stirred up controversy when he called Sudeten Germans traitors who were "Hitler's fifth column" going into WWII.

The controversy over the Sudeten Germans comes at a critical time. Germany is in pre-election mode, and the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary all face extremely close elections this year, in all likelihood the last national polls before accession to the E.U. Candidates are looking for an edge as campaigning heats up, and good old-fashioned populism is back in style. "There hasn't been this degree of populist rhetoric since 1989," says Jonathan Stein, an independent political analyst based in Prague. "Politicians are trying to show they are capable of defending national identity, but E.U. integration limits the scope for this to symbolic battles."

That symbolism still means a lot in Central Europe. Although the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans was approved by the Allied Powers at the Potsdam Conference in 1945, a legal basis for the expulsions was charted by a series of decrees issued by Czechoslovak President Edvard Benes, dealing with such things as loss of citizenship and expropriation of property, and those decrees remain on the books to this day.

> "According to Czech laws, many Sudeten Germans committed treason, a crime which at that time was punishable by death. If they were expelled or transferred, it was more moderate than the death penalty"
> *Czech Prime Minister Milos Zemen*

Survivors among the Sudeten Germans want to see the decrees repealed, and they're backed by Jörg Haider, governor of Austria's Carinthia province and a major force in the far-right Freedom Party, part of Austria's ruling coalition. "The Benes Decrees should no longer exist," Haider said. Erika Steinbach, head of Germany's Association of Displaced Persons, agrees: "Who in the year 2002 cannot distance himself from a political event that contradicts all norms of international law and questions the E.U. suitability of his country? Chancellor Schröder is urgently called upon to link the question of Czech E.U. entry to the abandonment of the Benes Decrees."

Czechoslovak President Edvard Benes issued a series of controversial decrees in 1945 which are still in effect today.

Zeman retorted that the Czechs would not consider removing the laws, the underlying fear being that their repeal would open the floodgates to demands for restitution. "Why should we single out the Benes Decrees?" Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kavan told Time. "They belong to the past and should stay in the past. Many current members of the E.U. had similar laws." German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder admitted that "in this heated debate, a rational discussion of such questions is much more difficult," but also doubted there would be any long-term damage to German-Czech relations.

E.U. accession might help resolve the dispute. Once the Czech Republic and Slovakia join, all E.U. citizens — including former refugees in neighboring countries — will have the right to live in their former homelands. The emotional wounds may take longer to heal.

CZECHS' HIDDEN REVENGE AGAINST GERMANS

By Charles Wheeler
Tuesday, 3 December, 2002
BBC News – World Edition

In 1945, two and a half million ethnic Germans were driven from their homes in Czechoslovakia. Thousands died. Now, as the Czech Republic heads for EU membership, Charles Wheeler reports on how the Czechs made the Sudeten German minority pay for Nazi occupation, and why this is now a hot political issue.

This is a story about Germans as victims of World War II. It has been suppressed for half a century, ever since Czechoslovakia expelled its three million strong German minority - the Sudeten Germans - at the end of the war.

It is also a story of two communities with a common past, each clinging to diametrically opposed versions of the same event. To the Germans, their expulsion was a war crime, an early case of violent, ethnic cleansing. To the Czechs, after six years of Nazi occupation, the expulsions were simply retribution.

What cannot be disputed is the brutality of the expulsions, especially during the chaotic transition from war to approximate peace. Newsreel film shows Germans being beaten up in the streets of Prague, forced to wear the swastika, painted on their overcoats.

There are pictures too of dead and dying Germans in fields.

'Shot for nothing'

Peter Klepsch, then aged 17, claims to have been a witness to mass murder. He describes how mere boys were shot and killed in front of their fathers after trying to flee from a prison camp.

"People were shot in parties of 30 or 40," says Mr Klepsch. "They were shot for nothing, just because they were the cream of German society. It was genocide. I have dreams about it still," he says.

Others have told of mass graves. Nobody knows how many Germans died. The total may run into thousands.

Wartime decree

The expulsions were decreed by Eduard Beneš, Czechoslovakia's president-in-exile, during his wartime years in Britain.

One particularly controversial decree granted immunity from prosecution to Czechs who committed crimes against the Germans. Another ruled out compensation for land and property they were forced to leave behind.

Today's Sudeten German leaders are demanding restitution, a formal apology and the repeal of the decrees before the Czechs join the European Union.

Bernd Posselt argues that "the expulsion of millions of innocent people was unjust and this ideology of ethnic cleansing cannot be part of the European order of tomorrow".

The Czechs say no.

Libor Roucek, a Czech MP and foreign affairs specialist, says that since the decrees do not apply to either the present or future, they could indeed be repealed. "But we don't want to re-judge history because we could go back to World War I or even to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when the Czechs had no state of their own," he says.

For Zdena Nemcova, a Czech who lived among the Sudeten Germans in the 1930s, going back to her own early life is memory enough. She remembers living among the Sudeten Germans - their devotion to Hitler and the transportation of 300,000 Czech Jews to the death camps.

"Every day we'd hear of someone we knew who'd been executed. Then, after the war, people came back from the concentration camps, dying before our eyes, our very best people. At that moment I would have been capable of murder. I, a young girl. We hated the Germans so much, we even hated the sound of the German language," she says.

Gassed

In 1942, in retaliation for the assassination of the SS general he had made governor of Czechoslovakia, Hitler ordered the complete destruction of a Czech village called Lidice.
All the males over 15 were shot, 88 girls and children as young as four were transported to Poland, where they were gassed. The women were sent to a concentration camp in Germany.

Nearly all the women survived. It was not until they were brought home by Czech soldiers that they heard a full account of the German reprisal.

Miloslava Kalibova says: "One of the soldiers told me that three years earlier all the men had been shot. I couldn't understand how they could have done such a thing. And then I discovered that the children had been gassed in lorries in Chelmno."

And so it was that injustice, atrocity and humiliation led to more of the same and to revenge.

Perhaps it is only right that the story of what the Sudeten Germans suffered at the hands of the Czechs in 1945 should be told.

But after 60 years?

In the event, the attempt by contemporary Sudeten German leaders to block Czech admission to the European Community has clearly failed.

Instead, it has served to awaken long-buried antagonisms.

THE SUDETEN GERMANS' FORGOTTEN FATE

By Jolyon Jenkins, producer of Europe's Forgotten War Crime
BBC Radio 4
February 7, 2004

As Czechoslovakia was liberated from the Nazis at the end of World War II, the population of the country took its revenge - not on the Nazis themselves, but on three million of their fellow citizens.

> "The fact is that people hated the Germans, genuinely hated them so much that there was a spontaneous reaction, and the feeling was that if they liked the Third Reich so much, they could go there"
> *Zdena Nemcova*
> *Eyewitness*

For centuries, three million ethnic Germans had lived in the Czech lands which became part of Czechoslovakia after World War I.

Clustered around the borders with Germany and Austria in the Sudetenland, they got along reasonably well with their Czech neighbours.

But as the Nazis were driven out of Czechoslovakia, it was open season on Germans - any Germans.

Among those caught up in the violence that followed was a 15-year-old ethnic German Czech girl, Ingeborg Neumeyer.

In the middle of the night, she and her family were evicted from their apartment in the city of Brno and sent on a death march.

"We had no water, no food, and we were constantly forced on with whips and rifle butts. We were told to walk faster, faster. If somebody collapsed, they were shot or beaten with rifle butts. In the ditches by the roadside we could see many dead bodies.

"We marched on, kilometre after kilometre. I had another problem-I was wearing three dresses because my mother had told me to wear them so I would have something spare to wear later, and we were not allowed to leave the road, we had to march on, even if you needed the toilet you had to do it as you walked.

"I couldn't march any more and I went to the side of the road and tried to take off two of my dresses, but one of the Czech partisans saw me and beat me. I had blood coming out of my mouth and ears and nose. He took the dresses and threw them away, and threw away my shoes too."

Across Czechoslovakia, thousands of ethnic Germans were murdered, raped and tortured, in the so-called "wild expulsions".

According to Czech military historian Frantisek Hanzlik, the wild expulsions were in fact carried out on the basis of a government programme, and there was an official cover-up afterwards.

As order returned to Czechoslovakia, the new president, Eduard Beneš, put into operation a plan, hatched with the Allies during the war, to expel all 3 million Germans from the country without compensation.

Sudeten Germans load into boxcars during the course of their expulsion from Czechoslovakia

Agreed at Potsdam, this act of ethnic cleansing was openly sanctioned by Churchill, Stalin and Truman.

> "I couldn't march any more and I went to the side of the road and tried to take off two of my dresses, but one of the Czech partisans saw me and beat me"
> *Ingeborg Neumeyer*
> *Sudeten German*

Stuck in the middle

But did the Sudeten Germans bring it on themselves?

During the Czechoslovak communist era, they were rarely mentioned, or else depicted as Hitler's collaborators.

They had not made themselves popular with the Czechs: in 1935, over a million of them voted for a nationalist German party which demanded unification of the Sudetenland with Germany.

Zdena Nemcova was one of those who witnessed growing German militancy in the 1930s.

She has no sympathy for the plight of the Germans after the war.

"We hated them. People who had survived the concentration camps were returning and they were describing what happened to them there. The fact is that people hated the Germans, genuinely hated them so much that there was a spontaneous reaction, and the feeling was that if they liked the Third Reich so much, they could go there."

It is arguable that the Sudeten Germans had some reason not to want to belong to a Czechoslovakia that, before the war, did not always treat them as equal citizens.

Be that as it may, the Sudeten Germans found themselves squeezed between the Nazis who were false friends, the Czechoslovaks who wreaked disproportionate vengeance, and the victorious Allies who simply washed their hands.

It may be too late to right the historic wrongs, but it is never too late to remember one of Europe's less honourable episodes.

MASSACRE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Newly Discovered Film Shows Post-War Executions

By Jan Puhl
Spiegel Magazine
June 6, 2010

It has long been known that German civilians fell victim to Czech excesses immediately following the Nazi surrender at the end of World War II. But a newly discovered video shows one such massacre in brutal detail. And it has come as a shock to the Czech Republic.

For decades, the images lay forgotten in an aluminum canister -- almost seven minutes of original black and white film, shot with an 8 mm camera on May 10, 1945, in the Prague district of Borislavka during the confusing days of the German surrender.

The man who shot the film was Jirí Chmelnicek, a civil engineer and amateur filmmaker who lived in the Borislavka district and wanted to document the city's liberation from the brutal Nazi occupation. Chmelnicek filmed tanks rolling through the streets, soldiers and refugees. Then, at some point, his camera also caught groups of Germans, who had been driven out of their houses and into Kladenska Street by Red Army soldiers and Czech militiamen.

Chmelnicek's film shows how the Germans were rounded up in a nearby movie theater, also called the Borislavka. The camera then pans to the side of the street, where 40 men and at least one woman stand with their backs to the lens. A meadow can be seen in the background. Shots ring out and, one after another, each person in the line slumps and falls forward over a low embankment. The injured lying on the ground beg for mercy. Then a Red Army truck rolls up, its tires crushing dead and wounded alike. Later other Germans can be seen, forced to dig a mass grave in the meadow.

A Shock to Czechs

The shaky images show an event that has been described again and again by eyewitnesses and historians: the systematic killing of German civilians. Yet the film comes as a shock to Czechs. "Until now, there was no footage whatsoever of such executions," says Czech documentary filmmaker David Vondracek, who showed the historical images on television. "When I watched this for the first time, it was like seeing a live broadcast from the past."

The only such images known before were taken by a US Air Force camera team. That footage showed injured Germans lying on the ground in Plzen, in what was then Czechoslovakia, in early May 1945. The images included some dead bodies, but they didn't show a liquidation, from beginning to end, like this one.

Vondracek's documentary about Czech atrocities, called "Killings, Czech Style," aired during primetime on Czech state television just two days before May 8, the anniversary of Nazi Germany's surrender. The broadcast marks yet another milestone on the Czech road toward confronting a not-always-comfortable World War II past -- a path the country has been working its way down for years.

Even organizations representing "Sudeten Germans" -- ethnic Germans expelled from Czechoslovak territory after the war -- took notice. Horst Seehofer, governor of Bavaria, plans to pay an official visit to Prague soon, making him the first holder of his office to do so since World War II. "A great deal has come into the open where the Sudeten Germans are concerned," Seehofer commented recently.

Victim to Acts of Revenge

Following Nazi Germany's defeat, the Czechs and the Red Army expelled around 3 million ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland and the rest of Czechoslovakia. In the process, up to 30,000 civilians fell victim to acts of revenge. Only a small minority of them had been Nazi perpetrators. Germans and Czechs had lived side by side for decades before Hitler's 1938 annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, the two regions that make up the majority of the Czech Republic today.

No one knows who singled out the Germans in Borislavka, nor what crimes they were accused of committing. They were most likely killed by Red Army soldiers, perhaps also by "Revolutionary Guards" -- members of Czech militias. Those firing the shots may also have included former Czech collaborators, who had previously worked with the Germans and who wanted to clear their names with a show of anti-German brutality.

Helena Dvoracková, amateur filmmaker Jirí Chmelnicek's daughter, was one of the first to see the images of these executions. She doesn't remember how old she was when her father set up his projection screen and ran the film. "I don't remember either whether he said anything about it -- and really, there wasn't much to be said," she says.

'Under the Meadow'

Her father kept the film hidden at home for decades. Communist police even came calling -- someone had figured out that the footage existed. The police asked about the film and threatened Chmelnicek. But the filmmaker didn't turn over his reel. He wanted the world eventually to learn what had been done to defenseless people that day in May in Borislavka.

Ten years ago, long after her father's death, Helena Dvoracková offered the historical footage to a well-known Czech television historian, but the historian kept the film under wraps. "People will stone me to death if I show this," he supposedly said, and placed the reel in the state television station's archives. Documentary maker Vondracek found it there, after a cameraman who knew the amateur filmmaker's family told him about it.

Today Borislavka is one of Prague's nicer districts, and tall grass has grown over the meadow where the executions took place. Vondracek now wants to start a search for the Germans' mass grave. "It must be somewhere under the meadow," he says.

Likely not all that far away from a memorial plaque for two Czechs who fell in the battle against the Nazis on May 6, 1945.

Translation by Ella Ornstein

CZECHS PROBE MASSACRE OF SUDETEN GERMANS

August 18, 2010
Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Czech police have launched an investigation into the May 1945 killing of more than a dozen German-speaking civilians, after the discovery of a World War II-era grave, a newspaper reported Wednesday.

Czech investigators exhume grave.

Investigator Michal Laska was quoted as telling *Hospodarske Noviny* that the remains of at least four individuals had so far been found at the burial pit uncovered last week in the central Czech village of Dobronin.

He said DNA from the remains was set to be compared with that of individuals now living in Germany, to help confirm the identity of the victims. The remains are believed to be those of a group of German-speaking farmers who lived in and around Dobronin, and who are thought to have been shot by a hit squad on May 19, 1945.

CZECH AUTHORITIES EXAMINE UNEARTHED HUMAN REMAINS

Associated Press - August 23, 2010

Authorities are examining the partial skeletons of six or seven people believed to be the remains of ethnic German residents killed at the end of World War II.

Police officer Dana Cirtkova says the remains have been unearthed near Dobronin, some 115 kilometers (70 miles) southeast of Prague.

The remains are believed to belong to Sudeten Germans killed by Czechs in May 1945 during their expulsion from the country after the WWII.

Some three million ethnic Germans were expelled from the so-called Sudetenland near the border with Germany after the war.

Cirtkova said Monday that anthropologists will be examining the skeletons for at least two months. She says that while only six skulls were found it was unclear whether the remains were of seven people.

Laska noted that the names of the alleged perpetrators had been mentioned in a book about Dobronin by a German writer, as well as on several German websites.

"One of them is still alive," *Hospodarske Noviny* quoted Laska as saying. "But to launch a formal criminal probe, we need proof. And after 65 years, there isn't a lot. We can't accuse a man of something simply because someone else says that he did it," he said.

The farmers had been detained and were due to be expelled to Germany and Austria, as the Czechs drove out three million ethnic Germans in the wake of World War II as collective punishment for their perceived role in the conflict.

The country's German minority was clustered in the Sudetenland, a region bordering Germany and Austria, which Nazi Germany took over in 1938 under the Munich Agreement with France, Britain and Italy.

Germany went on to seize the remainder of the country in 1939, launching a brutal occupation that only ended with the Nazis' defeat six years later.

AT WAR OVER RECOGNITION

A site to commemorate displaced WWII Germans sparks controversy

by Michael Petrou
Monday, August 23, 2010
Maclean's Magazine

Millions of Germans were thrown out of countries throughout Europe after WWII.

"We have to throw them out," said Wladyslaw Gomulka, deputy prime minister of Poland's Soviet-backed provisional government, in May 1945. Gomulka was referring to ethnic Germans living on Polish land. There were millions of them. Some were colonists who had arrived during the war and took land previously belonging to now-slaughtered Poles. Some found themselves on newly Polish territory when borders were shifted west at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945. Most had been there for generations. Almost all were "thrown out."

And not only from Poland, but also Czechoslovakia, Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. More than 10 million Germans were ethnically cleansed as the war on the eastern front turned against Germany, and in the months and years following the end of hostilities. Many who were not thrown out were killed—as many as 700,000 between 1943 and 1947. Those who survived arrived in Germany poor and resentful. Today, almost 70 years later, they and their descendents, who constitute a powerful political lobby in Germany, have secured government support for a documentation centre to commemorate their plight at the German Historical Museum in Berlin.

It's a contentious undertaking. Poland and the Czech Republic have long viewed German expellee groups with suspicion, oftentimes with reason. German expellees opposed Poland joining the European Union, and have demanded compensation for their wartime suffering. More fundamentally, Poles and Czechs believe efforts by German expellees to commemorate their wartime tragedies implicitly challenge the notion of German guilt for the Second World War. "The museum, to a Pole, says the Germans were victims, and the Poles don't want to hear that," says Andrei Markovits, a professor of comparative politics and German studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

It's unlikely the planned documentation centre could have completely avoided controversy. It might have diminished it, however, by acknowledging German responsibility for the cataclysm that ultimately resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Germans from Eastern Europe. "The devil is in the details," says Jeffrey Kopstein, director of European studies at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs. "As long as the story is told in a balanced manner. It's not like the expulsion of the Germans happened out of nothing. They were expelled in the context of Germany having started and then losing World War II."

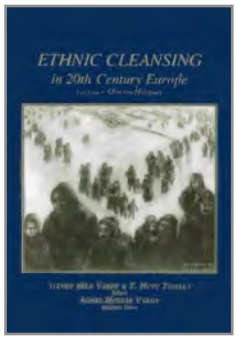
But now two of the museum's board members, state parliamentarians Arnold Tölg and Hartmut Saenger, have raised doubts even among Germans about the museum's message and the motives behind those who fought for it. In an article he wrote for a conservative weekly, Saenger criticized those who blame the National Socialists in Germany for starting the Second World War. "The historical context to the summer of 1939 reveals an astonishing willingness to go to war among all European powers," he said. In fact, France and the United Kingdom appeased German aggression and territorial demands in Spain and Czechoslovakia for years before finally declaring war in September 1939 over Germany's invasion of Poland.

Tölg, a long-time Christian Democratic Union parliamentarian in Baden-Württemberg, has drawn fire for comments he made 10 years ago in an interview with a far-right magazine in which he criticized those countries demanding reparations from Germany because they "perpetrated crimes similar to those of Hitler's Germany when it comes to forced labour." But as Yale historian Timothy Snyder documents in his forthcoming book, Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin, Eastern European slave workers were far more likely to die—and indeed were intended to die—than were German civilians forced to work for Poles.

Karl Lauterbach, an opposition parliamentarian with the Social Democratic party, has called Saenger and Tölg's comments a "disgrace." Whatever they are, they touch on an issue that still shapes politics in Central and Eastern Europe, regardless of how much time has passed. Claudia Roth, co-leader of the Green party, told Spiegel Online that the two politicians are "not suitable" to furthering German efforts at improving relations with its neighbours.

"It's a very charged memory," says Markovits, the University of Michigan professor. "If you know anything about Europe, World War II happened two seconds ago on some level, especially [in] the East."

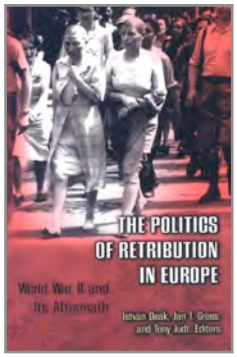
SELECTED RESOURCES



Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe

Edited by Steven Bela Vardy and T. Hunt Tooley
East European Monographs (April 23, 2003)

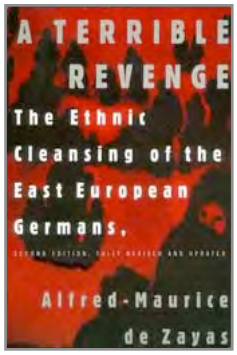
This volume encompasses a rich array of case studies, behaviors, origins and patterns, addressing such topics as "redrawing the ethnic map" in North America from 1536 to 1946, the twentieth century's first genocide (Armenia 1915-16), ethnic cleansing in World War II and its aftermath, and recent developments in Kosovo." - *Product description*



The Politics of Retribution in Europe

Edited by Istvan Deak, Jan T. Gross and Tony Judt
Princeton University Press (March 27, 2000)

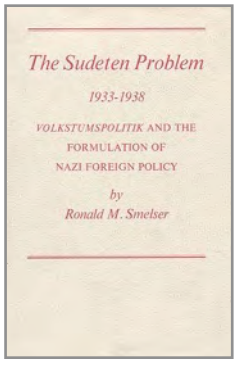
"This outstanding collection of essays examines the questions of collaboration and retributive jurisprudence in the aftermath of World War II." - *Library Journal*



A Terrible Revenge:
The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans

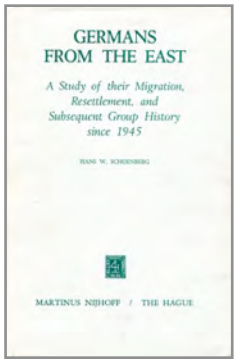
By Alfred-Maurice de Zayas
St. Martin's Press, 1994

The genocidal barbarism of the Nazi forces has been well documented. What is little known is the fate of fifteen million German civilians who found themselves on the wrong side of n e w postwar borders. All over Eastern Europe, the inhabitants of communities that had been established for many centuries were either expelled or killed. Over two million Germans did not survive. Some of these people had supported Hitler, but the great majority were guiltless. - *Product description*



The Sudeten Problem, 1933-38: Volkstumpolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy

By Ronald M. Smelser
Dawson Publishing, 1975



Germans from the East: A Study of their migration, resettlement and subsequent group history since 1945

By Hans W. Schoenberg
Spinger, 1970

The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans:
A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933-1962

By Radomír Luža
New York University Press, 1964

MAIN CREDITS

HABERMANN

a film directed by Juraj Herz

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