

**TALES OF EXPULSION: REMEMBERING POPULATION TRANSFER IN
WEST GERMANY AND THE CZECH LANDS, 1968-1997**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates changing memory discourses of the post-World War II (WWII) expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia in late-Cold War Central Europe. By uncovering the grassroots networks of Czech and Sudeten German cooperation in which these discourses evolved, I illustrate how this cooperation contributed to German-Czech understanding after 1989. This dissertation addresses three crucial questions: Firstly, why did revision of the expulsion become an important issue for Czech dissidents and émigré activists across Europe? Secondly, how did the Catholic Sudeten German organization, the Ackermann Gemeinde, emerge as an important partner for Czech dissidents, the underground Czech Catholic Church, and émigré activists during this period? And thirdly, how did these grassroots cooperations affect public discourse and policy in German-Czech relations after 1989?

I argue that the push to reconcile disparate West German and Czechoslovakian narratives of the expulsion and the promotion of a shared cultural heritage illuminates an early process of transnationalizing historical memory and identity that defines more recent discourses of history-writing in Europe in the 21st century. This project explores assertions of a cosmopolitan Central European identity in Czechoslovakia and West Germany that emerged in Czech underground and émigré circles and in prominent sectors of Sudeten Germans in West Germany in the 1970s. Based on archival research and interviews conducted in Germany and

the Czech Republic, I use this case study to speak to broader currents in the ways Europeans think about identity and history-writing as they deal with histories of conflict and violence on the continent in the context of increasing European integration.

DEDICATION

For Sarah and Sophie.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Academia Copernicana
AG	Ackermann Gemeinde
BayHStA	Bavarian State Archives (<i>Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv</i>)
BdV	Federation of German Expellees (<i>Bund der Vertriebenen</i>)
CC	Collegium Carolinum
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (<i>Christlich Demokratische Union</i>)
Charter	Charter 77
Council	Sudeten German Council (<i>Sudetendeutscher Rat</i>)
ČR	Czech Republic (<i>Česká republika</i>)
ČSDS	Czechoslovak Documentation Center (<i>Československé dokumentační středisko</i>)
ČSFR	Czechoslovak Federative Republic
ČSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
Czech Mission	Czech Catholic Mission in West Germany (<i>Česká misie</i>)
Decrees	Beneš Decrees
EU	European Union
FDP	Free Democratic Party (<i>Freie Demokratische Partei</i>)
IGMF	International Society for Human Rights in West Germany
JA	Junge Aktion
JHEF	Jan Hus Educational Foundation

OB	Opus Bonum
Party	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (<i>Komunistická strana Československa</i>)
SDA	Sudeten German Archive (<i>Sudetendeutsches Archiv</i>)
SL	Sudeten German Homeland Association (<i>Sudentendeutsche Landsmannschaft</i>)
StB	State Security (<i>Státní bezpečnost</i>)
Thesis	“Thesis on the Deportation of the Czechoslovakian Germans” by Danubius (Ján Mlynárik)
WSA	Wolfgang Stock Personal Archive
WWII	World War II
ZgV	Center Against Expulsions (<i>Zentrum gegen Vertreibung</i>)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On December 23, 1989, Václav Havel appeared on television as candidate for president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR).¹ After more than a month of street demonstrations and strikes, the previous regime under Gustáv Husák stepped down and members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (hereafter, Party) resigned their memberships by the tens of thousands.² Havel's television appearance was the first time many of his fellow citizens saw or heard the voice of the internationally famous dissident playwright and author who was now asking for their vote for president. During the interview, the young Czech television moderator asked Havel a question that at first glance might seem irrelevant given the gravity of the political reorientations taking place in Czechoslovakia and across Central and Eastern Europe: What was Havel's opinion on the post-WWII forced removal of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia?

¹ Havel had not planned to run for president during the early protest stages and only reluctantly agreed on December 7 when Civic Forum leaders became convinced for the need to have a dissident as president and not a reform Communist from 1968. Dubček had returned to the spotlight alongside Havel and other dissidents gathering at Prague's Magic Lantern Theater during the demonstrations in the attempt to show that the spirit of the 1968 reforms was still alive and ready to take over. However, it soon became clear to Civic Forum leaders that his continued use of socialist rhetoric was problematic for winning over all the protesting masses, leaving Havel as the best candidate; Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: William-Heinemann, 2005), 619–621; Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

² Bernard Wheaton and Zdeněk Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988–1991* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 106.

The question was in reference to comments made by Bavarian Minister-President Max Streibl in a speech several days prior, where he spoke directly to Czechs and said that after the dust settles the new democratic Czechoslovak government should change its previous stance that viewed the removal of the German population as necessary and justified. Havel was occupied around the clock managing the Civic Forum³ and his presidential campaign, and he was completely unaware of these comments. Caught off guard by the interviewer's vague explanation of the question, Havel improvised, answering, "I think that we are obliged to apologize to the Germans."⁴

Scholarship on recent German and Czech history often notes that Havel's "apology" was a watershed in bilateral relations, and indeed it proved to be a major step toward reconciliation in the long-run.⁵ However, the immediate reaction among Civic Forum organizers to Havel's televised comments was panic. His fellow

³ Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*) was the political movement established during the Velvet Revolution to organize the dissident forces in Czechoslovakia to overthrow the Communist regime.

⁴ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015; a transcript of Havel's response was published in: "K omluvě sudetským Němcům," *Rudé Právo*, January 3, 1990, 3.

⁵ Despite contemporary assumptions to the contrary by the public as well as some scholars, Havel never actually apologized. His comments on television began with "I think," and he meant for those comments and future statements to stimulate national self-reflection. This statement did not constitute a formal apology on behalf of all Czechs, which Havel felt he was incapable of giving as a single individual; Václav Havel, *To the Castle and Back*, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 139–140. On Havel's comments serving as a watershed in Czech public discussion of the expulsions and German-Czech relations, see: Ján Pauer, "The Problem of Ethical Norms and Values in the Czech-German Discussion," *Perspectives* 12 (1999): 65; Ján Pauer, "Moral Political Dissent in German-Czech Relations," *Czech Sociological Review* 6 (1998): 173; Miroslav Kunštát, "German-Czech Relations after the Fall of the Iron Curtain," *Czech Sociological Review* 6 (1998): 153; Michaela Witte, *Entfremdung, Sprachlosigkeit, Aussöhnung?* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2002), 85–88.

Forum organizer, Petr Pithart, assembled a crisis team to figure out how to deal with these unscripted comments, fearing a strong public backlash that might threaten Havel's election. The crisis grew the next day following West German President Richard von Weizsäcker's televised speech on Christmas Eve, where he quoted from a letter Havel sent him over a month prior in which Havel expressed his personal regret for the expulsion.⁶ Havel had hoped that Weizsäcker would make public that part of his letter to begin the process of reconciliation with Germans over the expulsion, but after a month of waiting he was unsure when or if Weizsäcker would do so.⁷ Weizsäcker's speech now came at a most inopportune moment, and for the next several days Pithart and the crisis team worked frantically around the clock to find a resolution, all the while fearing that Havel's stance on the

⁶ Havel wrote the letter as a thank you for Weizsäcker awarding him the German Bookseller's Peace Prize in absentia early that November, in which Havel offered a friendly gesture and condemned the expulsion, writing, "I personally condemn—as do many of my friends—the expulsion of Germans after the war. I consider it a deeply immoral act which did moral as well as material harm not only to Germans, but also, maybe even more so, to Czechs." Reiner Beushausen, "Die Diskussion über die Vertreibung der Deutschen in der ČSFR," *Dokumentation Ostmitteleuropa* 17 (1991): 10; Judith Renner, "'I'm Sorry for Apologising': Czech and German Apologies and Their Perlocutionary Effects," *Review of International Studies* 34 (2011): 1588.

⁷ Havel smuggled the letter to Weizsäcker via the established channels of an émigré living in West Germany, Vilém Prečan (see chapter two), and on December 12 he wrote to Prečan again asking when and if Weizsäcker planned to quote from his letter. With the help of his longtime contact in the West German embassy in Prague, Wolfgang Scheuer, Prečan sent a message to Weizsäcker's office with Havel's question. There was no response, but the answer came on December 24 during Weizsäcker's televised speech. Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015. A letter from Weizsäcker addressed to Havel, dated December 15, 1989, is located in the German National Archives in Koblenz in which Weizsäcker thanks Havel for his letter and conciliatory words and expresses his hope for future friendship between Germans and Czechs. However, it is uncertain when or if Havel ever received this letter. A Czech translation of this letter can be found in: Vilém Prečan, *Václav Havel—Vilém Prečan: Korrespondenz 1983–1989* (Prague: Československé dokumentační středisko, 2011), 771.

expulsion may well deny him the presidency and possibly alter the entire course of the recent democratic movement in Czechoslovakia.⁸

The course of the next seven years saw tensions over the expulsion emerge as a problematic sticking point in German-Czech relations, as both sides worked to find common language to narrate the expulsion and to solve outstanding issues of restitution for Sudeten German victims and Czech victims of the Nazi regime. As Havel and other former dissidents and émigrés took over leadership of Czech politics, academia, and social institutions, they worked closely with a network of Sudeten Germans with whom they forged partnerships in the 1970s and 1980s to help them navigate bilateral relations and reassure the Czech public that Germans no longer represented a threat. The bulk of these individuals came from the Catholic Sudeten German organization in West Germany, the *Ackermann Gemeinde* (AG). Political expellee organizations like the Sudeten German Homeland Association (*Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*, hereafter, SL) demanded restitution and a right to return throughout the 1990s and helped engender anti-German sentiment among Czechs that discouraged the moral reevaluation of the expulsion Havel called for. It was the AG and the many Czechs with whom they built partnerships before 1989 that were at the forefront of German-Czech reconciliation and helped put the outstanding political issues to rest and allow a peaceful, if

⁸ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015; Petr Pithart, “Über Gesten in der Politik,” in *Češi a Němci: ztracené dějiny—Tschechen und Deutsche: Verlorene Geschichte*, ed. Eva Malířová (Prague: Prago Media, 1995), 70.

initially rocky, transition of Germans and Czech from Cold War foes to partners in Europe.

This dissertation investigates changing memory discourses of the post-World War II (WWII) expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia in late-Cold War Central Europe. By uncovering the grassroots networks of Czech and Sudeten German cooperation in which these discourses evolved I illustrate how this cooperation contributed to German-Czech understanding after 1989. This dissertation addresses three crucial questions: Firstly, why did revision of the expulsion become an important issue for Czech dissidents and émigré activists across Europe? Secondly, how did the AG emerge as an important partner for Czechs during this period? And thirdly, how did these grassroots cooperations affect public discourse and policy in German-Czech relations after 1989?

I argue that the push to reconcile disparate West German and Czechoslovakian narratives of the expulsion and the promotion of a shared cultural heritage illuminates an early process of transnationalizing historical memory and identity that defines more recent discourses of history-writing in Europe in the 21st century. This project explores assertions of a cosmopolitan Central European identity in Czechoslovakia and West Germany that emerged in Czech underground and émigré circles and in prominent sectors of Sudeten Germans in West Germany in the 1970s. I use this case study to speak to broader currents in the ways Europeans think about identity and history writing as they deal with histories of

conflict and violence on the continent in the context of increasing European integration.

Crucial to understanding how the AG emerged as an unlikely partner to the post-1989 Czech regime and elites in Czech academics and civil society is tracing the individual contacts and friendships they formed over the preceding two decades. The majority of previous scholarship on Sudeten German activities before 1989 focuses on the narratives of political organization and institutions like the SL and generally argues a decline in Sudeten German influence after the policies of openness toward the East of the Willy Brandt government in the late 1960s.⁹ This dissertation introduces two revisions to this narrative: firstly, that the AG was institutionally and culturally very different from the SL and must be viewed separately from its political-oriented counterparts; and secondly, that while the political organizations like the SL did indeed suffer a decline in public status and influence in the final two decades of the Cold War, the AG's grassroots activities in social and cultural areas greatly expanded during this same period and enabled the

⁹ The standard work on the political decline of expellees in West Germany following the Brandt regime is: Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For studies on expellees in Bavaria and forms of Sudeten German influence that focus on the political sphere and marginalize or ignore the AG altogether, see: K. Erik Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns: Die Schirmherrschaft über die Sudetendeutschen, 1954–1974* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2010); Samuel Salzborn, *Geteilte Erinnerung: Die deutsch-tschechische Beziehungen und die sudetendeutsche Vergangenheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2008); Gerhard Hopp, *Machtfaktor ohne Machtbasis? Die Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft und die CSU* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2010).

AG to forge critical relationships with Czechs that would have a meaningful impact on German-Czech relations after 1989.

From 1968 onward the AG underwent a transformative process in response to aging leaders and dwindling membership numbers. Their solution in 1970 was to replace the leadership with younger AG members of the so-called “middle generation” who were children at the time of the expulsion. These new leaders worked to recruit more involvement of the younger generation who came of age during the 1950s and 1960s and were more interested in outreach and reconciliation with Czechs than in preserving and promoting Sudeten German heritage. As the middle and younger generation came to comprise more of the leadership and active membership base of the AG, the AG capitalized on a wave of new Czech immigrants in the wake of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion to build partnerships with Czech émigrés residing in metropolises across Europe. These émigré contacts assisted the AG in expanding its outreach to persecuted Catholic dioceses and dissidents inside Czechoslovakia and helped them build a reputation as a trusted partner who sought reconciliation and the rehabilitation of German-Czech relations. After 1989 the AG and their Czech counterparts activated these networks to foster encounters between Germans and Czechs and open discussion about the expulsion with an aim toward reconciliation and friendliness between the two peoples.

Accompanying the transition toward outreach with Czechs was a new formulation of Sudeten German identity I refer to interchangeably as “inclusivist”

or “Bohemian.” This identity discourse sought to dislocate “Sudeten German” identity from the divisive era of national conflict from the 19th century to WWII that had created the very idea of “Sudeten Germans” and redefine it in terms of a pre-nationalism era of multiethnic, cosmopolitan identities and heritage in the Czech lands. In their public statements, conferences, and seminars, the new AG platform emphasized a long history of peaceful cohabitation in Central Europe as a basis for promoting reconciliation. This discourse contrasted with the SL’s continued promotion of an “exclusivist,” nationally distinct Sudeten German identity as a way to legitimize their demand of a right to return to the homeland as a minority group, which brought the two institutions into conflict as each organization promoted their competing vision of Sudeten German identity.

This movement within the AG paralleled similar discourses in Czech underground writing that condemned the expulsion and sought to rehabilitate a positive German-Czech heritage as part of larger discussions about a Central European identity.¹⁰ This dissertation views both iterations of Central European identity as part of an ongoing process of collective identity negotiation taking place concurrently on both sides of the border that emphasized cosmopolitanism and shared heritage between Germans and Czechs. It views the Czech discussions of

¹⁰ For an English overview of the underground Czech expulsion debates, see: Bradley F. Abrams, “Morality, Wisdom and Revision: The Czech Opposition of the 1970s and the Expulsion of Sudeten Germans,” *East European Politics and Societies* 9 (1995): 234–255. For full copies of many of the original Czech and Slovak entries to the debate, see: Bohumil Černý et al., eds., *Češi, Němci, Odsun: Diskuse Nezávislých Historiků* (Prague: Academia Praha, 1990).

rewriting expulsion history, and rehabilitating German-Czech heritage as a positive history, as part of a larger process of renegotiating Czech identity through historical revision of the Communist expulsion narrative into a usable past that reflected the current values of the underground emphasizing morality and human rights. This process began in the wake of the failed reform attempts of the Alexander Dubček-led Party in the late 1960s, when many Czech intellectuals began defining themselves in opposition to the repressive socialist state under Dubček's successor Gustáv Husák, and the values they promoted above all were support for human rights and morality. This necessitated a revision of the expulsion narrative to reflect those values, and the dissidents maintained their moral stance against the expulsion throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s when they confronted wider Czech society with a call for similar national self-reflection and reappraisal of the expulsion narrative.

Equally, the AG's inclusivist discourse toward identity and heritage in Central Europe was also rooted in universal feelings of morality and human rights. Its roots were laid during the AG's founding with an emphasis on reconciliation in a Christian spirit of morality, although the bulk of their activities in the 1950s focused on preserving the cultural heritage of Sudeten Germans to prepare them for an eventual return to the homeland. Their rhetoric toward emphasizing reconciliation and shared heritage with Czechs evolved and grew in response to social and political changes in West Germany in the late 1960s and 1970s that

shunned expellee politics of restitution and victimhood discourses and promoted European integration based on support for human rights.

That the AG in the 1970s viewed the expulsion as a moral tragedy was nothing new or surprising, but what did change was an increased emphasis on outreach and promoting an inclusivist heritage and identity with Czechs as former inhabitants of the same lands. The AG's history of emphasizing reconciliation offered a precedent for promoting an inclusivist identity, but this alone does not explain the pronounced shift in rhetoric and outreach activities in the 1970s. The generational transition to younger leaders and members with little or no direct memory of the expulsion was important for the promotion of this new discourse, but this explanation alone runs the risk of reducing a complex issue to age and generation and fails to explain support for the inclusivist rhetoric by AG members of the older generation.¹¹

I argue that the generational change was not the sole factor, but it offered an important and timely opportunity for rethinking the AG's institutional identity, and this rethinking took place during, and was influenced by, the wider shift in West German society toward seeking peaceful relations with the East and promoting a

¹¹ For example, founder and decades-long AG director Hans Schütz wrote in a 1981 essay "Is the Sudeten Question Still Relevant?" that Sudeten Germans and Czechs had to walk "hand in hand" and foster a new way of thinking about each other to lay the foundation for a new relationship: Hans Schütz, "Ist die Sudetendeutsche Frage noch aktuell? Der Versuch einer Antwort 36 Jahre nach 1945 und 63 Jahre nach 1918," in *Volk und Volkstum im Donauraum: Festgabe für Prof. Dr. Franz Hieronymus Riedl zum 75. Lebensjahr*, ed. Theodor Veiter (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981), 89–100.

European identity based on European integration and respect for human rights. These discourses of peace and political inclusion over isolation married well with the AG's past emphasis on reconciliation and offered a way for the AG to disassociate itself from the "revanchist expellees" that West German society was increasingly shunning and recast itself as a forward-looking institution promoting a vision of a reunited Europe. Through the inclusivist identity discourse the AG framed Sudeten Germans not as a national group seeking indemnity, but as harbingers of a heritage of multiculturalism and peaceful multiethnic cohabitation. In this way, the AG presented West German society with an image of Sudeten German heritage as the very model for a future reunited, multiethnic, and peaceful Europe that West Germans sought to achieve by normalizing relations with Eastern Europe and shunning discourses of German victimhood in WWII. This was not a simple calculated political move by the AG, but instead it rested in a deeply held belief of the leadership influenced by the changing social times and encouraged by their increased interaction with Czech immigrants and activists after 1968. It was an expression of a changing identity renegotiated in the context of political, social, and generational change, and this new identity inspired them to take personal risks by traveling to Czechoslovakia to deliver support and aid to repressed Catholic communities and to seek out partnerships and dialogue with Czechs across Europe to work toward reconciliation.

Expulsion History, Memory, and German-Czech Relations in Recent Scholarship

Widespread scholarly interest in the postwar expulsion of Germans and their resettlement in the occupied zones emerged in the context of observing contemporary forced population transfers during the Balkan wars of the early 1990s, and many of the first works aimed to bring the expulsions into the Western historical consciousness as an earlier incident of the “ethnic cleansing.”¹² Beyond the scholarship of the experience of expulsion, other works have focused on the political and cultural impacts of expellees after their resettlement. These works tend to concentrate on the early decades of the Cold War and their analyses typically cease by the end of the 1970s, citing declines in the political and cultural influence of expellees in West German society following the end of the Christian Democratic Union-led governments and the rise of Willy Brandt’s Social Democratic

¹² The first English-language work that comprehensively addressed the expulsions was: Alfred de Zayas, *The German Expellees: Victims in War and Peace* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993). This was reprinted the following year to incorporate the new contemporary term “ethnic cleansing” in the title: *A Terrible Revenge: Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994). Subsequent works sought to incorporate the expulsions into larger histories of forced population transfer as a modern phenomenon separate from genocide; Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing,” *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer, 1993): 110–121; Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). The new discourses on “ethnic cleansing” were not without their critics, as some scholars argued that the term was simply a euphemism for genocide that enabled the West to stand by and watch the violence unfold without taking action. See: Stjepan G. Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion: The Post-Emotional Balkan War* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Stjepan G. Meštrović, *The Conceit of Innocence: Losing the Conscience of the West in the War against Bosnia* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997); and Stjepan G. Meštrović and Thomas Cushman, eds., *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, hereafter, SPD)-led government in 1969.¹³ By focusing on political influence and the role of expellees in West German public discourse these studies leave a void of the 1970s and 1980s, which is precisely where this dissertation concentrates to uncover the impactful activities of the AG on a grassroots level outside of the political and public mainstream.

The narratives of steadily declining expellee influence in West German society have difficulty reconciling with the resurgence of expulsion memory and conflict over competing narratives of the expulsion in German-Czech relations in the 1990s as well as the return of expulsion memory and German victimhood discourses in the early 2000s. Perri Ahonen's work on expellee political influence, for example, ends with the ratification of the Two-Plus-Four Treaty in 1990 and fails to account for the German-Czech conflict over expulsion memory that emerged a year later and complicated relations for the better part of the decade.¹⁴ Robert G. Moeller provides a comprehensive overview of the continual presence of expellees

¹³ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*. Robert G. Moeller illustrated the cultural and social impact of expellees serving as prominent symbols of German victimhood in the 1950s as a way to "acknowledge the war as part of their history and at the same time to distance themselves from the National Socialist state" by focusing on German suffering. His study likewise marked a decline in the late 1960s during the transition toward confronting German guilt and perpetrators; Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3. Other works have since refined and expanded this analysis, also focusing predominantly on the same early time period. See, for example, Peter Fritz's chapter in: Peter Fritz, "Volkstümliche Erinnerung und die deutsche Identität nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Verletztes Gedächtnis: Erinnerungskultur und Zeitgeschichte im Konflikt*, ed. Konrad Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002), 75–98.

¹⁴ See Ahonen's conclusion in which he illustrates the expellee organizations as largely being a spent force after reunification: Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 266–279.

in German collective memory through 1989 and into the new millennium to explain the resurgence of expulsion memory in public discourse in the early 2000s.¹⁵

However, the primary purpose of Moeller's work is to trace continuity in German collective memory to explain the return of German victimhood discourses in the new millennium, and although he touches upon select aspects of expulsion memory from the 1970s-1990s he does so in passing and restricts his analysis to domestic changes in West German public and academic thought, not the German-Czech conflict or expulsion memory debates beyond the national borders.

A separate body of scholarship fills in some of the gaps during the German-Czech conflict over expulsion history in the 1990s, but these works tend to focus on the conflict itself and trace little continuity to the late-Cold War period, further contributing to the trend of scholarship on expulsion memory that glosses over the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶ What emerges from these studies is a trend of dividing currents of expulsion memory into pre-1989 and post-1989 phases. This dissertation challenges that narrative by linking activism and identity discourses of the late-Cold War decades to political and social reconciliation in the 1990s, illustrating that

¹⁵ Robert G. Moeller, "Sinking Ships, the Lost Heimat and Broken Taboos: Günter Grass and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany," *Contemporary European History* 12 (May 2003): 147–181.

¹⁶ Witte, *Entfremdung*; Jaroslav Kučera, "Zwischen Geschichte und Politik: Die aktuelle Diskussion über die Vertreibung der Deutschen in der tschechischen Gesellschaft und Politik," in *Flucht und Vertreibung: Zwischen Aufrechnung und Verdrängung*, ed. Robert Streibel (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1994), 174–187; Miroslav Kunštát, "Deutsch-Tschechische Beziehungen—Deutsch-Tschechischer Dialog?" *Transondra* 12/13 (1996): 20–29; Kunštát, "German-Czech Relations after the Fall of the Iron Curtain," 149–172; Pauer, "Moral Political Dissent," 173–186.

the end of the Cold War as a watershed for European social and cultural histories is not as absolute as the periodization of these previous works might suggest.

The context of European integration in which the German-Czech expulsion debates took place has inspired a growing body of literature adopting comparative and transnational approaches that focus on cross-border patterns of German and Czech expulsion memory politics. At the forefront are the publications associated with the Joint German-Czech Historians' Commission established in 1990 to work out the two countries' complicated past.¹⁷ The edited volume *Dictatorship—War—Expulsion* provides strong theoretical as well as practical work on the development of contemporary transnational memory cultures surrounding the expulsions taking place in the 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁸ Contributions in this anthology reinforce arguments for the emergence of transnational forms of expulsion remembrance inspired by moral abhorrence of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and desires for European integration that gave rise to movements for creating a “European” form

¹⁷ The commission's publication list is vast, but some of the more notable works dealing with memory culture specifically are: Dietmar Neutatz and Volker Zimmermann, eds., *Die Deutschen und das östliche Europa: Aspekte einer vielfältigen Beziehungsgeschichte* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2006); Detlef Brandes, Dušan Kováč, and Jiří Pešek, eds., *Wendepunkte in den Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen, Tschechen und Slowaken 1848–1989* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2007).

¹⁸ Christoph Cornelißen, Roman Holec, and Jiri Pešek, eds., *Diktatur—Krieg—Vertreibung. Erinnerungskulturen in Tschechien, der Slowakei und Deutschland seit 1945* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2005).

of expulsion remembrance by the early 2000s.¹⁹ These patterns of transnationalism, however, are largely attributed to the post-1989 era and do not explore at length the roots of their development in the 1970s and 1980s or their connections to the AG and Sudeten German discourses of identity and remembrance before 1989.²⁰

Other scholars have called for a transnational approach to writing troubled European histories in a way that downplays national perpetrator-victim dichotomies and Europeanizes victims of particular forms of violence like forced population transfer.²¹ Some scholars argue this was already taking place in the

¹⁹ The introductory chapter of *Diktatur—Krieg—Vertreibung* discusses pan-European tendencies to universalize collective memory and a growing trend toward the Europeanization of historical memory. The second chapter outlines frameworks to analyze and understand history-writing as a collective memory promoting a particular identity and world view. An addition by Peter Haslinger engages the influences of German post-unification identity formation, European integration, moral outrage at the Balkan ethnic cleansings, and restitution questions to explain changing dynamics in the international debates about expellee remembrance toward the end of the nineties; see: Christoph Cornelißen, Roman Holec, and Jiri Pešek, “Politisch-historische Erinnerungen in Mittel- und Ostmitteleuropa seit 1945,” in *ibid.*, 9–24; Christoph Cornelissen, “Zur Erforschung von Erinnerungskulturen in West und Osteuropa: Methoden und Fragestellungen,” in *ibid.*, 25–44; Peter Haslinger, “Von der Erinnerung zur Identität und zurück: Zur aktuellen Debatte über die Vertreibungen in Ostmitteleuropa,” in *ibid.*, 473–488.

²⁰ One significant exception is Claudia Kraft’s contribution that traces Czech expulsion remembrance discourses from the postwar era to the mid-1990s. Kraft traces the debates in Czech underground circles in the 1970s and 1980s and notes that many of the actors involved led the calls for public moral revision of the expulsion after 1989. She attributes the negative public reactions to these calls for moral revision in part to collective desires for a self-assured past as part of forging a post-communist Czech national identity; Claudia Kraft, “Der Platz der Vertreibung der Deutschen im historischen Gedächtnis Polens und der Tschechoslowakei/Tschechiens,” in *ibid.*, 329–354. For her argument of the need for a transnational theoretical framework to better understand the Czech public resistance to calls to morally condemn the expulsion after 1989, see: Claudia Kraft, “Locating German Refugees in Polish and Czech Memories,” in *Restitution and Memory: Material Restoration in Europe*, eds. Dan Diner and Gotthart Wunberg, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 285–286.

²¹ Norbert Frei, “Gefühlte Geschichte,” *Die Zeit*, October 21, 2004; Ute Frevert, “Geschichtsvergessenheit und Geschichtsversessenheit Revisited,” *Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 40–41 (2003): 6–13.

1990s and that European integration and the “Europeanization of memory” were combining with recontextualizations of World War II experiences into comparative concepts of genocide and ethnic cleansing that enabled sympathy for victims in a universal discourse.²² The result was new victimhood discourses in the late 1990s and early 2000s that moved away from national contexts and adopted a growing sense of European identities and commonalities. Yet all these works continue the trend of studying expulsion memory and expellee influence either in the early Cold War period or after 1989. They do not ascribe any transnational currents or identity discourses to the dissident debates of the 1970s and 1980s, nor do they explore the grassroots activities of expellee organizations like the AG that thrived during the late-Cold War period even as expellees lost their political and cultural influence on a national level. Moreover, they imbue 1989 with too much importance as a watershed and thus cannot account for how Cold War contacts shaped post Cold War politics, memory, and relations.

²² Constantin Goschler, “‘Versöhnung’ und ‘Viktimisierung’: Die Vertriebenen und der deutsche Opferdiskurs,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 53 (2005): 881. These processes were also taking place among Czechs in their discourses of expulsion memory, although the Czech public’s initial skepticism toward revision of the expulsion narrative illustrated persisting national frameworks of expulsion memory that juxtaposed Czech nationality against a perennial German threat; Martin Schulze Wessel, “Die Mitte liegt Westwärts: Mitteleuropa in tschechischen Diskussion,” *Bohemia* 29 (1988): 325–344; Pavel Kolář, “Vertreibung zwischen nationaler Meisterzählung und Deutungspluralität,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 53 (2005): 927–928.

Transnational Memory and Identity

In many of these analyses of German and Czech expulsion memories in the 1990s scholars have applied theoretical conceptions of collective memory and identity in a transnational context largely credited to the study of Holocaust memory by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider.²³ In their seminal work *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* they argue that the container of the nation-state, which had previously been the assumed harbinger of collective memory, has given way to new forms of identity that have slowly developed since the end of WWII. They follow the processes of globalization behind the “deterritorialization” of politics and culture to trace the decoupling of collective memory and national history, using Holocaust remembrance as a case study. Holocaust remembrance and history-writing has been confronted by a long list of actors which have attempted to universalize it, to particularize it, and to nationalize it; yet, it continues to exist as a global collective memory which has been powered, maintained, and altered by these interactions between global and local.²⁴

²³ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001). An English translation is available: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002): 93. See also the discussion of transnational ethics in international Holocaust remembrance in: Helmut Dubiel, “The Remembrance of the Holocaust as a Catalyst for a Transnational Ethic?” *New German Critique* 90 (2003): 59–70.

Levy and Sznajder dub Holocaust memory a “cosmopolitan memory,” existing neither as a global universal nor a local particular but as a conglomeration floating somewhere in between.²⁵ Cosmopolitanism is roughly defined as a process of “internal globalization” through which global concerns become part of the local experiences of an increasing number of people.²⁶ They argue that studies and remembrance of the Holocaust have exploded in historiography and public thinking in recent decades as a reflex to the need for a moral touchstone in an age of uncertainty and the absence of a master ideological narrative.²⁷

While I do not propose to put expulsion memory during the 1970s and 1980s on this same level of proliferation, the same forces of transnationalization, cosmopolitanism, and morality were certainly at play among the Czech dissidents and within the AG, and they influenced both groups’ emphasis on reconciliation and promotion of shared heritage and identity as historical inhabitants of the Czech lands. Levy and Sznajder share the same historical limitations of the scholars of expulsion memory cited above by viewing 1989 as a watershed after which transnationalism and cosmopolitanism began to take hold. My work seeks to illustrate that cosmopolitan identities and memories of the expulsion were already

²⁵ Levy and Sznajder adopted the term “cosmopolitan memory” from the previous work of Ulrich Beck. See: Ulrich Beck, “The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity,” *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (January/March 2000): 79–105.

²⁶ Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 21.

²⁷ Levy and Sznajder, “Memory Unbound,” 93.

visible among Czech dissidents and the AG in the 1970s; the developments in the 1990s were the rest of Europe catching up.²⁸

Scholars investigating the emergence of cosmopolitan identities often focus on universal human rights and morality as a prime unifying force in creating identities beyond the nation-state and encompassing geographically distant peoples.²⁹ This dissertation proceeds from this same perspective by highlighting the centrality of the human rights discourses as a foundation for the cosmopolitan European identities that both the Czech dissidents and AG leaders expressed. Although this occurred in different countries for different reasons, both of these groups began redefining their respective identities in a way that emphasized a shared cosmopolitan heritage as former inhabitants in the Czech lands from the 1970s onward. It was this cosmopolitanism and its intrinsic morality emphasizing human rights that made revising the expulsion narrative from a victory to a tragedy a moral imperative for the Czech dissidents; it was also this same cosmopolitanism that drove the AG to assist the repressed Catholic Church in Cold War

²⁸ Levy and Sznajder argue it was only after Serbian crimes began to be equated to the Holocaust that moral outrage grew to the point of inspiring military action, including Germany's first combat deployments since WWII. Memory of the Holocaust and "never again," thus, served as a cosmopolitan memory and a moral measuring stick invoked to justify military action against similar events of the present; Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 97–100.

²⁹ Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Perspective," 83; Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *Human Rights and Memory* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im Globalen Zeitalter*, 97–100; Jack Crittenden, *Wide as the World: Cosmopolitan Identity, Integral Politics, and Democratic Dialogue* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011); Florian Pichler, "How Real is Cosmopolitanism in Europe?" *Sociology* 42 (2008): 1107–1126.

Czechoslovakia and to work closely with the former Czech dissidents to ensure a peaceful transition toward German-Czech partnership in reunited Europe.

The international popularity of human rights discourses, though not the direct cause of these reconstructed visions of the past, provided useful language in which to couch the moral basis for asserting a cosmopolitan identity, particularly for the Czechs. Human rights discourses gained prominence worldwide in the 1970s as a response to the recent decline in utopian ideals of modernity. They emerged in the wake of crushed hopes for reforming socialism in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Chile in 1973, as well as growing disillusionment with the promises of capitalism and the welfare state that had sparked street protests from Paris to Berkeley, brought war to Vietnam, divided Germany, and turned it into the front line of Mutually Assured Destruction. By the mid-1970s, human rights perhaps served as “the last utopia” that could offer a framework for ordering peaceful, free societies and a moral world order, and they were vested with an almost mythological power to guide the world from chaos and disarray toward freedom and stability.³⁰

³⁰ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3–4; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

For many behind the Iron Curtain, human rights provided the rhetorical basis for an alternative value system as “a language of moral empowerment.”³¹ The Charter 77 petition invoked human rights in its rallying cry for a civil society outside Communist Party, asserting that the Charter emerged “from a background of friendship and solidarity among people who share our concerns for those ideals [human rights].”³² It was also human rights that provided the stated moral foundation of the cosmopolitan identity that engendered revision of the expulsion narrative as part of a reshuffling of Czech identity.

Yet, more so than arguing for the enforcement of laws concerning basic human rights, the dissidents were concerned with restoring morality in a broader sense and promoting “life in truth” and personal authenticity.³³ Havel even warned against fetishizing the law in his landmark essay: “The Power of the Powerless,” saying, “Even in the most ideal of cases, the law is only one of several imperfect and more or less external ways of defending what is better in life against what is worse. By itself, the law can never create anything better.”³⁴ Human rights itself was not the cause of the dissident movement nor its only concern, but it served as a universalistic language to connect to the transnational web of Helsinki

³¹ Michal Kopeček, “Human Rights Facing a National Past: Dissident ‘Civic Patriotism’ and the Return of History in East Central Europe,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012): 574.

³² Text from the original Charter 77 petition, cited from: H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 211–212.

³³ See: Jan Vladislav, ed., *Václav Havel or Living in Truth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

³⁴ Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” *International Journal of Politics* 15 (Fall–Winter 1985–1986): 77.

organizations and human rights agendas of Western governments while also appealing to the various domestic dissident groups with differing focuses and interests. As Michal Kopeček writes, human rights was a convenient framework to translate the dissidents' visions into internationally understandable cultural codes: "The reconsiderations of national history, national political traditions, and conceptions of patriotism—as vaguely formulated as they mostly were—leaned on the new powerful instrument of human rights. In a different political situation, they might have gone without it."³⁵

Human rights discourses, though offering the AG a moral foundation, provided somewhat less useful externally directed rhetoric than it did for the Czechs. Sudeten German activists had often invoked human rights in the 1940s and 1950s to invoke sympathy for their suffering and loss and to base their legal claim of a right to return, and the Konrad Adenauer-led government of the 1950s equally invoked their violation through the expulsions as the basis for its refusal to recognize Poland's western frontier on the Oder and Neisse rivers.³⁶ With the international ascendance of human rights discourses in the 1970s the SL ramped up their invocation of human rights in their public statements as a pretext for

³⁵ Kopeček, "Human Rights Facing a National Past," 601–602.

³⁶ Lora Wildenthal, "Human Rights Activism in Occupied and Early West Germany: The Case of the German League for Human Rights," *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 526–527, 541; Andrew Demshuk, "What is the 'Right to Heimat'? West German Expellees and the Many Meanings of 'Heimkehr,'" *Central European History* 45 (2012): 524–525; Robert G. Moeller, "War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany," *The American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 1022–1023.

preserving a right for expellees to return to their homeland as an irredentist minority group.³⁷ With the AG attempting to disassociate itself from the negative stereotypes of revanchist expellees during the 1970s, the SL's public emphasis on human rights caused the AG to avoid using such rhetoric in order to draw a clearer distinction between the two organizations.

However, for a younger generation of expellee children enamored with the suffering of those behind the Iron Curtain, the popularity of human rights discourses undoubtedly played a strong role in inspiring them to become more active through the AG in assisting the Czechs who relocated in West Germany after 1968. Many of the AG's symposiums directed toward the youth held human rights as their topic of discussion to further contribute to the idea that the AG's work was grounded in the same currents of human rights that had grown to such popularity in West German public discourse. So while human rights discourses provided useful internal rhetoric for gaining more support from the youth, the external invocation of human rights as the basis for the AG's activities to the public did not take place on the same level as the Czech dissidents or, and due in part to, the SL.

The AG and Czech intellectuals' "resurrection" of a cosmopolitan heritage in Central Europe lost through nationalism, war, and Cold War geopolitics raises fundamental questions about the importance of nostalgia, namely how historically

³⁷ In particular, the SL attempted to connect their arguments to the plight of Palestinians, which was a popular topic in West Germany in the 1970s; Yuliya H. Komska, "Heimat in the Cold War: West Germany's Multimedial Easts, 1945-1989" (PhD diss, Cornell University, 2009): 1-47.

accurate were the AG's "inclusivist" version of Sudeten German identity and the Czech dissidents' assertion of a cosmopolitan Central European identity? Recent historians have argued the widespread existence of multiculturalism and fluid identities in the Czech lands that the forces of nationalism and ethnic chauvinism reduced into new national-ethnic categories of "Czechs and Germans."³⁸ These works challenge previous scholarship that accepted the ethnic master narratives constructed during the rise of nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries which spoke of "revivals" and "awakenings" of national identities among Germans and Czechs that purportedly had always existed under the surface. Their findings support the late-Cold War assertions of the AG and many Czech dissidents that it was social class, communities, and locations and not specific national or ethnic heritage that comprised the most common bases of identity in the Czech lands before the mid-19th century.

That is not to say that questions of nostalgia do not factor into this story. Nostalgia for the recent past lay at the center of Sudeten German forms of collective remembrance and celebration of their culture and heritage in the 1950s and 1960s, giving rise to what Andrew Demshuk calls a "Heimat [homeland] of Memory." This

³⁸ Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 8–10; Gary Cohen, *Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861–1914* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006), 9–15; Chad Bryant, "Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939–1946," *Slavic Review* 61 (2002): 683–706; Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008)

idealized view of the homeland recalled individual remembrances of their former villages and the surrounding countryside that often invoked peaceful memories of childhood innocence.³⁹ These patterns of remembrance allowed Sudeten Germans of the 1950s to lament a lost homeland in a way that was devoid of the divisive forces of nationalism and questions of culpability or guilt in the brutal wartime occupation. However, the middle and younger generation of expellees that took over leadership of the AG in the 1970s had no such direct remembrances of the lost Heimat and thus had little connection to the patterns of remembrance of their parents, even going so far as to reject being labelled “Sudeten Germans.”⁴⁰ In this light we may perhaps view the resurrection of an older, pre-nationalism view of historic cosmopolitan heritage in the Czech lands as the creation of new forms of nostalgia to which younger expellees could relate, even if imaginatively, to serve as a historical reinforcement for their current worldview that valued peace and reconciliation.

For the Czechs in this story, discourses of cosmopolitan Central European heritage may be a continuation of a historic transnational identification with multicultural intellectual life spread across Europe that Josef Škvorecký argues has been an integral component of the Czech mind since the wave of Czech immigration

³⁹ Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14–20.

⁴⁰ See chapter two’s subsection “1968 in West Germany: Political Reorientations and a ‘Generation Problem.’”

following the 1620 defeat by Austrian-led forces at the Battle of White Mountain.⁴¹ Indeed, German thinkers have long been part of Europe's international intellectual life, and Czechs' resurrection of German-Czech heritage was an important gateway to rejoining the intellectual community of Western Europe. Or perhaps these discourses comprised, to quote Helmut Illbruck's analysis of the concept of nostalgia, a set of postmodern simulacra that kept "alive [...] the dream of a return to particularity in the age of hyperreality."⁴² Hyperreality, or the inability of the consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality, is indeed an apt description of a post-1968 Czech society that was inundated with authoritarian symbols and rituals of socialist revolution at a time when these dissident intellectuals and even a vast majority of Communist Party members had ceased to believe (or never did to begin with) that there was any truth to the cause behind it.⁴³

Following Illbruck's view, one could interpret the promotion of cosmopolitan heritage in the Czech lands as a nostalgic longing for a past to serve as a historical touchstone to reinforce contemporary calls for cooperation, understanding, and peace at a time where both were hard to come by for dissidents

⁴¹ Josef Škvorecký, "Bohemia of the Soul," *Daedalus* 119 (1990): 112–114.

⁴² Helmut Illbruck, *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease* (Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 24.

⁴³ Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulation," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2001), 169–170. The application of Jean Baudrillard's concepts of social simulation and hyperreality to public discourse in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s is explored in more detail in chapter three.

in public life in Czechoslovakia. “When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning,” writes Jean Baudrillard, and the concurrent assertions of cosmopolitan heritage in the Czech lands made by AG members and Czech dissidents may have represented a temporary triumph in the power of nostalgia over historical reality.⁴⁴ Or maybe the very notion of comparing the “real” to nostalgia is less useful than we believe, as Illbruck argues that the fear of nostalgia replacing the “real” and “authentic” is itself “a form of homesickness, one which still figures as the bad conscience of modernity.”⁴⁵

However, for purposes of this study the answers to these questions, though intriguing, are largely irrelevant. The goal here is not to evaluate the historical accuracy of the claims of cosmopolitan heritage made by AG members and Czechs during the late Cold War. Rather, this study seeks to understand why they emerged when they did and how they came to acquire such importance in the worldviews and self-conceptions of these two groups. In pursuing these questions this study proceeds from a foundation of collective memory and identity studies laid in the seminal 1925 work of Èmile Durkheim’s student Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Halbwachs describes collective remembrance of the past as a social phenomenon, arguing, “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.”⁴⁶ To

⁴⁴ Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulation,” 174.

⁴⁵ Illbruck, *Nostalgia*, 25.

⁴⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

remember is a social act that serves a social function, and every remembered version of the past provides a historical foundation and reinforcement of the current values and morals that ground that particular group's collective identity at that given time.

The "truth" is what people accept as the truth, and whether historically accurate or not, memories of a cosmopolitan German-Czech heritage in the Czech lands came to hold a central importance for many AG members and Czech dissidents and émigrés from 1968 onward. They guided their writings, activities, and interactions during the late-Cold War, and they served as the foundation for promoting reconciliation on a large public scale after 1989. In light of these observations outlined in this work, the question 'were these memories historically accurate?' is of little importance to the story; instead, the critical question becomes 'why did these two geographically distant social groups of Sudeten Germans and Czechs come to place such importance on promoting similar idealized versions of a multiethnic past at the same time?'

The "Transfers" and Remembrance in Cold War Czechoslovakia

Reconciliation for Czechs necessitated a revision of the disparate German and Czech narratives about the morality of the expulsion, and Havel's December 1989 comments on the expulsion reintroduced into public Czech discourse debate about a history that had been suppressed since the rise of the Communist Party in 1948. Some three million ethnic Germans were expelled from or fled

Czechoslovakia from 1945–1947.⁴⁷ This was part of a larger process that uprooted some 13 million people from their homes across Central and Eastern Europe and sent them to occupied Germany. The nationality conflicts between “ethnic Germans” and their Slavic neighbors had their roots in the rise of nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the very identification by many as being “ethnic German” emerged, and with it, a rise in claims of ethnic superiority which engendered conflicts over minority rights and representation.⁴⁸ These problems were amplified following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of Czechoslovakia and the restoration of Poland through the Treaty of Versailles, which left millions of these “ethnic Germans” living outside of Germany or Austria. The widespread enthusiasm with which many of these individuals greeted the arrival of Nazi forces, combined with the experience of brutal occupation, left many across Eastern Europe no longer believing that peaceful cohabitation with their “ethnic German” neighbors would be possible at the war’s end. The Czechoslovak government-in-exile under Edvard Beneš adopted the decision to deport Czechoslovakia’s German population after the war in 1943 and sought the support of the Allies for this proposal, which came when the “orderly

⁴⁷ Detlef Brandes, Holm Sundhaussen, and Stefan Troebst, eds., *Lexikon der Vertreibung: Deportation, Zwangsaussiedlung und ethnische Säuberung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 202.

⁴⁸ King, *Budweisers*, 8–10; Cohen, *Politics of Ethnic Survival*, 9–15.

and humane” transfer of Germans from Eastern Europe was agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945.⁴⁹

The deportation of Germans from Czechoslovakia occurred during the so-called “wild expulsions” from May-August 1945 that took place during the Nazi retreat back to Germany, followed by the “orderly and humane” transfer of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary after the Potsdam Conference.⁵⁰ Across Central Europe ethnic Germans were removed from their homes, at times with little more than a half-hour’s notice, placed into holding camps and deported to Germany. The expulsions in Czechoslovakia (referred to by Czechs with the morally-neutral term “transfer” until well into the 1990s), as well as crimes committed during the “wild expulsions,” were legalized through a series of decrees by the then-President of Czechoslovakia Edvard Beneš in 1945.⁵¹ The bulk of those expelled Germans came from the Czech lands of Czechoslovakia, and in discussions of later decades the expulsion was generally considered to be an issue

⁴⁹ For more on the specific historical background of ethnic Germans in the Czech lands, see Brandes, Kováč, and Pešek, *Wendepunkte in den Beziehungen*; Detlef Brandes, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung: Pläne und Entscheidungen zum “Transfer” der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005).

⁵⁰ For an overview of the evolution of the process of deportation, see: R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Detlef Brandes, “1945: Die Vertreibung und Zwangsaussiedlung der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei,” in Brandes, Kováč, and Pešek, *Wendepunkte in den Beziehungen*, 223–248.

between Germans and Czechs, not Slovaks, and is treated as such in this work as well as the overwhelming body of literature surrounding the expulsion.⁵²

The decision to remove the German population from Czechoslovakia was widely popular for Czechs at the time, and there was little domestic criticism of the “transfer” for over three decades.⁵³ Nationalism and the war experience convinced most Czechs of the day that cohabitation was no longer possible and that the transfers were necessary to rid themselves of a hostile element whose nationalism helped deliver Czechoslovakia to the Nazi regime and who were Hitler’s willing

⁵² The majority of the some 100,000 German inhabitants of the Slovak lands (so-called Carpathian Germans) fled to the Sudetenland or Germany in the face of the Red Army and thus the German inhabitants of Slovakia were not subjected to the “wild expulsions” of 1945. Roughly 30,000 were expelled from Slovakia in 1946 following the “orderly and humane” process established in the Potsdam Agreement, but in the discussions of later decades Czechs typically presented the “transfers” as a Czech policy and a Czech problem to deal with; Susann Bethke, “Die Entwicklung der tschechoslowakischen Diskussion um die Vertreibung,” *Deutsche Ostkunde* 3 (1992): 95–96. One significant exception is Slovak Historian Ján Mlynárik, whose 1978 underground publication condemning the expulsion helped touch off the most significant pre-1989 discussion of the “transfers” in Czechoslovak history. Mlynárik’s work and the discussions are treated in depth in chapter three of this work.

⁵³ A handful of publications by Czechs in exile attributed the expulsion to collective guilt and questioned its morality, but these works received little echo and were met with other exile writers justifying the transfers as necessary; Bethke, “Entwicklung,” 96–97. One notable work that sought to justify the transfers was Radomír Luža’s *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans*, where he framed them as the “last act of the long German-Czech dispute” and a direct “response to circumstances created by the Sudeten Germans themselves and implicit in the Nazi regime.” See: Radomír Luža, *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of Czech-German Relations, 1933–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 1964). Luža maintained this position and was a vocal critic during the discussions about reevaluating the morality of the expulsions among Czech dissidents and émigrés in the 1970s and 1980s. A notable exception to the acceptance of the expulsion in exile came in 1950 with the signing of the Wiesbaden Agreement between the Czechoslovak government in exile led by General Lev Prchala and representatives of the Working Group for the Protection of Sudeten German Interests, which later became the Sudeten German Homeland Association. The agreement called for a right for Sudeten Germans to return after democracy was restored to Czechoslovakia; however, internal divisions within the Czech government in exile and disagreements over the future form of Czechoslovakia made this agreement and particular instance of early German-Czech partnership a “political stillborn,” Tobias Weger, “*Volkstumskampf ohne Ende? Sudetendeutsche Organisationen, 1945–1955* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 441–464, quote from 458.

allies during the brutal occupation. Official Communist history-writing and teaching continued to promote this narrative after their rise to power in 1948 and framed it in Marxist terms as the final act of triumph over fascism. Communist Party censorship of the media and publications generally meant that the “transfer” was a taboo subject and thus was rarely the focus of research or published discussion.⁵⁴

Yet, Havel’s 1989 comment that Czechs should apologize for the expulsion was not a spontaneous act of national self-reflection, but rather it was the logical progression of a pattern of morally reevaluating Czech history that Czech dissidents and émigrés undertook in the late 1970s and 1980s. 1968 was the pivotal year here, when the Warsaw Pact invasion ended the temporary reform period under Communist Party Chairman Alexander Dubček and caused many reform-minded Communists to lose faith that the Party could be changed from the inside. In the wake of the reassertion of control by the new leadership of the Party under Gustáv Husák many Czech intellectuals were purged from the Party and from positions at universities and began reorganizing intellectual life in underground circles and

⁵⁴ In 1958 future reform Communist Milan Hübl submitted his dissertation which dealt in part with the “transfer” and concluded that it was a tough but necessary measure to ensure the Czechoslovakian state after WWII; Milan Hübl, “Glosy k vysídlení československých Němcov,” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 92. During the relaxation of censorship in the late 1960s two other publications dealt briefly with the “transfers”; one from historian Jan Křen, who called for factual, primary source research on the transfers to better understand what took place and how, and a discussion by Hübl and two others published in the Brno cultural journal *Host do domu*, where the contributors questioned the morality of the collective nature of the expulsion but stopped short of condemning them. Neither publication reverberated much at the time given the greater importance of the political and social changes during this thaw in party control. See: Jan Křen, “Odsun Němcu ve světle nových pramenů,” *Dialog: Měsíčník pro politiku, hospodářství a kulturu* 4–6 (1967): 1–10; “Trialog o roce 1945: Diskuse historika Milana Hübla, spisovatele Jána Procházky a redaktora časopisu Host do domu Vladimíra Blažka,” *Host do domu* 5 (1968): 22–29.

from exile abroad. The 1970s saw a dramatic rise in Czech independent writing (*samizdat*) that circulated in underground circles and was published in émigré journals abroad. Within these publications and underground discussion groups and seminars Czechs began a process of pursuing morality and respect for human rights that the Warsaw Pact invasion and subsequent crackdown had shut out of public discourse, and in these discussions the expulsion and the history of German-Czech relations took central positions.

The 1978 circulation of a highly critical samizdat essay on the “transfers,” which compared them to an act of genocide and argued they had critically weakened Czechoslovakia, set off years of debate in the underground and émigré journals about the morality of the “transfers” as well as new conceptions of German-Czech heritage in a historic cosmopolitan culture of the Czech lands. In these discussions Czechs began reevaluating the official Communist narratives of Czech national history in a larger process of rewriting those narratives to reflect values of human rights and cultural and spiritual integration with Western Europe. The new narratives, though varied in nuance and opinion, largely supported cosmopolitan, multicultural portrayals of heritage in the Czech lands as a way to both reject and undermine the Communist narrative and to serve to as a historical legitimation for Czechs’ “return to [Western] Europe.” This process is the focus of chapter three in this study, and that chapter will demonstrate that the revival of Czech discussions of Central European identity and heritage in the 1980s, which scholars typically attribute to Milan Kundera’s 1983 article “The Tragedy of Central

Europe,” began earlier as a product of moral and spiritual reevaluation of Czech identity in the 1970s and were strongly manifested in the expulsion debates.⁵⁵ Respect for human rights and morality was a central component of the movement to reject Soviet-style socialism and calls to “Return to Europe” in the 1980s. For Havel and many other dissidents, reevaluating the existing expulsion narrative was an important and necessary step to rejoining the European community and, hence, the reason why Havel confronted Czechs with that moral revision immediately following the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

Expellees in Early Cold War West Germany and the Founding of the Ackermann Gemeinde

Ethnic German refugees and expellees began pouring across the border to Germany in the spring of 1945, with many more continuing to arrive through 1947 with the “orderly and humane” removals of Eastern Europe’s German populations. By 1950, some eight million of them resided in West Germany, with another four million in East Germany at least temporarily.⁵⁶ Despite later narratives that emphasized quick expellee integration in West Germany and their participation in

⁵⁵ See, for example, discussion of Central European discourse attributed to Milan Kundera in: Leonidas Donskis, *Yet Another Europe After 1984: Rethinking Milan Kundera and the Idea of Central Europe* (New York: Rodopi, 2012); Jörg Brechtefeld, *Mitteleuropa and German Politics: 1848 to the Present* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 78–80; Peter M. R. Stirk, “The Idea of Mitteleuropa,” in *Mitteleuropa: History and Prospects*, ed. Peter Stirk (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 23.

⁵⁶ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 1–2.

the “economic miracle” of the 1950s, recent scholarship has shown that the process of resettlement was anything but smooth and that many indigenous Germans did not greet their ethnic German counterparts with enthusiasm or welcome.⁵⁷ Most expellees arrived exhausted with few or no possessions in war-ravaged Germany which was already facing a severe crisis of internal refugees, and many expellees faced a very dire situation as they searched for food, housing, and employment.⁵⁸ Domestic organizations to assist the incoming expellees began to spring up in the fall of 1945, and it was in this context that the Ackermann Gemeinde was born.

⁵⁷ On the historiography of expellee integration, see: Edgar Wolfrum, “Zwischen Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtspolitik: Forschungen zur Flucht und Vertreibung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 36 (1996): 500–522; Uta Gerhardt, “Bilanz der soziologischen Literatur zur Integration der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge nach 1945,” in *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Krauss, and Michael Schwartz (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 41–63. For recent works investigating the problems of expellee integration and the experiences of expellees themselves, see: Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat: Die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2008); Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Krauss, and Michael Schwartz, eds., *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000); Paul Lüttinger, *Integration der Vertriebenen: Eine empirische Analyse* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1989); David Rock and Stefan Wolf, eds., *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002); Sylvia Schraut and Thomas Grosser, eds., *Die Flüchtlingsfrage in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft* (Mannheim: Palatinum, 1996). On the integration of expellees in East Germany see: Philipp Ther, “The Integration of Expellees in Germany and Poland after World War II: A Historical Reassessment,” *Slavic Review* 55 (1996): 779–805; Michael Schwartz, *Vertriebene und ‘Umsiedlerpolitik’: Nachkriegs-Gesellschaften und die Assimilationsstrategien in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1961* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2004); Andreas Thüsing et al. *Umsiedler in Sachsen: Aufnahme und Integration von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen 1945–1952: Eine Quellensammlung* (Leipzig: Edition Kirchhof & Franke, 2005).

⁵⁸ On the arrival of expellees into an already ongoing internal crisis of evacuees, see: Ian Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). For an in-depth case-study of how dealing with this crisis of displaced persons and reestablishing order under American occupation played out on a local level, see: Adam R. Seipp, *Strangers in a Wild Place: Refugees, Americans, and a German Town, 1945–1952* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

The AG emerged from activities beginning in Munich as a Catholic aid station established for expellees in October 1945.⁵⁹ The original AG founders were Paulus Sladek—a Catholic priest from Litoměřice who resettled in Munich in the spring of 1945—and his friend Hans Schütz—a Catholic politician and former member of the Czechoslovakian National Assembly who had moved to Munich in 1939.⁶⁰ Through their Catholic aid station for expellees in Munich, Sladek and Schütz began building a network of contacts that would become the first members and allies of the AG. Sladek was primarily involved in providing pastoral care for Catholic expellees in Munich, but he also kept a list of the names and addresses of those he helped as well as others assisting Sudeten German expellees at similar aid offices around the occupied zones. Meanwhile, Schütz used his political experience to gain audiences with Bavarian and national politicians to raise interest and assistance for the aid station in order to help as many expellees as possible.⁶¹

The AG was established in 1946 originally with the name “Catholic Young Men’s Team/Ackermann Community (Sudeten German Working Team)” [*Katholische Junge Mannschaft/Ackermann Gemeinde (Sudetendeutscher*

⁵⁹ The Munich aid office was not the first such office, but was one of several that opened from local initiatives in the summer of 1945 that were sanctioned and supported by the German Bishop’s Conference; Weger, *Volkstumskampf ohne Ende?*, 153–155.

⁶⁰ There was a third original founding member of the Munich aid office, journalist Richard Mai, who did not follow Schütz and Sladek in building what became the AG but remained an ally as the editor of a monthly publication for Christian expellees; Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 155.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 155–159.

Arbeitskreis]], which they later shortened to the “Ackermann Gemeinde.”⁶²

Including “Catholic” in the title reflected the AG’s close connection to the Catholic Church, which was not merely a coincidental result of Sladek’s status as a priest, but instead rested on the practical ground that the American occupational forces’ restriction on establishing political organizations did not apply if those organizations were founded within religious institutions.⁶³ Organization through the Catholic Church also offered an important preexisting networking that increased early opportunities to establish contacts with Sudeten Germans around the occupied zones, and the Catholic orientation of the AG offered a religious moral foundation for promoting reconciliation over revanchism. They adopted the name “Ackermann Gemeinde” in reference to the 1401 poem by Johannes von Tepl “The Ackermann from Bohemia,” which tells the story a man who submits himself to God after suffering a difficult turn of events with the death of his wife and struggles over his property.⁶⁴ The moral was one of acceptance and submission to fate and God’s will, and it served as a symbolic representation of the AG’s focus on helping Sudeten

⁶² While many authors consider a gathering in Munich on January 13, 1946, hosted by Sladek and Schütz as the founding date of the AG, Tobias Weger argues that it is more correct to speak of a “founding phase lasting several months” that ultimately ensured the establishment of a lasting organization; *ibid.*, 161–162.

⁶³ Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 164; Marcus Stadtrechter, *Nicht unter Fremden? Die katholische Kirche und die Integration von Vertriebenen im Bistum Augsburg* (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2016), 103.

⁶⁴ Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 176. The poem already served as a cultural element of identity reinforcement in the Sudeten German movement in Czechoslovakia in the first decades of the 1900s; Tobias Weger, “Die Ackermann-Gemeinde als katholisches Gesinnungsgemeinschaft der Sudetendeutschen nach 1945,” *Jahrbuch für deutsche und osteuropäische Volkskunde* 45 (2003): 37.

Germans come to peace with the expulsion in a Christian spirit and encourage a willingness for reconciliation.

From their early years the AG eschewed revanchism and nationalism and placed strong emphasis on reconciliation and recreating a multiethnic Czechoslovakia with their former Czech countrymen. The AG published their founding mission statement in 1948 that focused on three major themes: never rescinding their right to their homeland, encouraging economic and social integration of Sudeten Germans in Germany, and calling for the protection and preservation of Sudeten German heritage as a means to allow a future return to the homeland.⁶⁵ This mission statement called on Sudeten Germans to recognize their own nationalist missteps and reject feelings of revenge and retribution in the quest to restore the homeland. Their vision of the “homeland” was not framed through the prism of earlier nationalist struggles, but rather they declared that their “most important task” was the restoration of the “thousand year order of peoples” in Central Europe that had preceded recent nationalist divisiveness. In this sense, the “homeland” was not just land and property but was above all the people.⁶⁶ Sladek and Schütz reinforced this emphasis on reconciliation and restoring a peaceful relationship with Czechs in their many writings and publications distributed to

⁶⁵ “Grundgesetz der Ackermann Gemeinde (1948),” *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann-Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 27-33

⁶⁶ Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 173.

Sudeten Germans around the occupied zones in the initial years following their resettlement.⁶⁷

Early AG activities focused on restoring religious life among Sudeten Germans, helping them integrate socially and economically with native Germans, and preserving knowledge and heritage of the homeland. Schütz wielded considerable influence as a member of the Church aid office, a member of the Committee for Refugees and Expellees in Bavaria, a Christian Social Union politician, and, from 1949 onward, a member of the German Bundestag; many other AG leaders were also in similar positions of power.⁶⁸ They opened regional offices across the American, British, and French occupied zones to assist in local integration, and they also began organizing cultural retreats, presentations, and regular publications like the *Volksbote*, a periodical to spread cultural knowledge among members and readers about Sudeten German history and heritage. They took an early interest in directing this cultural work toward the Sudeten German youth, and in 1950 they organized a separate youth organization called the *Junge Aktion* in order to help spread education about the homeland for the preservation of their heritage as they integrated in German society.⁶⁹ The *Junge Aktion* became a member of the Federation of German Catholic Youth that same year, and this

⁶⁷ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁸ Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 174.

⁶⁹ Stadtrechter, *Nicht unter Fremden*, 106–109.

association with the Catholic Church helped separate them from other Sudeten German youth organizations and their more nationalist rhetoric.⁷⁰

For the AG, the preservation of heritage was requisite for a future return to the homeland, and their cultural program was aimed at maintaining interest in the homeland to keep people prepared to return. Renouncing revenge and retribution was a similar theme across all Sudeten German organizations during this time, and while historian Tobias Weger questions what possible alternatives to it were ever presented that would have allowed Sudeten Germans to physically return to their former homes, Markus Stadtrechter concludes that the Catholic orientation of the AG provided such an alternative with its emphasis on healing the “deepest and bitterest of wounds” with love. He argues that although a return did not take place in the 1950s, the rejection of violence was an “indispensable requirement for the subsequent deeper reconciliation between the expellees and the new inhabitants of their old homeland.”⁷¹ While reconciliation was difficult to achieve in the 1950s, considering that Germans and Czechs lay on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain, the AG’s willingness and emphasis on reconciliation early on laid the groundwork for reconciliation and cooperation as the AG’s network of Czech contacts expanded drastically after 1968.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 245; Stadtrechter, *Nicht unter Fremden*, 112.

Early Ackermann Gemeinde Relations with the Sudeten German Homeland Association

From the early years after their founding, AG leaders strove to establish themselves as an organization independent from the larger SL with their own aims and activities. The SL was officially founded in 1950 and was born from local Sudeten German associations from across southern Germany that banded together to form a single organization to pursue the political goal of reclaiming the homeland and securing restitution for lost property. During the years of consolidating the local Sudeten German assemblies from 1946-1950 a leader emerged in the person of Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, who aimed to establish a strong central organization that would effectively exert a monopoly over opinion concerning Sudeten German affairs.⁷² Despite Schütz's participation in the SL, that organization existed in a sort of tension with the AG during its early years, due largely to Lodgman's desire to have the SL serve as the sole public voice for all Sudeten Germans as well as the different views of AG leaders and Lodgman toward Sudeten Germans' relationship to Czechs.⁷³

Early conflict between the budding AG and Lodgman came in November 1949 when Sladek invited Sudeten German leaders from the separate national and

⁷² For a general overview of the process of the SL's founding, see: Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 103–150.

⁷³ Schütz was briefly considered as one potential SL leader before Lodgman, but he was quickly dismissed as an option due to his entrance into the National Socialist Party in 1938 and the desire not to have a former Nazi member as the face of the organization. Schütz nevertheless became a member of the SL's board of directors after its founding; Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 111 and 149.

Social Democrat sectors to join with the Catholic Sudeten Germans for a three-day conference in Eichstätt to discuss Sudeten German visions of the past and future for Central Europe. Lodgman and his closest circle were notably not invited due to his claim to absolute leadership and Sladek's desire for an open discussion.⁷⁴ After the conference, participants published a declaration that expressed a common Sudeten German political stance toward Europe. The "Eichstätt Declaration" framed the East-West conflict as a struggle for human rights and declared that the struggle could only be won with the end of Communism and expellees' right to return to their homeland. Sudeten Germans had a duty to help in this struggle and reclaim the homeland and establish a sustainable relationship with Slavs in the larger context of a humanitarian rebirth of Europe.⁷⁵ This declaration became another founding statement of sorts for the AG and one they would continue to recall and emphasize as the foundation of the AG's model for a unified Christian Europe.⁷⁶

Lodgman's reaction to Eichstätt was anger at the participation of Sudeten Germans with whom he was working to consolidate the SL, whom he wrote privately "must be shown the teeth."⁷⁷ Lodgman worked over the next several

⁷⁴ Ibid., 425.

⁷⁵ "Eichstätter Deklaration (1949)," *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann-Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 34–35.

⁷⁶ While scholars often view the Eichstätt Declaration as a shining example of a postwar vision of Europe, Tobias Weger is critical and cautions that it was a text embodying typical Western views of the early Cold War that recalled earlier anti-Slavic stereotypes and visions of a Central Europe in need of German culture and civilization; Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 440.

⁷⁷ Rudolf Lodgman von Auen, undated notes, BayHStA, SDA Sprecherregistratur Lodgman von Auen 470.

months to delegitimize the Eichstätt Declaration in Sudeten German circles and among Bavarian and national German politicians, even going so far as to accuse it of being a thinly veiled plan for the restoration of Catholic Hapsburg hegemony in Central Europe.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Lodgman organized a conference in Detmold in January 1950 to assemble the local SL offices and create a unified political platform for the SL, and the resulting declaration illustrated the differences in political outlook between Lodgman and the AG.

The Detmold Declaration contrasted with the Eichstätt Declaration's focus on promoting a policy toward the East that would restore a multinational Central Europe in a way that defined the fundamental difference in world views between the SL and AG for decades to come. The Detmold Declaration referenced "Europe" only in calling for a single economic space with respect for minority rights, and it focused instead on the relationship between Sudeten Germans and native Germans as a mechanism for preserving a separate nationalist identity and heritage. The central statement of the declaration read: "The Sudeten German ethnic group considers its task to preserve itself for the German *Volk*, to keep their consciousness and legal claim of the homeland alive and to share their borderland-German experience with the German nationality."⁷⁹ In this case, the "borderland-German experience" referred to the nationalist stance of Sudeten Germans toward

⁷⁸ Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 436.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

Czechs in the interwar period as Sudeten Germans' contribution of "experience" to guide West German anti-communist foreign policy toward the East.⁸⁰ The SL's tone in the Detmold Declaration was more nationalistic and less friendly toward Czechs than the Eichstätt Declaration, which Lodgman criticized for being too reconciliatory and not nationalist enough.⁸¹

The circumstances surrounding the issuing of these two separate decrees created a rocky relationship between the AG and SL that persisted for the next several years, however the two main points of disagreement would resurface later in AG-SL relations.⁸² Those two points of disagreement were firstly, Lodgman's insistence on the SL being the absolute authority to issue public statements and policies pertaining to Sudeten Germans; and secondly, the different viewpoints toward visions for Central Europe, with the AG voicing support for multinational cohabitation and the SL emphasizing national separation and minority rights for Sudeten Germans.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Letter, Rudolf Lodgman von Auen to Paulus Sladek, "Grundsätze einer sudetendeutschen Europapolitik," December 1, 1949, BayHStA, SDA NL Becher 92.

⁸² The conflict revolved largely around Lodgman seeking to ensure that the SL would dominate the "Working Group for Sudeten German Interests" (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Wahrung sudetendeutscher Interesse*), in which Schütz held considerable sway. Tensions subsided when the working group was transformed into the Sudeten German Council (*Sudetendeutscher Rat*) in 1955 when all sides agreed to a compromise that representatives to the council must also be members of the SL, which Schütz and other AG members also were; Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 129–135; Weger, *Volkstumskampf*, 180–181.

The 1960s: The Young Generation and the Turn to the East

While the SL's program during the 1950s and 1960s centered on lobbying the Bonn governments for making restitution and the promotion of a legal right to the homeland part of Bonn's foreign policy toward the East, the AG focused on outreach and assistance. In the early years this assistance was aimed at helping Sudeten Germans with the resettlement and integration process with activities like helping them find homes and jobs and supporting new immigrants with medication, food, and spiritual guidance.⁸³ The AG began to reach other nationalities in 1958 when it became the host of a newly-created exile office for Western Europe under the auspices of the World Federation of Catholic Youth. Through the exile office the AG organized courses for political, cultural, social and religious education for youths arriving from across Eastern Europe, including but not limited to Czechs and Slovaks.⁸⁴

The increased interactions with Czechs began to change the program of the AG's youth organization, the Junge Aktion. During the early 1950s the events of the AG's Junge Aktion youth branch concentrated on preserving cultural heritage and outreach programs to native German youths to combat negative stereotypes about them as refugees from the East. However, the opening of the exile office afforded AG youths with more opportunities for interaction with young people from Eastern

⁸³ For a good overview of early AG activities, see: Stadtrechter, *Nicht unter Fremden*, 199–256.

⁸⁴ Walter Klötzl, "Das katholische Exilbüro," in *Integration und Dialog: Sechs Jahrzehnte Friedensarbeit*, ed. Raimund Paleczek (Munich: Ackermann Gemeinde, 2007), 39–40.

Europe and began a process of the Junge Aktion reorienting itself toward pursuing outreach and encounters with Czechs and Slovaks. As the Czechoslovak government relaxed visa restrictions in 1962–1963 as part of its gradual process of de-Stalinization, the Junge Aktion began hosting visiting Czech youth groups as well as organizing their own travel groups across the border. From this period onward, Junge Aktion leaders began to downplay the importance of identity preservation and emphasized interaction with Czechs and reconciliation.

This shift in the younger generation's outlook coincided with a changing of the old guard of AG leaders over sixty-five to members of the middle generation—those in their forties and fifties—to bridge the generational gap between the original founders who experienced the expulsion and the youth who did not. This took place at the same time as the reorientation of Czech intellectual life in the underground and in exile, and it is here where the story told in this work begins. Chapter two of this dissertation examines the social and political shifts taking place in West German and Czechoslovak society in the late 1960s and 1970s and the establishment of networks on both sides of the border that served as the foundations for future AG-Czech cooperation. It traces the formation of underground dissident circles and independent publication in Czechoslovakia following the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion and the subsequent return of strict political and intellectual censorship that formed a new community in which cosmopolitanism emerged and engendered historical revision of the expulsion narrative. That chapter also traces the activities of Czechs who left the country and

resettled in metropolises across Western Europe, where they began assisting the underground back home with money, printing supplies, foreign literature, and logistical support. This outside assistance enabled the underground discussions to reach wider audiences and created an international network of independent Czech discussion in which the expulsions and German-Czech history would become central themes.

Chapter two then moves to West Germany to trace how the AG navigated the changing socio-political context in West German society that sought peaceful relations with Eastern Europe and rejected German victimhood discourses that highlighted expellee suffering. The generational shift in the AG and its new emphasis on outreach and cooperation with Czechs comprise the major themes, with the AG's partnership with the newly-established Czech Catholic organization *Opus Bonum* being the most crucial link in West Germany. It was this partnership that greatly expanded the AG's network of contacts with Czechs in Czechoslovakia and around Europe and enabled the AG to establish itself as a positive Sudeten German partner promoting reconciliation. These contacts also allowed the AG to significantly increase its assistance of struggling Catholic dioceses in Czechoslovakia in the 1980s, further enhancing its image as a friendly Sudeten German institution in contrast to narratives in Czechoslovakia of revanchist Sudeten Germans who only sought a return of their property and restitution.

Chapter three explores how the Czech underground's emphasis on morality and human rights engendered a reevaluation of the expulsion narrative. It analyzes

the samizdat debates over the expulsion as manifestations of this new morality and an identification with westward-oriented heritage shared with Germans, illustrating that the roots of the cosmopolitan Central European identity discourses of the 1980s extend back to the 1970s and served as a source of inspiration in these debates. Chapter three then explores the expansion of samizdat and underground seminars that received Western help and proliferated in the 1980s, when this new morality also engendered reevaluations of the expulsion narrative in underground seminars in Prague and Brno and found resonance among a wider populace. I argue here that the experience of education and discussion in these underground seminars also displayed similar discourses of Central European identity and values that reached much wider audiences than the earlier circle of dissidents active in the 1970s expulsion debates.

Chapter four returns to West Germany to illustrate how the AG advanced its vision of promoting a multiethnic Central European heritage as part of an inclusivist identity that contrasted the exclusivist discourse of a nationally-distinct Sudeten German identity promoted in the SL and other Sudeten German institutions. Both the AG and SL had to respond to an aging expellee population and West German society's changing view of expellees and their claims of a right to the homeland, but they did so in very different ways. The AG adopted the currents of Europeanism and inclusion in West German society to recast Sudeten Germans as a multicultural group embodying values of Europeanism, while the SL sought to preserve a distinctly German vision of Sudeten German identity to legitimate their

right to the homeland as a minority group. The struggle over competing visions of identity played out in a prolonged conflict throughout the 1970s and early 1980s over control of the Sudeten German research institute the *Collegium Carolinum*. Both the AG and the SL sought to ensure that the Collegium Carolinum's research program would reflect their particular visions of identity in its scholarship, illustrating the importance of historical narrative in reinforcing current group identity and values.

Chapter four also traces the AG's support of the Catholic Church and underground religious activities in Czechoslovakia as part of its expanding network of cooperation and activism with Czechs inspired by the AG's belief in the universality of human rights and its duty to assist the repressed Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. The underground Catholic Church had close ties to many dissidents and Charter 77 spokesmen⁸⁵, and the AG's assistance to the underground Church bought the AG good will and helped it gain the trust and respect of crucial figures in the Czech underground. When these figures took over prominent positions in Czech society after 1989 they worked together with the AG to encourage the wider Czech

⁸⁵ Charter 77 began in 1977 as a signed petition of the same title to the Czechoslovak government to respect the terms of the two United Nations covenants on human rights, including a list detailing the violations of these rights by the Czechoslovak regime. Charter 77 soon evolved into a loose organization of spokesmen who published various documents concerning violations of human rights, appeals to Czechoslovak political leaders, essays, and correspondence between dissidents and foreign citizens discussing a range of political themes and statements on the state of society and politics behind the Iron Curtain. For many in the West, Charter 77 emerged as "the" voice of Czech and Slovak dissidents and served as a primary source of information about the plight of the persecuted in Czechoslovakia. For an overview of its origins as well as translations of the various Charter 77 documents published, see: Skilling, *Charter 77*.

society to morally reevaluate the expulsion and work toward a smooth transition to friendly German-Czech bilateral relations.

Chapter five follows these contacts and partnerships between the AG and prominent Czechs now in positions of political and social power into the 1990s as they worked toward German-Czech rapprochement as part of Czechs' "Return to Europe." Early calls by the former Czech dissidents for the Czech public to reassess the morality of the expulsion were met with resistance, and this was further complicated by SL demands of restitution and a right to return with minority rights that appeared hostile to Czechs and encouraged the spread of anti-German sentiments. Although issues relating to the expulsion were an early stumbling block in political and social relations between Germans and Czechs, the AG-Czech network forged over the previous two decades took the lead in guiding Czechs and Sudeten Germans toward reconciliation, which culminated in the signing of the 1997 German-Czech Declaration which aimed to put the issues of restitution, blame, and morality to rest. While this treaty did not end all disputes over expulsion remembrance, the AG and its Czech partners created a host of institutions and partnerships on a national and local level in the 1990s to encourage dialogue and promote further reconciliation and understanding into the future. These institutions, born of AG-Czech partnerships extending back to the early 1970s, remain some of the most influential organizations and partnerships helping Germans and Czechs live together peacefully in Europe and find a way to

re-narrate their troubled history in a way that reinforces their common heritage as a pathway forward for continued cooperation in Europe.

Finally, the concluding chapter places this story in the larger context of post-1989 European discussions about constructing narratives of expulsion that reinforce European integration and shared identities and experiences. The roots of these discussions lay in the cautionary spectacle of violence in the Balkans in the 1990s and the universalization of repudiating ethnic cleansing as a European moral imperative. These discussions also rose to public prominence after a 1999 proposal by the Federation of Expellees to construct a Center Against Expulsions to serve as a site for remembering ethnic cleansing. The debates that ensued illustrated discourses promoting the need for writing and telling European histories of expulsion in a way that Europeanized victims and perpetrators and avoided divisive national dichotomies of victims and perpetrators to foster integration and peaceful cohabitation. Forging a common identity and shared set of values as Europeans through history-writing were primary concerns in these debates, and expulsion history and remembrance were transformed from being a bilateral concern of Germany and its Eastern neighbors to a problem for Europe. The tales of expulsion and drives for forging a common Central European identity told in this work, thus, emerge as precursors to the discourses that occupied organs of the European Union in the 2000s and brought politicians and academics from around Europe and North America together to find a way to tell expulsion history in a way

that would preserve European unity and provide a historical foundation for dealing collectively with the traumatic past of recent violence on the continent.

A Note on Sources

This dissertation is based on archival research and interviews conducted in Germany and the Czech Republic. Except where cited otherwise, all interviews were conducted by the author in an open discussion-based format and ranged from one to six hours in duration. All primary documents marked “AG” are contained in the central archives of the Ackermann Gemeinde in Munich, Germany. All documents marked “JHEF” are part of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation collection housed in the archive of the Moravian Museum in Brno, Czech Republic (archiv Moravského zemského muzea). At the time of research these documents had just been donated and were still packed in boxes and suitcases. They were not yet catalogued and there were no file or folder numbers to record; however, I have made every attempt to indicate sufficient identifying information for each document cited. All documents marked “BayHStA” refer to collections housed at the Bavarian State Archives (*Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv*). Items marked “Libri prohibiti” belong to the archive of the same name in Prague, Czech Republic that collects all forms of Czech and Slovak *samizdat* and émigré writing; all documents labelled “ČSDS” belong to Czechoslovak Documentation Center in Prague assembled by Vilém Prečan. All documents marked “WSA” belong to the personal private archive of Wolfgang Stock who graciously granted me access. These documents are in the

process of being relocated to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation collection at the Moravian National Museum Archive.

CHAPTER II
POLITICAL REORIENTATIONS AND NEW CONTACTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND
WEST GERMANY, 1968–1977

Czech Abbot Anastáz Opasek (1913–1999) was fifty-five years old and visiting his birthplace of Vienna when the tanks and troops of the Warsaw Pact invasion entered Czechoslovakia in late August 1968. For this trip he had taken temporary leave from his job carting boxes in the warehouse of Prague’s National Gallery, which itself was an improvement over his previous employment as a construction worker. Born Jan Nepomucký Vojtěch Opasek, Opasek received the new name of Anastáz when entered the Břevnov-Braunau monastery in 1932. During his years at the monastery he experienced firsthand the damage of ethnic nationalism: First in 1939, when the monastery was split into two houses between German monks in Braunau and Czechs in Břevnov under pressure from the German occupying forces; and then again when the German monks were expelled from Czechoslovakia in 1946 following the transfer decrees by Czechoslovakian President Beneš.

Opasek remained at the Břevnov monastery over the next five years, becoming its abbot in 1947 and forging close ties with the Vatican, even after the Communists seized power in February 1948 and sought to sever Catholic ties to the

Vatican and create a Catholic Church loyal to the Czechoslovak state.⁸⁶ It was these ties, and Opasek's vocal opposition to the repression of the Catholic Church in Eastern Europe in his sermons and speeches abroad, which caused Opasek to be convicted of espionage and treason in a 1950 show trial and sentenced to life imprisonment.⁸⁷ Opasek served ten years of this sentence before being pardoned during a blanket of presidential amnesty granted to many religious and political prisoners in 1960. During his prison sentence Opasek's fellow inmates knew him as "always a funny man with a number of distinctive and peculiar views," and he earned the nickname the "Hooligan Abbot" for surprising his cell-mates with walls full of colorful caricature drawings when they returned one day from work in the prison.⁸⁸

The invasion of 1968 dashed Opasek's hopes for reforms in Czechoslovakia, and, with little faith that he would be allowed to resume his service as an abbot and fearful that his commuted prison sentence might be reinstated, he declined to return to Czechoslovakia from his vacation in Vienna and relocated instead to West Germany. There, he reunited with his former fellow German monks from Braunau

⁸⁶ Milan J. Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," in *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies*, ed. Pedro Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 144–149.

⁸⁷ For records on the trials from the Ministry of Justice, see: Stanislav Zela, *Proces proti vatikánským agentům v Československu: Biskup Zela a společníci* (Prague: Ministerstvo spravedlnosti, 1950).

⁸⁸ Bohumil Vít Tajovský, Aleš Palán, and Jan Paulas, *Člověk musí hořeti: Rozhovor Aleše Palána a Jana Paulase s opatem želivského kláštera* (Prague: Torst, 2001), 295; Anastáz Opasek, *Dvanáct Zastavení: Vzpomínky opata břevnovského kláštera* (Prague: Nakladatelství Torst, 1992), 63–76, 119–134, 215–230.

who had reestablished a monastery at the former Rohr Abbey in Bavaria, previously closed since 1803.⁸⁹ It was from Rohr that Opasek became one of the most well-known and well-respected Czech figures among Czech émigrés and expellees in West Germany.

Opasek was in contact with representatives from the AG from the mid-1960s, when he twice received AG visitor groups touring their former homelands and learning about the state of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia.⁹⁰ Once Opasek relocated in West Germany he quickly strengthened these contacts, and with strong support from the AG he founded the Czech cultural organization Opus Bonum in 1972, which went on to be arguably the single most important Czech émigré organization in Europe.⁹¹ From the late 1970s onward Opus Bonum established itself as the central uniting organization bringing the most prominent émigré leaders and external facilitators of Czechoslovakia's thriving intellectual underground together to discuss the future of Czechoslovakia. This network integrated with the AG and afforded both sides with invaluable contacts through which they worked to support underground intellectual and religious life in Czechoslovakia before 1989, and this network also proved crucial to bringing Germans and Czechs together to promote reconciliation after end of the Cold War.

⁸⁹ Opasek, *Dvanáct Zastavení*, 274–280.

⁹⁰ Speech on the occasion of Opasek's 100th birthday anniversary, Pater Angelus Waldstein, "Mein Beitrag zur Feier anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags von Erzabt Anastáz," April 13, 2013, http://www.ackermann-gemeinde.de/uploads/media/Pater_Angelus_Waldstein_OSB_Erinnerungen_an_Opas-ek.pdf (accessed September 10, 2014).

⁹¹ Interview Václav Prečan, June 2, 2014; Interview Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

This chapter traces the foundations of Czech underground dissident circles and AG partnerships with Czech émigrés abroad in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The 1968 invasion and subsequent political crackdown spawned a wholesale reorientation of Czech intellectual life into underground circles and an international network of émigrés abroad. Through their contacts with émigrés the AG forged extensive contacts and partnerships with Czechs on both sides of the border to lay the groundwork for efforts toward reconciliation.

In Czechoslovakia, the period from 1968 to 1976 witnessed the creation of an underground network of repressed and ostracized intellectuals that discussed and wrote about Czech identity, history and politics beyond the confines of state censorship. These groups benefitted from material and logistical support from the wave of post-1968 Czech émigrés and organizations based abroad that helped increase participation in activities like underground *samizdat* circulation and underground academic seminars, which expanded in frequency later in the decade and even more so in the 1980s.⁹² Many of these Czechs founded émigré journals that published domestic samizdat for audiences abroad, and they also forged ties with Western organizations like the AG and helped create an international alliance of support for dissidents in opposing the Czechoslovak regime. It was within these networks that discourses on German-Czech relations and the expulsion of Sudeten

⁹² In 1968 alone some 70,000 Czechs fled the country, with the total by 1989 estimated at 300,000; Jan Čulík, "Den, kdy tanky zlikvidovaly české sny Pražského jara," *Britské Listy*. <http://www.britskelisty.cz/9808/19980821h.html> (accessed August 28, 2014)

Germans would take a prominent role in discussions about rewriting the Communist narrative of Czech history and promoting discourses of a cosmopolitan Central European identity in the late 1970s and 1980s.

For the AG in West Germany the wave of Czech émigrés meant a host of new partners to expand outreach efforts and increase their network of Czech contacts in Czechoslovakia. This period was also a period of profound political and social change in West Germany that fundamentally altered the perception of expellees and their place in politics and society. Public opinion turned away from previous tendencies that shunned German guilt in WWII and focused on German victims instead, and expellees and Sudeten Germans had been a central image in this victimhood. Moreover, in 1969 the Social Democrats took office in West Germany for the first time, and new chancellor Willy Brandt largely ended the strong political influence that expellees and Sudeten Germans had enjoyed in Bonn and openly defied their wishes in his policy of reestablishing political relations with Eastern Europe (*Ostpolitik*).

While historians have described this shift as a blanket decline in expellee influence, their analyses are largely restricted to political expellee organizations like the Federation of Expellees (*Bund der Vertriebenen*) and the SL, whose direct influence in Bonn did indeed decline.⁹³ However, the AG was not a political

⁹³ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 28–29; 266–279; Jürgen Tampke, *Czech-German Relations and the Politics of Central Europe: From Bohemia to the EU* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 129–137; for the continued support of Sudeten German politics in the Bavarian government, see: Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 363–424, and also: Tampke, *Czech-German Relations*, 138–142.

organization but a social and cultural one, and this same period saw a marked increase in AG grassroots activities, initiatives, and cooperations that continued to build through 1989 and culminated in an ability to affect real social and political change in the Czech Republic and Germany after 1989. As a confessional Catholic Sudeten German organization, the AG as an institution aimed at reconciliation and cooperation with Czechs, not at promoting political policy. While many AG leaders personally lamented the absence of the expulsion or any mention of expellee rights to return to their homeland in the Brandt regime's negotiations with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, they nevertheless focused their efforts in the AG on integrating younger members within its ranks and forging new ties with Czechs in the 1970s.

During this period the AG also faced a generational crisis as their leaders aged and their numbers began declining, and they worked to actively recruit younger Sudeten Germans into their ranks. AG leaders realized that the growing unpopularity of expellees in West German society was a hindrance to increasing participation of the younger generation that did not have direct experience of the expulsion. This generation was more interested in promoting peaceful relations with Czechs and Eastern Europe than in preserving a distinct identity as Sudeten Germans and celebrating memories of life in the old homeland. The AG responded by enhancing their image as reconciliationists, both through their own actions and by distancing themselves from the political Sudeten German organizations, whose opposition to *Ostpolitik* made them appear as revanchist and outdated to much of

West German society. The AG worked to separate themselves from these institutions and revamp their image as an institution of cooperation and reconciliation, and invested evermore resources into contacts and cooperation with Czechs to win much of the younger generation.

Their partnership with Opasek and Opus Bonum was the leading symbol of this cooperation. AG directors devoted much of their financial and political resources to ensuring the growth of Opus Bonum, which by the end of the decade forged a trusting network which could bring Czech émigrés from all political and social backgrounds together for discussion and debate. Opus Bonum would play a significant role in initiating debate among Czechs about the expulsion, and it was also an important partner of the AG in promoting its version of Sudeten German identity as being part of a historic, multicultural, and multiethnic Bohemia.

The Husák Regime's "Normalization" and the Creation of an International Czech Underground

Jiří Müller (1943–) was a twenty four-year-old mechanical engineering student in Prague when the tanks and troops of the Warsaw Pact invasion entered in late August 1968. Expelled from the university in 1966 for attempting to create a non-communist student organization, Müller was rehabilitated during the thaw of the spring of 1968 and resumed activities as a student leader, rallying his fellow students and organizing demonstrations at the Czech Technical University in Prague in support of the ongoing reforms. With the occupation of Prague by

Warsaw Pact troops, Müller organized protests against the occupation and led student organizations in Prague, Bohemia, and Moravia. For Müller, like many in Czechoslovakia who would come to be known abroad as “dissidents,” retribution for activities deemed oppositional did not come immediately. Müller remained active in student opposition groups for the next two years while also finishing his studies. On March 18, 1970 Müller entered the room of the state examination board wearing a dark suit prepared to defend his thesis, only to be told by the chairman that he would not be allowed to undertake his defense due to “repeated infringements of the principles of proper behavior and civic duty.”⁹⁴ Müller was expelled from the university for the second time, beginning a nineteen year period of his life dedicated to organizing underground activities aimed at subverting the regime.

In the wake of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion, Moscow slowly but steadily regained its grip on Czechoslovak politics, deposing and eventually expelling from the Communist Party reform leader Alexander Dubček and replacing him with a Soviet favorite, Gustáv Husák, in April 1969. When Husák came to power many intellectuals initially held hope that he would be a moderate leader who could stave off the vindictive conservative wing of the Party clamoring for atonement for the insults it had received during the Prague Spring. Many, including Václav Havel,

⁹⁴ Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014; Jiří Müller, Letter to Members of the Examining Committee, February 8th, 1990, JHEF.

believed Husák's presentation of himself as someone who simply wanted to end the tumultuous era of change during Dubcek's rule and restore peace and quiet and get on with repairing the economy.⁹⁵ After all, Husák served prison time in the 1950s on treason charges, and his refusal to confess likely saved his co-defendants from the death sentence. This past seemed for many to be a sign of his character and an indication that he would not resort to similar abuses of justice having been a victim to it himself.⁹⁶

However, Husák's first year oversaw the gradual end of both popular and organized opposition and began a process of reasserting Party control over society dubbed "Normalization," or as philosopher Ernst Gellner described it, "Stalinism with a human face."⁹⁷ The last major public demonstration against the occupation regime was on the anniversary of the invasion on August 29, 1969 and was suppressed by the army and police. Later that year, the government began cracking down on organized opposition.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ After April, Václav Havel was recorded in his apartment by StB as saying "Dubcek is a dreamer and a lyric poet" while Husák "has a genuinely firm conception and can lead the nation out of the crisis situation," Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 208–209.

⁹⁶ Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 57.

⁹⁷ Ernst Gellner, "Reborn from Below: The Forgotten Beginnings of the Czech National Revival," *Times Literary Supplement*, May 14 1993, 3–5, here 3.

⁹⁸ Two prominent examples of early crackdowns included the arrest and interrogation of a group of writers, politicians and academics that published the "Ten Points" declaration against the Moscow Protocol, as well as the imprisonment of nineteen leaders of the Movement of the Revolutionary Youth student group, many of which later became signatories of Charter 77; Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 57–59.

Following his second expulsion from the university in 1970, Müller continued his efforts at increasing the education and political awareness of fellow Czechs while being relegated to occupation in various capacities as a window cleaner, stoker, and fire extinguisher repairman. He was active in the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens—an attempt to organize an oppositional platform around an alternative plan of socialism. From his new exile in London Müller’s fellow student activist and friend, Jan Kavan, began supplying Müller with banned literature, printers, and other materials to help his anti-regime propaganda campaign, thus beginning a long career for Müller of printing and disseminating forbidden literary works in Czechoslovakia.⁹⁹

Müller’s initiatives with the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens sparked a new wave of arrests in which some two hundred people were detained between December 1971 and January 1972, and Müller received a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence.¹⁰⁰ For Kavan, the imprisonment of his old friend only encouraged him to expand his smuggling channel and eventually open Palach Press in London in 1976 to distribute publications from Czech dissidents to academics and Czech societies around the world. These crackdowns sent a message from the

⁹⁹ Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014; Jan Kavan, “Epilogue,” in *Love and Freedom: My Unexpected Life in Prague*, ed. Rosemary Kavan (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 260–261.

¹⁰⁰ Though Müller published an array of subversive documents and manifestos, the primary act that brought the government crackdown was the distribution of over 100,000 leaflets encouraging Czech citizens to boycott the 1971 election as a form of mass protest; Vladimir Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter 77: A Study of ‘Normalisation’ in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1978* (Edinburgh: Q Press, 1978), 158–160; Kavan, *Love and Freedom*, 263–266.

Husák regime that organized opposition would not be tolerated, but it also created fertile recruiting grounds for future dissidents. Müller and Kavan are just two examples of how Husak’s “Normalization” helped create an underworld of opposition with an international dimension of cooperation and coordination, and similar cases increased over the course of the 1970s.

Much of the ranks of Czech opposition were filled with former Party members. The crackdowns on oppositional activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s coincided with a purging of the Party, which leaders framed as a massive reissuing of Party membership cards during which every member would have to affirm their support for the new Party line.¹⁰¹ These purges were not a throwback to the Stalinist terror of the 1950s, but were rather an attempt to rid the Party of high-profile reformers while giving everyone else a chance to pledge support for the new Party line rather than fight.¹⁰² While Kieran Williams has pointed out that a mere 4% of Party members bore the brunt of these purges, Jonathon Bolton argues that its effects were much further reaching for three reasons. Firstly, the family of those purged also suffered the aftereffects, with spouses being dismissed from their jobs, children often denied university entry, and close friends being brought under suspicion and monitored. Secondly, the purges can be seen as a “disciplinary mechanism” as described by Michel Foucault, whereby the act of being screening

¹⁰¹ On the purges see: Williams, *Prague Spring*, 226–244; Kieran Williams, “The Prague Spring: From Elite Liberalisation to Mass Movement,” in *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule*, eds. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (New York: Berg, 2006), 101–118.

¹⁰² Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 60–61.

institutionalized a new model of bureaucratic speech and behavior—a kind of political theater—which trained members to the new rules of the game. This theater was founded on ritual humiliation before the screening committees and the performance of staged obedience, all shrouded in the anesthetized language of bureaucratic Communism.¹⁰³ And thirdly, the purges were aimed primarily at ridding non-conformists in positions of higher education, the university professionals and intellectuals, who comprised “about 41% of all members who were losing their cards.”¹⁰⁴ Historians were among the academics affected the most by the purges, with as many as one-third removed from the party and thus losing their academic posts.¹⁰⁵

One of those historians was Václav Prečan (1933–). Prečan grew up in a family where both parents were Party members. His parents participated in the anti-Nazi resistance movement the final year of the war, and Prečan himself also received the Medal of Merit in 1947 for his involvement in the movement as a teenager. He was active in the Communist Czechoslovakian Youth Union from

¹⁰³ Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 62–64; Williams, *Prague Spring*, 235.

¹⁰⁴ In his analysis of purge statistics based on the Central Committee’s own reports, historian Jiří Maňák notes that 56% of the Party’s “artistic and cultural workers” lost their membership, followed closely by academics and scholars in research institutes, with the social sciences being particularly hard hit, see: Jiří Maňák, *Čistky v komunistické straně Československa v letech 1968–1970* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1997), 63.

¹⁰⁵ Jan Kren, “Czech Historiography at the Turning Point,” *East European Society and Politics* 6 (1992): 153. A 1975 report on historians listed 145 who had lost their posts, but Jiří Kořalka estimates that more than 500 historians may have been removed; *Acta Persecutionis: A Document from Czechoslovakia* (San Francisco: XIV International Congress of Historical Sciences, 1975); Jiří Kořalka, “Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Czechoslovakia,” *American Historical Review* 97 (1992): 1030.

age 15, and in 1951 he formally applied to the Party and was granted membership in 1954. During this time he studied history in Prague and was, in his words, “indoctrinated” into Party philosophy.¹⁰⁶ He joined the history institute at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1957, and it was from there that he and several of his colleagues watched with disapproval the retreat of the Dubcek leadership under Soviet pressure in the fall of 1968.

As secretary of the Commission for Recent Czechoslovakian History at the Academy of Sciences, Prečan helped organized the Historians’ Assembly held June 26, 1968 at the philosophical faculty at Charles University to discuss ways to democratize the organization and leadership of the academy. Once the occupation began he issued a leaflet of behalf of all Prague historians denouncing the occupation, and he also published a personal statement against the occupation in a special issue of the journal *Český časopis historický* that fall.¹⁰⁷ Still a member of the Academy, Prečan was tasked with recording and publishing an official history of the population’s response to the initial days of military occupation in Prague together with colleague Milan Otáhal. It was the results of this publication which ultimately led to his dismissal from the Party in 1970. What began as a small brochure swelled into over four hundred pages documenting acts of violence and opposition

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Vilem Prečan, June 2, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Vilem Prečan et. al, “Postoje k sovětské okupaci z 24.8.1968,” *Československý časopis historický: Zvláštní číslo* (1968): 4.

complete with emotional eye-witness accounts and bound in a solid black cover.¹⁰⁸

The first recourse for his role in the “Black Book” came in September 1969 when his passport was revoked, his publications banned from print, and his current research projects canceled; he was dismissed from the Party in April 1970.

The course of the next several years, before Prečan’s immigration to West Germany in 1976, illustrated how Czechs like Prečan used contacts inside and outside Czechoslovakia to organize international networks of activism and subversion against the regime, and it was these networks that the AG would tap into to forge meaningful and lasting contacts and partnerships to work toward German-Czech reconciliation during the 1970s and 1980s and especially after 1989. Though never imprisoned before his exile, Prečan faced outstanding charges of sedition, and for the next six years he was continually harassed by the police in the form of arrests, interrogations, and his removal from various menial jobs such as waiting tables. During this time he prepared a number of underground texts for publication in exile journals on themes like the nature and substance of the purges as part of “Normalization” as well as a letter on the dire situation in Czechoslovak academia, which was presented to the International Congress of Historical Sciences in San Francisco in 1975.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Historický ústav (Československá akademie věd), *Sedm pražských dnů, 21.–27. Srpen 1968* (Prague: Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences, 1968). For an English translation, see: Robert Little, ed., *The Czech Black Book* (New York: Avon Books, 1969).

¹⁰⁹ *Acta Persecutionis*, 1975.

Being pushed from his official job as a historian into underground publications, Prečan had many contacts with others in the underground whom he would remain in cooperation with after his exile. He remained friends with his old colleagues Milan Otáhal and historian Karel Kaplan who were also dismissed from their positions. Otáhal would go on to be one in a group of writers that worked to confront Czechs with the immorality of the expulsion later in samizdat debates the decade which is the focus of the next chapter; Kaplan later immigrated to Munich and worked in the Collegium Carolinum, the research institute on the Bohemian lands whose close relationship to the AG and emphasis on promoting a cosmopolitan German-Czech identity and heritage in the Czech lands is the focus of chapter four. Prečan also developed relationships with Ludvík Vaculík, author and future Charter 77 spokesman and underground seminar organizer, and Jiří Pelikan, who would immigrate to Rome and publish the prominent émigré journal *Listy* and become a close friend of the AG and frequent participant in their conferences and seminars.

Beginning in 1974, Prečan took on the role of Jan Kavan's primary contact person under the pseudonym "Františka," under which he received large shipments of foreign literature from Kavan and distributed them to others in the underground with the help of a taxi driver he met while working as a restaurant waiter. Through his smuggling operations Prečan began correspondence with Pavel Tigrid (1917–2003), whose Paris-based journal *Svědectví* was perhaps the most well-known of émigré publications and one that Prečan helped disseminate inside

Czechoslovakia.¹¹⁰ Tigríd, an early émigré from 1948, was perhaps the most renown of all Czech figures abroad and also became a very close ally of the AG and frequent participant in their events. It was Tigríd who later brought the AG together with the new dissident-run Czechoslovak government in January 1990 and afforded the AG with direct influence in the Prague government which they would use to promote reconciliation and friendly bilateral relations.

It was Prečan's letter to the 1975 International Congress of Historians detailing the persecution of Czech historians, which was widely reported on Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, and in foreign press, which caused Prečan to be called into a hearing at the Ministry of Interior later that year. The chairman of the hearing berated Prečan for two hours accusing him of subverting Czechoslovakia and offending Husák personally and then suggested that Prečan should leave the country. By this point Prečan had lost hope in the Husák regime and had reoriented his life around cultivating and feeding an independent intellectual life in Czechoslovakia outside the Party's rigid institutions. After discussing the idea of emigration with his wife and believing that they both would be able to leave as Czechoslovakian citizens, Prečan ultimately agreed, though not before creating a framework for future clandestine correspondence from abroad. He worked out a coded writing system with friends Jiřina Šiklová and Vaculík for the purposes of

¹¹⁰ Interview, Vilem Prečan, June 2, 2014; Vilem Prečan, "Vilém Prečan about himself," an autobiography document, ČSDS.

continuing his smuggling work, and he left a trove of archival documents collected by Kaplan with Otáhal to send through a mutual friend in the West German embassy later, rather than risk it being seized by customs on departure.¹¹¹ Through this embassy contact he was also able to secure a scholarship through the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to help him and his wife resettle in West Germany.

From his West German exile Prečan continued his literature smuggling operations in and out of Czechoslovakia and slowly amassed the world's largest collection of Czech samizdat from his residence at the castle of Karel Schwarzenberg in Scheinfeld. He built close relationships with Pelikan, Tigrid, and other Czech emigres and founded the Documentation Center for Independent Czechoslovak Literature in Scheinfeld in 1986. With the help of Šiklová, who herself had extensive contacts with Czech dissidents in Prague, Prečan became perhaps the most central figure in bringing foreign literature into the country and smuggling samizdat out for publication in émigré journals. His smuggling channels were paramount to enabling the expulsion debate to take place in émigré journals in the late 1970s and 1980s and allowed it to receive a much wider readership and

¹¹¹ Šiklová became Prečan's primary contact to receive his shipments and mail him samizdat. They worked out coded system consisting of numbers that corresponded to a specific book that Prečan had purchased two copies of at random before his departure, *Stopz mizí v archívu* by František Fárek. In correspondence where a sensitive name, date, or address had to be conveyed they would write a series of numbers corresponding to the page, then line, then a specific letter, in order to transmit the message. They were the only two people who knew of the book and it was therefore impossible for anyone else to decipher the message. Interview, Vilem Prečan, July 17, 2015.

contributions of opinion from inside and outside Czechoslovakia. He also served as an important messenger for dissidents communicating with the outside world, including Havel.¹¹² He sent and received literature and messages via Jan Kavan's smuggling courier until 1981 when the van he used was searched at the border and hundreds of books and journals were seized along with names of recipients. After this, Precan used various diplomatic channels, first through the Swedish embassy and then through the West German embassy in Prague with the help of diplomat Wolfgang Scheuer.¹¹³ Precan was one of the most central figures in enabling Czech intellectual discourse to cross Europe's Cold War borders and allow Czechs abroad to engage with Czech dissidents at home, and he became a crucial contact of the AG beginning in the late 1970s that allowed the AG to tap into this network and lay the groundwork for trust and cooperation to pursue reconciliation after 1989.

Underground Community in the "Shadow World"

The early years of the 1970s saw the loose formation of an underground "shadow world" of intellectuals and academics.¹¹⁴ As this network expanded and increased in interconnectivity toward the end of the 1970s, it encouraged the formation of a shared sense of identity and purpose in the underground based in part in opposition to the repressive socialism around them and to the belief in the

¹¹² Precan was in regular correspondence with Havel for much of the 1980s, and a collection of over 700 pages of their letters can be found in: Prečan, *Václav Havel—Vilem Prečan*.

¹¹³ Interview, Vilem Prečan, July 17, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 72.

necessity for independent thought. Many Czech intellectuals of the shadow world were transplanted into working-class jobs, one of the defining features of Czech intellectual life between 1968 and 1989. Whereas in the 1950s many dissident intellectuals often simply disappeared from daily life, either from imprisonment or assigned to forced labor camps, Jiří Lederer wrote of the new phenomenon in the 1970s, "I began to encounter many friends and close acquaintances as taxi drivers, parking lot attendants, night watchmen in factories, window washers, salespeople at newsstands."¹¹⁵ These new positions often held the advantage of a great deal of down time at work, which gave many time to undertake other intellectual pursuits. Kaplan, who found work in the boiler room of a Prague tire factory, recalled of this time, "I wrote a whole book there on Czechoslovakia from 1945 to 1948."¹¹⁶

Future discourses of a Central European identity in which the expulsions played a central role, emerged from two activities that largely defined life in the shadow world: publishing and reading samizdat, and informal discussion meetings. Historians have yet to fully map the various mini-meetings and semi-official gatherings of the 1970s and 1980s, but many of them sprang up in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The gatherings ranged from informal encounters in cafes and

¹¹⁵ Jiří Lederer, *Touhy a iluze II* (Toronto: Sixty-Eight Publishers, 1988), 156.

¹¹⁶ "Vzpomínám ... (Rozhovor s Karlem Kaplanem)," in *Gottwaldovi muži*, ed. Karl Kaplan and Pavel Kosatik (Prague: Paseka, 2004), 322.

countryside cottages to organized underground lecture and discussions series.¹¹⁷ These gatherings originated among friends and former colleagues and were largely segregated by political leanings in the early years. But the shared common experience of dissidence and repression gradually brought many of these groups together based on their mutual identification as independent thinkers and non-conformists and helped forge a common sense of community. As Havel recalled of early meetings at his cottage, “There were former communists [...] who in earlier days had often been my opponents [...] [including] Pavel Kohout, Ludvík Vaculík, Ivan Klíma and others [...] [and] another group would come along every summer as well, friends from earlier times, noncommunist writers. [...] .” Gradually, these separate groups merged and built a shared sense of purpose and existence: “These people all had very different pasts, but the differences of opinion that had once separated them had long since ceased to be important. We were all in the same boat and we were in agreement about general matters.”¹¹⁸

As the initially disparate groups of reform and non-communists gradually became more integrated, the expansion of a samizdat network enhanced their cohesion and helped spread ideas further by enabling informed and wider

¹¹⁷ Some of the early sites of discussion included a table frequented by Jiří Kolář at Café Slavia in downtown Prague, “writer’s congresses” at Vaclav Havel’s cottage, philosophy seminars hosted in Jan Patočka’s apartment, and a monthly writer’s meeting group organized by author Ivan Klíma; Karel and Ivan Kynch, *After the Spring Came Winter*, trans. George Theiner (Stockholm: Charter 77 Foundation, 1985), 43–46; Ivan Klíma, *Moje šílené století II: 1967–1989* (Prague: Academia Praha, 2010), 126–129.

¹¹⁸ Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Huizdala* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 120–121.

communication and debate of the ideas in the various circles. The first major post-1968 publishing house began in 1973, when Ludvík Vaculík and others established *Edice Petlice* (Padlock Editions) which published a variety of essays from philosophers, historians, playwrights, and novelists. *Edice Petlice* was soon joined by a number of smaller ventures, and in 1975 two larger journals were founded by Václav Havel and his brother, Ivan (*Edice Expedice*) and by Jan Vladislav, Jiří Kolář, and František Kautman (*Edice Kwart*). Early samizdat publishing was tedious work, and circulation was limited to small circles during most of the 1970s.¹¹⁹ However, as more Czechs like Prečan left the country over the 1970s and began to provide outside resources like foreign publications and paper, typewriters, copy machines and later, computers, samizdat circulation increased and began to reach into more hands and enable a wider spread of independent thought and ideas.

The proliferation of independent opinions in samizdat helped to create a stronger sense of community among those active in various groups as well as those who simply read samizdat. People who otherwise would not have crossed paths in their daily lives could now feel connected based on shared readership and knowledge of the current opinions and perspectives of leading Czech intellectuals. This helped to reach people who still maintained their official employment in the academies and universities like the young political scientist Rudolf Kučera (1947–).

¹¹⁹ For a detailed overview of the early years of samizdat production and circulation, see: Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 97–109.

Kučera was a philosophy student in Prague during the late 1960s, and although he was active in the student demonstrations in 1968 he was able to remain in his studies, graduating in 1970, and finding employment at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague. In the 1980s Kučera organized the samizdat journal *Štředni Evropa* (Central Europe), which became one of the most widely-circulated journals inside Czechoslovakia, and published many essays and opinions critical of the expulsions and promoting shared Czech heritage with Germans. AG leaders were encouraged by his *Štředni Evropa* publications, and after 1989 he became a primary contact and ally of the AG in hosting international conferences and gatherings aimed at promoting reconciliation and shared German-Czech heritage.¹²⁰

During the early seventies, however, Kučera was one of many independent writers still in official employment, although he harbored a growing sense of opposition to the Husák regime and to the strong political influence of the Soviet Union. As with many others during this period, he credits the 1968 invasion and the repressive “Normalization” period with inspiring a sense of a Central European identity and heritage that better represented the true Czech character than Communism. He regularly read publications in Prague’s growing samizdat culture and occasionally contributed essays to them while still in the academy until he was dismissed from the academy in 1977 after signing Charter 77.¹²¹

¹²⁰ The next chapter treats *Štředni Evropa*’s publications and their contribution to Central European identity discourses in more detail, and chapter five details his post-1989 cooperation with the AG.

¹²¹ Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014.

For many like Kučera, the proliferation of samizdat helped grow a sense of community and shared purpose that facilitated the development of a stronger culture of dissent and activism. This sense of community, and to a certain extent solidarity, in the shadow world helped lay the groundwork for the growth of the Charter 77 movement and the expansion of underground seminar and samizdat activities in the late 1970s and 1980s. Living in the underground world and rejecting the values and narratives of Communism encouraged many to think about alternative conceptions of Czech identity, and these were debated in samizdat.

In 1978 one anonymous author published an essay rebutting the entire Communist narrative of the expulsion of Sudeten Germans and recasting it as a tragic, deeply immoral mistake. This essay touched off years of debate about the role of Germans in Czech history and the very roots and nature of Czech national identity and is the focus of the next chapter. Many of the contributing authors promoted a cosmopolitan Czech identity and heritage that included Germans, and many expressed a spiritual and moral need to rewrite expulsion history to reflect those values and to seek rapprochement with Germans. This new way of thinking about the expulsion emerged within the underground and became the standard for the dissidents who would take over political leadership after 1989 and become close allies of the AG in their pursuit of reconciliation between Germans and Czechs. As the following section and later chapters illustrate, the AG was concurrently promoting its own similar version of cosmopolitan, German-Czech heritage and identity for the Czech lands in West Germany. It was this perspective that won them

the trust and support of Czech émigrés abroad and put them in a position to have a meaningful impact on German-Czech relations and rapprochement after 1989.

1968 in West Germany: Political Reorientations and a “Generation Problem”

In West Germany AG leaders watched with dysphoria the “tragic end” of the liberalization movement in Czechoslovakia through the invasion of August 1968.¹²² The political relaxation in Czechoslovakia in the preceding years had temporarily enabled much stronger and more open outreach across the border, and from 1965 onward the AG organized small trips to Czechoslovakia with the youth branch of the AG, the Junge Aktion, where students also met with the Abbot-turned-warehouseman Anastáz Opasek.¹²³ In 1968 Prague Bishop František Tomášek sent a group of Czech youths to participate in the Junge Aktion’s *Bundesjugendwoche* in Wettenhausen. The AG was expecting another group of twenty young Czechs at the fall 1968 summit of the AG’s college youth organization (*Hochschulring*), and in 1969 there were no less than five Junge Aktion trips to ČSSR and six visits of Czech youths to West Germany.¹²⁴ These youth trips were supplemented with adult trips as well as personal trips by AG leaders like Franz Olbert, which helped significantly

¹²² Niederschrift, Sitzung des Führungskreises der AG, January 4–5, 1969, AG 107.

¹²³ Waldstein, “Mein Beitrag zur Feier.”

¹²⁴ Reinhard Forst, “Die Junge Aktion in den 60er Jahren,” in *Junge Aktion Festschrift: 50 Jahre Junge Aktion 1950–2000* (Munich: Junge Aktion der Ackermann Gemeinde, 2000), 50 (publication obtained from the Ackermann Gemeinde headquarters in Munich); Protokoll, Bundesversammlung der Jungen Aktion, January 24–26, 1969, AG1174; Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 30, 1968, AG 107; “Vertraulicher Aktenvermerk des Bundesgeschäftsführers 1969,” in *Junge Aktion Festschrift*, 58–59.

increase the AG's contacts to Czech bishops, priests, Catholic youths, and institutions in Czechoslovakia. By 1968 they had a list of six hundred priests in Czechoslovakia to support with shipments of religious literature and noted that members of the Junge Aktion had more personal contacts they made during their trip the previous year. They also formed partnerships with journalists and began building cooperation for a partnership to maintain German graves in Czechoslovakia.¹²⁵

Already by this point the AG's reputation as conciliatory and friendly toward Czechs helped enable and expand these contacts. In discussions for one planned cooperation effort to maintain graves of Germans in and around Prague, the AG's Czech contacts insisted that, "only representatives from the AG and *Seliger Gemeinde*¹²⁶ would be considered as partners in dialogue," and raised specific objections to any involvement of representatives from the SL.¹²⁷ The distinction that Czechs who knew AG representatives made between the AG and the SL afforded the AG with an ability to make partnerships and gain the trust of Czechs that would serve them well over the coming decades and especially after 1989.

¹²⁵ Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 30, 1968, AG 107

¹²⁶ The Seliger Gemeinde is a Sudeten German organization of Social Democrats that engaged in many cultural outreach programs similar to the AG and with whom the AG frequently cooperated. As evidence by this quote, they had a reputation as being friendly and open to Czechs and Slovaks and were not typically associated with revanchist politics.

¹²⁷ Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 30, 1968, AG 107. The plan was to create a youth work exchange and send young AG and Junge Aktion members to Czechoslovakia and renovate cemeteries together, but these plans were halted by the Warsaw Pact invasion and the subsequent tightening of visas.

These plans, as well as future exchanges across the border, came to a halt in 1970 as the Husák regime ceased allowing visas for such trips.

Aside from the travel restrictions that complicated their activities in Czechoslovakia after 1970, the immediate years after 1968 presented two additional problems for the future program of the AG. The first was declining membership in the AG and the overall aging of its members. “We are getting old,” was the frank observation of one leader.¹²⁸ The head of the AG at the time was original founder Hans Schütz (1901–1982), and most of the managerial board was also of that same generation and over sixty-five. AG leaders were concerned by recent declines in memberships so much that they discussed waiving the accumulating sums of unpaid dues for members in the hopes that they could maintain strong numbers.¹²⁹ Looking ahead, the AG sought to strengthen their recruitment of younger member and bring more members of its youth branch, the Junge Aktion, into the main organization of the AG.

The Junge Aktion made clear that it would be difficult to integrate the younger generation into the “leadership generation of 65 year-olds” because the culture and interest gap was so vast, and there were too few members of the “middle generation” in leadership positions at the AG to which the youth could

¹²⁸ Letter, Hans Schmidt-Egger an die Vorstandsglieder der AG, AG 80.

¹²⁹ Protokoll, Herbstkonferenz der AG, November 30–December 4, 1970, AG 107.

better relate.¹³⁰ This was a problem AG leaders were aware of, and they began encouraging “middle generation” members—those in their 30s–50s who were alive but young at the time of the expulsion—to take on more leadership positions.¹³¹ The changing of the old guard took place in 1970, as Schütz declined to run as chairman and the board unanimously voted in fifty-one year-old Josef Stingl (1919–2004) as the new leader of the AG. Franz Olbert (1935–), thirty-five at the time and the director of the Junge Aktion, became the head of the AG’s *Sozialwerk* office that oversaw outreach efforts to Czechs on both sides of the border, and other AG leadership positions saw a similar transfer of authority to the middle generation.¹³² This transition was crucial to integrating younger members into the AG and securing its existence for the future, and it also began a steady process of the AG coming into its own as an institution aimed at reconciliation and becoming more willing to publically disagree with the SL, when the latter levied political demands the AG felt were harmful toward its own goals of rapprochement with Czechs.

As AG leaders sought to increase the participation of the youth in the late 1960s they ran into another problem, namely that much of the youth was turned off by the idea of being labelled as “expellees” and being associated with the expellee politics and forms of remembrance of their parents’ generation. In analyzing his

¹³⁰ Protokoll, Bundesversammlung der JA, January 24–26, 1969, AG 1174.

¹³¹ Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 30, 1968, AG 107; Letter, Schmidt-Egger an die Vorstandsmitglieder der AG, AG 80.

¹³² Niederschrift, Jahreshauptversammlung der AG, January 3–5, 1970, AG 107.

concept of the “Heimat of memory” comprised of idealized childhood experiences in the homeland that dominated the witness generation’s forms of remembrance in the 1950s and 1960s, Andrew Demshuk noted that the youth born after the expulsion felt little identification to the patterns of Heimat remembrance of their parents.¹³³ Junge Aktion members expressed similar discontent with the forms of identification and remembrance the older generation of the AG promoted, and they began to openly reject their emphasis on remembering Heimat and clinging to an expellee identity and even asked the AG leadership to not refer to Junge Aktion members as “expellee youth” (*Vertriebenenjugend*).¹³⁴ If they wanted to integrate the Junge Aktion into the AG, older AG leaders would have to find another motivation to replace the Heimat remembrance and Sudeten German identity discourses of the previous two decades.

The Ackermann Gemeinde and Junge Aktion Navigate West Germany’s “Mastering of the Past”

There was an immediate social impetus for the youth to shy away from and even reject association as expellee children. This generation came of age during an era of West German critical self-reflection on the roots and origins of the Third Reich and how West Germans chose to remember their victimhood in WWII and forget German perpetrators. Historians in the 1950s and 1960s were at the

¹³³ Demshuk, *The Lost German East*, 19.

¹³⁴ Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 30, 1968, AG 107.

forefront of this reappraisal of the past in defining a German *Sonderweg* (particular path) that led from an authoritarian German empire to authoritarian National Socialism. From this perspective, National Socialism was not a catastrophe that befell the German people, but rather a system deeply rooted in German society that enabled and encouraged the authoritarianism of the Nazi regime.¹³⁵ The path to catharsis in the new 1960s focus on German guilt necessitated confronting Germans as perpetrators and abandoning the previous post-WWII trend of viewing Germans as a nation of victims, and a postwar generation of radical students joined these historians in insisting that Germans must focus on the victims of Germans, not on what Germans had suffered at the end of “Hitler’s war.”¹³⁶

German expellees held a central place in the established narratives of German WWII victimhood, and expellees and their plight served as strong political imagery in the Cold War politics and anti-Soviet/communist rhetoric of the 1950s.¹³⁷ Public opinion and politics in West Germany witnessed a shift to the political left in the 1960s that discouraged selective remembrance of German victimhood and hostile policies toward the East and helped sweep into power the first post-war Social Democrat government in Bonn under Willy Brandt in 1969,

¹³⁵ The literature debating the *Sonderweg* thesis is vast and will not be rehashed here. For a good overview of the major works supporting *Sonderweg* as well as later rebuttals, see: Jürgen Kocka, “Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German *Sonderweg*,” *History and Theory* 38 (1999): 40–50.

¹³⁶ Robert G. Moeller, “Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II’s Legacies,” *History and Memory* 17 (2005): 156–160; Moeller, “Sinking Ships,” 161–162.

¹³⁷ On the appropriation of the expulsion into a dominant national discourse of German suffering and victimhood in the 1950s, see: Moeller, *War Stories*.

who pursued policies of détente and openness (*Ostpolitik*) toward Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Expellee youths were influenced by this shift and many hesitated to claim an identity as expellees, whose political organizations were publically opposing *Ostpolitik*. Junge Aktion members wished to be part of the new currents promoting Europeanism and friendly relations, and indeed many of their activities had already moved in this direction. While earlier Junge Aktion activities in the 1950s concentrated on preserving the heritage and identity of their parents, the cross-border exchanges enabled by a relaxing of visa restrictions by the slowly reforming Czechoslovak regime in the mid-1960s paralleled this transformative process in their aims and goals. The Junge Aktion's emphasis on looking outward and building bridges with Czechs was already evident in their greeting words to a Czech youth delegation visiting for the Junge Aktion's 1964 national gathering in Waldsassen: "As youths whose parents and ancestors built a common homeland together with your ancestors over centuries we see our particular task for today and the future to build a new community with the German people and the Slavic people."¹³⁸ Junge Aktion members went through a coming-of-age process of sorts and sought to recast themselves as a youth organization promoting peace and multiculturalism,

¹³⁸ "Grüßbotschaft der 9. Bundeswoche der Junge Aktion der Ackermann-Gemeinde (in Waldsassen) an die tschechischen Jugend (1964)," *Weg und Ziel: Zeitschriftenreihe der Ackermann-Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 38.

and they encouraged their members to take Czech language courses to help bridge the cultural and lingual divide.¹³⁹

Many of them wanted to integrate more with the AG, but they held reservations about being labeled “Sudeten Germans” and suffering the negative associations that came with it.¹⁴⁰ Junge Aktion leadership discussed the growing negative opinion toward the SL and the AG in the broader public and noted that within the Junge Aktion there were even suspicions of nationalist revanchism against the AG leadership.¹⁴¹ Olbert, then the director of the Junge Aktion, discussed their concerns with the AG board and they decided that the best course would be the creation of an entirely new mission statement to replace the original 1948 statement and clarify the AG’s institutional aims. This was a move to redefine the AG for the next generation in the new era of changing political and social landscapes, and it was formulated in direct cooperation and dialogue with the Junge Aktion.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Protokoll, Bundesführungskreis der JA, September 20–21, 1969, AG 1174. In a 1969 confidential report on the Junge Aktion, Olbert noted that the Junge Aktion was particularly dedicated to avoiding making statements on political issues especially in the current politicized climate regarding Ostpolitik and that they were dedicated to promoting an atmosphere of understanding with Czechs as a future basis for solving contentious political issues. “Vertraulicher Aktenvermerk des Bundesgeschäftsführers 1969,” in *Junge Aktion Festschrift*, 60–61.

¹⁴⁰ Protokoll, Bundesversammlung der Junge Aktion (JA), January 24–26, 1969, AG 1174. Their dedication to pursuing exchanges was further demonstrated by the Junge Aktion organizing a Czech language course later that year to help bridge the cultural and linguistic divide during their cross-border exchanges. This initiative was part of a larger program titled “*Sudeteneuropäer*” aimed at recasting the Junge Aktion from Sudeten German youths to citizens of Europe. Protokoll, Bundesführungskreis der JA, September 20–21, 1969, AG 1174.

¹⁴¹ Protokoll, Bundesführungskreis der JA, September 20–21, 1969, AG 1174.

¹⁴² Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 19, 1969, AG 80.

In discussions with the AG the Junge Aktion expressed a wholesale rejection of the labels and phrases of Sudeten German identity of the older generation. The Junge Aktion leadership agreed that they had no identification with the older generation's concerns of maintaining the "heritage of the homeland" (*Heimaterbe*), and efforts to promote this came across to the youth as "homeland jingoism" (*Heimattümelei*) and "clubbiness" (*Vereinsmeierei*), which they resoundingly rejected.¹⁴³ The youth was "allergic" to phrases like "our homeland" and wanted to see the AG recast itself and its rhetoric in a tone more inclusive to Czechs and showed a desire for peaceful cohabitation and friendliness.

The SL was the most prominent symbol of promoting Heimat and (in the Junge Aktion's eyes) outdated visions of Sudeten Germans as a separate ethnic entity from Czechs, and Junge Aktion members were blunt in their rejection of being associated in any way with them, saying "collaboration with the SL stands in the way of cooperation with the Czech people."¹⁴⁴ Junge Aktion representatives who participated in the earlier cross-border exchanges cited firsthand conversations with Czechs as evidence of the roundly negative view of the SL and

¹⁴³ Gespräch, AG—Junge Generation, July 19–20, 1969, AG 80.

¹⁴⁴ Gespräch, AG—Junge Generation, July 19–20, 1969, AG 80. At a 1970 Junge Aktion discussion forum titled "Does the Junge Aktion support reconciliation?"; participants reiterated their concerns that the SL's emphasis on remembering victimhood and concentrating on past wrongs hurt the public image of the Junge Aktion and Sudeten Germans as a whole and was not the best way forward. Instead, the younger generation roundly agreed that they must become more vocal and voice their political differences to the SL more publically moving forward; Protokoll, Bundesversammlung der JA, January 16–18, 1970, AG 1174.

argued that even Junge Aktion cooperation with other Germans in the German Catholic Youth League (*Bund der deutschen katholischen Jugend*) was often complicated because many outsiders associated the Junge Aktion with the SL. They asked the AG leadership to become more vocal in articulating their differences with the SL, but this was something the older leadership of the AG was hesitant to do.¹⁴⁵

The AG leadership argued that the AG should avoid isolation from the SL “at any price” in order to be able to continue to influence the SL’s program and statements, and they stressed that Junge Aktion members could become more active in the SL and in political parties to further influence the SL in the future. Junge Aktion members need not “identify with the SL on every detail,” but AG leaders insisted that one could not simply “abandon” a “natural entity” like an ethnic group (*Volksgruppe*).¹⁴⁶ This was in 1969 and the middle generation of AG leaders like Olbert and Stingl would not assume leadership responsibility from the older, original founding AG members until the following year. Once they did, however, the AG showed more willingness for public confrontation with the SL during the following decade when they felt the SL was hampering the AG’s outreach efforts.

AG leaders nevertheless integrated the concerns of the Junge Aktion on the AG’s future outlook and activities in the new mission statement. In internal

¹⁴⁵ Gespräch zwischen der AG und JA, July 20–21, 1969, AG 107.

¹⁴⁶ Gespräch zwischen der AG und JA, July 20–21, 1969, AG 107.

discussions of the AG board on formulating the statement, the organizing committee stated it should “contain a clear statement of the self-image of the AG [...] for the future, above all with regard to the younger generation that will soon have to take over the managerial functions in the AG.”¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the subtext of specific aims must be “clear and unambiguous about the goals and tasks of the AG,” and here, “(out of psychological concerns!) strictly positive formulations should be used.”

The new mission statement, which the AG and Junge Aktion ratified unanimously and with acclaim later in 1970, was strongly influenced by these concerns and desires of the younger generation.¹⁴⁸ The AG’s stated aim in its preamble was to reaffirm its principles to guide the younger generation as they took over the leadership and tasks of the AG, and the nine principles they encoded in their mission were a Christian foundation, personal social engagement, a promotion of the cultural and historical values and heritage “of the Bohemian lands,” reconciliation with the east, European peace, European integration, self-determination for all peoples, material help for those in need and for the persecuted Catholic church, and solidarity with all young emerging democratic states around the world.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Kurzprotokoll über das Ergebnis der Beratungen über die Neufassung des Grundgesetzes der AG, December 12–13, 1969, AG 107.

¹⁴⁸ Niederschrift, Führungskreises der AG, July 25–26, 1970, AG 107.

¹⁴⁹ Leitsatz der Ackermann Gemeinde, 1970, AG 1174; “Leitgedanken 1970,” *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 15–17.

Notably, the new mission statement was almost entirely devoid of references to “Sudeten Germans” or the “homeland”—two major points that Junge Aktion members objected to in their self-portrayals. Whereas the AG’s original mission statement from 1948 mentioned “homeland” fourteen times and “expellees” or “Sudeten Germans” thirteen times, the 1970 statement spoke of “Sudeten German” and “expellees” only once each, and it did so only in describing the past work of the AG in helping “Sudeten Germans” and “expellees” integrate into German society in the immediate postwar years.¹⁵⁰ Instead, the new statement described the AG as “a group of German Catholics who see their heritage from Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia as an historical obligation to work for the Church, state, and society.”¹⁵¹ This symbolic but important change in terminology marked a turning point for the AG toward emphasizing shared heritage with Czechs over a separate Sudeten German identity and a stronger emphasis on inclusive rhetoric of a multiethnic Central Europe. This was the course the new “middle generation” leaders of the AG took in the 1970s and 1980s as they built more bridges and contacts with Czechs at home and émigrés abroad and brought younger participants into the AG, and it is one that we shall see in chapter four led to conflict and disagreement with the SL over how to write and portray Sudeten German identity and heritage.

¹⁵⁰ In the 1948 mission statement the primary term for expellee was “*Heimatvertriebene*.” “Sudeten German” and “expellee” each appeared only once. “Grundgesetz der Ackermann Gemeinde (1948),” *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann Gemeinde 24* (2004): 28–32.

¹⁵¹ “Leitgedanken 1970,” in *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann Gemeinde 24* (2004): 15–17.

The 1970s and a Growing Rift between the Ackermann Gemeinde and the Sudeten German Homeland Association

It was not just the younger generation that had concerns about the SL. AG leaders were also worried about the SL's demands for restitution and their political opposition to Ostpolitik were creating a bad public image of expellees whose repercussions would harm the work of the AG and Junge Aktion. The AG was also concerned that the SL's influence was growing within the Sudeten German Council (*Sudetendeutscher Rat*, hereafter, Council)—an institution comprised of representatives of the various Sudeten German organizations whose primary goal is to formulate a shared platform among Sudeten Germans and lobby political representatives at the state and federal level. Whereas the older AG leaders cautioned against a public rift with the SL in 1969, the new managerial board promptly rethought this hesitation when faced with the SL's growing dominance in the Council.

Appointments to the Council were made by the political parties, and before the 1969 Bundestag vote, AG leaders discussed ways they could try to get people on the board they approved of.¹⁵² They were not pleased with the outcome, which saw the speaker of the SL, Walter Becher (1912-2005), voted chairman of the Council. After the first new meeting of the Council in 1970 AG leader Adolf Kunzmann (1920–1976) wrote to fellow AG board member Richard Hackenberg (1909–1995)

¹⁵² Niederschrift, Vorstandssitzung der AG, July 19, 1969, AG 80.

that “the meeting at the Sudeten German Council was catastrophic. I have as many regrets about going there as I have hairs on my head. Dr. Becher made a very bad impression and everything else was unpleasant except for Hanz Schütz’s presentation, which was excellent. [...] It would be good for Sudeten Germans in general to have such formulations [Schütz’s presentation] become their face. It will probably disappear again into the drawer, and we lose much on our image.”¹⁵³

Other AG leaders also shared these negative feelings toward Becher leading the Council. In a meeting later that summer AG leaders discussed the topic of Becher serving as the chairman of the SL and Council congruently, and “the board members joined in largely with the opinion of the chairman [Stingl] who expressed that this solution is not considered ideal and a change will be sought.”¹⁵⁴ AG leaders raised objections in the Council that Becher’s dual leadership of both institutions brought the legitimacy of the Council as a separate entity into question, but this failed to effect any change and Becher maintained his leadership role in both institutions.¹⁵⁵

The relationship between leaders of the AG and the SL became more pointed and public following the results of the vote for the SL’s board of directors at their 6th National Assembly in January–February of 1976. Since the SL was the primary political organ of Sudeten Germans that claimed authority to speak for the entire

¹⁵³ Letter, Kunzmann to Hackenberg, March 26, 1970, AG 1174.

¹⁵⁴ Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, June 25, 1970, AG 80.

¹⁵⁵ Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, October 26, 1970, AG 80; Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, December 11, 1970, AG 80; Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, November 6, 1971, AG 80.

group, the AG had a vested interest in having their opinions represented. An internal memo on the national assembly by the AG's Richard Hackenberg revealed AG concerns that the nationalist Sudeten German organization *Witikobund*, which the AG held in little regard and saw as counterproductive to their goals of reconciliation and understanding, had strongly influenced the results of the election.¹⁵⁶ In December 1975 before the election, representatives of the AG and Seliger Gemeinde attempted to arrange a meeting with Witikobund leader Heinz Lange to discuss their concerns about rumors that suggested the Witikobund was lobbying to stack vote results heavily in their favor, which would effectively eliminate "the share of responsibility of the other two communities" (*Gesinnungsgemeinschaften*, in this case referring to the AG and the Seliger Gemeinde).¹⁵⁷ However, despite repeated invitations to Lange to attend a scheduled meeting with the AG and Seliger Gemeinde he was a no-show, and the AG and the Seliger Gemeinde met alone and discussed their mutual concerns over the coming vote.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Richard Hackenberg, Kurzbericht über die VI Bundesversammlung der SL, February 4, 1976, AG 829. In speaking about the AG's ties with other Sudeten German expellee organizations, Franz Olbert recalled various levels of cooperation with the SL, Seliger Gemeinde, Adalbert Stifter Verein and other organizations, but remarked that there was no common ground with the Witikobund and no cooperation; Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Letter, Anton Seeman to Josef Stingl, Adolf Hasenöhrl and Heinz Lange, December 27, 1975, AG 829.

¹⁵⁸ Letter, Adolf Kunzmann to Heinz Lange and Adolf Hasenöhrl, January 7, 1976, AG 829; Letter, Heinz Lange to Adolf Kunzmann, Josef Stingl, Adolf Hasenöhrl and Anton Seeman, January 21, 1976 AG 829; Letter, Adolf Hasenöhrl to Heinz Lange, no date, AG 829

At this same time the AG was also attempting to curb SL influence in another institution, the Sudeten German Foundation (*Sudetendeutsche Stiftung*). The Sudeten German Foundation was founded in 1970 by Bavarian Minister-President Alfons Goppel to fund Sudeten German events and projects. Stingl met with Goppel in January 1976 just before the SL's national assembly to lobby for Goppel to appoint an AG member to the Foundation's board instead of solely SL representatives.¹⁵⁹ Becher learned about the meeting and took it as a direct attack on the leadership of the SL, writing to Stingl, "It will be difficult to heal the rifts this has opened. Do you really think that you thereby win young, capable people [...] more focused on performance than on plotting when you go about this in all public view as you did? [...]"¹⁶⁰ He accused Stingl of weakening the political weight of the SL, and that as its speaker Becher was not allowed to endorse a path that would lead to the relativizing and exclusion of the SL in state or federal politics. By the spring of 1976 the new middle generation leaders of the AG had thus moved to a more combative stance toward the SL that its older leaders were hesitant to do a half-decade prior.

The results of the votes at the SL's national assembly in spring 1976 went strongly in the Witikobund's favor. Its members gained 18 positions total, including

¹⁵⁹ Gesprächnotize für Stingl on Aussprache mit Ministerpräsident Alfons Goppel, January 7, 1976, AG 829.

¹⁶⁰ Letter, Walter Becher to Josef Stingl, February 19, 1976, AG 829.

president of the national assembly (beating out the AG's Hackenberg by 56 votes to his 12), first vice president, both representative of the speaker positions, and additional members of the national board (*Bundesvorstand*).¹⁶¹ In his report to the AG board Hackenberg did not overtly accuse the SL of conspiring with the Witekobund, but he did assert that "the occupation of each position [by Witekonen] was preplanned and agreed upon in every detail."¹⁶² AG chairman Stingl voiced concerns of the Witekobund's overrepresentation in the SL publicly at an open ceremony for Hans Schütz's seventy-fifth birthday a month later and also in a letter directly to Becher in which he wrote that "a majority has damaged the principle of plurality."¹⁶³ Becher served as the chairman of the Witekobund from 1956–1958 and remained an active member up to this point, and he seemed perfectly content with the Witekobund's increased representation in the SL. Becher refuted Stingl's assertions in a five-page letter in which he argued "if there is a predominant number of Witekonen, it is obviously because they worked more actively in the areas which send the electoral delegates." He further attributed the large number of Witekobund members to a generational problem and the necessity to fill leadership positions as many older members retired, and he claimed that Heinz Lange of the Witekobund had simply found a solution within the ranks of his institution.

¹⁶¹ "Die Wahlergebnisse zur VI. Bundesversammlung," *Witekobrief* 19 (24), Folge 2 (February 1976): 2–3, AG 829.

¹⁶² Richard Hackenberg, Interner (vertraulicher) Bericht über die Bundesversammlung der Sudetendeutschen Landsmannschaft am 31.1 und 1.2.1976 in München, February 4, 1976, AG 829.

¹⁶³ Letter, Walter Becher to Josef Stingl, February 19, 1976, AG 829.

The SL and the AG both faced a generational crisis during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but both responded in different ways. The AG sought to win over a youth more interested in outreach with Czechs than in holding on to national-ethnic conceptions of a Sudeten German heritage. The SL under Becher, by contrast, moved closer to the nationalistic Witikobund and opened up much of its leadership to their members. This process paralleled another rift between the AG and SL over how to portray Sudeten German identity, with the SL emphasizing a closed nationalist conception and the AG promoting a multicultural identity that included Germans and Czechs into a single heritage and culture of the Bohemian lands. This identity debate will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, but before we can understand the AG's emphasis on inclusion and multiculturalism we first must look at the ways in which the AG built and expanded their network of cooperation with the wave of Czechs who immigrated from Czechoslovakia to West Germany and Western Europe in the years after 1968.

Opus Bonum and Ackermann Gemeinde-Czech Cooperation

By the time Anastáz Opasek resettled in West Germany at the Braunau in Rohr Abbey in 1969 he had decided to devote his life to more than simple prayer and to become active in helping those who had suffered under the Communists as he had. Recalling the segregation and ultimate expulsion of his fellow German priests from the Břevnov Monastery, Opasek also desired to work toward mending the rift between Germans and Czechs caused by nationalisms of the 1930s and

1940s. He began attending the AG's organizational meetings as early as October 1969 and served as a consultant on how to best help Catholic diocese and clergy in ČSSR, and he soon began planning for the creation of a Czech émigré organization based on their model.¹⁶⁴ His friend, future AG associate and Radio Free Europe employee, Richard Belcredi recalled of Opasek's mindset at the time:

In 1969 he was with me during the visit of a friend from Moravia who spent several years in a Communist prison. Suddenly, [Opasek] began to talk of a pledge to his former cellmates from Břevnov. I admit I was very curious—I knew his life story well [...] I expected that he would begin recounting the tragic fate of him and his brothers. Nothing like that. Opasek excited me, and for the first time I was influenced by his vitality. He immediately began talking of the need to do something for the Czech émigré community, for people in Czechoslovakia, and for our common future. He was the one who caused me to re-engage in exile.¹⁶⁵

This prison pledge of activism in exile also involved Vladmír Neuwirth, an active figure in the Czech émigré community in West Germany who served time with Opasek prior to relocating to Germany. Neuwirth was imprisoned in 1961 for his role in a grassroots religious organization he founded along with six others in 1947 during his theology studies at the university in Olomouc. The organization called itself *Společenství* (The Community) and aimed to promote secular Christian spiritual and cultural life. After February 1948 their activities continued secretly, by which time *Společenství* had grown to include over one hundred members. It was

¹⁶⁴ Protokoll, Arbeitstagung der AG, October 25–26, 1969, AG 107; "Vertraulicher Aktentenvermerk des Bundesgeschäftsführers 1969," in *Junge Aktion Festschrift*, 60.

¹⁶⁵ Opasek, *Dvanáct Zastavení*, 280.

during this grassroots Catholic movement in Olomouc that Neuwirth met Josef Zvěřina, who would later become Opus Bonum's primary contact in Czechoslovakia through which it assisted underground priests and clergy in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶⁶ Through Opus Bonum's cooperation with the AG, Zvěřina also became a central contact for the AG's clergy assistance, and he later served as a crucial partner for AG-Czech outreach and reconciliation efforts after 1989.

Neuwirth was released from prison during the thaw in April 1968 and immigrated to West Germany that summer, where he reunited with Opasek. Together they began planning an initiative similar to *Společenství* and the AG that resulted in the founding of Opus Bonum in March 1972. Although Opus Bonum was conceived by Czechs and was often referred to and treated as a Czech Catholic organization, its membership and activities were aimed at educating and integrating all people who traced their heritage to the Czechoslovak lands, with a special emphasis on laymen. Nowhere in its charter was "Czech" mentioned explicitly, and instead it declared itself to be "an organization for the preservation and fostering of the native cultural heritage from Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia as well as youth support and education for fulfilling charitable duties."¹⁶⁷ In this way, from its conception, Opus Bonum served as a perfect sister

¹⁶⁶ Vojtěch Novotný, *Odvaha být církví: Josef Zvěřina v letech 1913–1967* (Prague: Karolinum Pres, 2014), 164–166.

¹⁶⁷ Satzung des Opus Bonum, AG 1441.

organization to the AG in promoting shared German-Czech heritage in the Czech lands.

Opus Bonum's second goal of involving the youth echoed AG concerns about increasing activism in the younger generation, and indeed, AG leaders and the future leaders of Opus Bonum were already discussing desires to integrate the youth activities of both organizations the year before Opus Bonum was formally founded.¹⁶⁸ In their 1974 annual report, Opus Bonum leaders wrote that one of their primary objectives was to "offer trust" and inform about Christian culture and religious thought for a Czech youth that "was raised atheistically and materialistically for twenty years" and were either "deprived of Christianly and other free ideals" or were taught them as reactionary remnants of a disqualified capitalism.¹⁶⁹ Beginning in the year of its founding, Opus Bonum held annual youth meetings over Pentecost weekend to promote awareness of Czech and Slovak history and culture with an emphasis on German-Czech relations and a "consciousness of belonging to Europe."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Protokoll der Vorbesprechung über das deutsch-tschechische Gespräch im Rahmen des II. Kulturkongresses der AG, November 1, 1971, AG 1441.

¹⁶⁹ Tätigkeitsbericht des Opus Bonums, 1974, AG 1249.

¹⁷⁰ Information text "Gesellschaft 'Opus Bonum,'" AG 1249. The theme of the first of these meetings in 1972 was "The Former and Current Problems in German-Czech Relations," and later topics all centered around culturally unifying themes such as "The Thousand-Year Bishopric in Prague," "A Unified Europe—A Call for Hope," and others on human rights; Selbständige Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonums, AG 1441.

From its founding Opus Bonum organizers worked closely with AG leaders in securing the viability of the institution and offering their separate national perspectives as guest speakers and national representatives at each other's summits and events.¹⁷¹ However, Opus Bonum ran into initial opposition from Czech Catholic émigrés already working in religious institutions in West Germany and Rome, particularly the Czech Catholic Mission in West Germany (*Česká misie*). Some of the opposition can be attributed to the Czech Mission attempting to claim its authority as the established provider of pastoral care for Czechs in West Germany. Czech Mission leaders expressed displeasure that they were not notified in advance of Opus Bonum's founding, nor were they consulted as Opus Bonum sought funding from the German Bishop's Conference and other Catholic organizations in West Germany.¹⁷² Czech Mission leader Karel Fořt wrote to Opasek saying that while he supported Opus Bonum's funding request, he was not entirely pleased with "the manner of its portrayal and justification," and he cautioned Opasek to refer to Opus Bonum by its name only and not refer to "Czech Catholic

¹⁷¹ Protokoll der Vorbesprechung über das deutsch-tschechische Gespräch im Rahmen des II. Kulturkongresses der AG, November 1, 1971, AG 1441; Selbständige Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonums, AG 1441.

¹⁷² Letter, Adolf Kunzmann to Alexander Heidler, October 4, 1972, AG 1441; Letter Karl Woertner to Richard Hackenberg, September 25, 1973, AG 1249. Czech Mission leaders Karel Fořt and Alexander Heidler led the criticism of Opus Bonum. Fořt and Heidler were the two original founders of the Czech Mission and remained at its helm in the early 1970s. For more on their biographies and the founding of the Czech Mission in West Germany, see the homepage of the Czech Mission in Germany: <http://www.misie-nemecko.com/> (accessed September 9, 2016).

pastoral care, which are not identical to each other.”¹⁷³ In the same letter Fořt assumed that Opus Bonum would subordinate its activities under the Czech Mission’s umbrella and that Fořt would take over correspondence with other Catholic institutions on Opus Bonum’s behalf.¹⁷⁴

Some of the opposition in the Czech Mission stemmed from a perceived slighting of their work with Opus Bonum’s assumption that a new organization was required to perform pastoral care for Czechs in West Germany, something the Czech Mission already did. Opasek and AG leaders had to them explain that Opus Bonum’s aim was to reach out to recent émigrés who had grown up under Communism, many of whom were not Catholic and otherwise would not encounter any of the existing services of the Czech Mission.¹⁷⁵ It was this group that was the most politically active and where the AG would benefit the most from in terms of establishing contacts and cooperations with prominent Czech émigrés, who in-turn had contacts with dissidents at home.

These initial disagreements with the Czech Mission about the focus and institutional independence of Opus Bonum required the negotiation of a formal

¹⁷³ Fořt wrote: “Nächstes mal ist es notwendig, zwischen dem Verein ‘Opus Bonum’ und der tschechischen katholischen Seelsorge, die nicht miteinander identisch sind, zu unterscheiden.” Letter Karel Fořt to Anastas Opasek, September 2, 1972, AG 1441.

¹⁷⁴ Fořt wrote, “In order for us to have a clear basis for further negotiations with church officials I would appreciate if you would briefly send me your plans and wishes concerning your participation in Czech pastoral care,” referring to Opasek working within the auspices of the Czech Mission; Letter Karel Fořt to Anastas Opasek, September 2, 1972, AG 1441.

¹⁷⁵ Letter, Adolf Kunzmann to Alexander Heidler, October 4, 1972, AG 1441; Protokoll, Mitgliederversammlung des OB, 17.2.1973, AG 1441.

covenant of sorts, establishing recognition and mutual expectations. In this agreement the Czech Mission recognized the need for Opus Bonum to work within cultural and social-religious areas, and they agreed to endorse Opus Bonum's requests for financial support from church offices if they were given representation within Opus Bonum. They also agreed that Opus Bonum would become the cultural component of the Czech Mission, and they pledged to work together to fund and organize annual academic and student events.¹⁷⁶

Despite this working agreement between the two institutions, tension persisted concerning Opus Bonum's closeness to the AG that showed nationalist tendencies of mistrust of Sudeten Germans even in Czech Catholic circles. The international Czech Missions were coordinated from Rome, which was also the site of the publication of its international journal, *Vinculum*. That journal, edited by Jaroslav Skarvada, introduced Opus Bonum to the wider community of international Czech missions with an unceremonious 1973 article that instantly criticized Opus Bonum for being created "without any prior agreement or notice of our priests" and for supposedly refusing official membership to representatives of the West German Czech Mission.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the article objected that the director of the AG was the one who had informed Pope Paul VI about Opus Bonum's

¹⁷⁶ Abkommen zwischen Abt. A. Opasek und den tschechischen Seelsorgen, October 20, 1972, AG 1249.

¹⁷⁷ "A ještě Německo: Opus Bonum," *Vinculum* XVIII 3 (Summer 1973): 5, http://www.scriptum.cz/vinculum/vinculum_1973_03.pdf (accessed February 24, 2015).

founding, saying “On what grounds—perhaps the Ackermann Gemeinde considers [Opus Bonum] its offshoot?”

This was Opus Bonum’s public introduction to Czech pastorals outside West Germany and even many within, and it cast a suspicious and mistrusting light on the infant organization. AG leaders refuted Skarvada’s suspicions and the negative portrayal of Opus Bonum and argued to Skarvada that Czech contacts with Sudeten Germans should be welcomed in the spirit of Christianity unity and to the overall benefit of German-Czech relations.¹⁷⁸ Skarvada responded that he wished for all Czech Catholics living abroad to have a single pastoral community and stated that Opus Bonum “was founded outside of this community and exists in a certain tension to this community.”¹⁷⁹ At the same time characterizations of Opus Bonum as traitors and collaborators for working with the AG were circulating in pamphlets within circles of the Czech Mission in West Germany, with one even taking making a religious association by characterizing Opasek as Judas, and Hackenberg appealed to Skarvada’s religious sensibilities to take leadership in refuting any such characterization.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Letter, Karl Reiss to Skarvada, August 24, 1973, AG 1441; Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Skarvada, September 9, 1973, AG 1441; Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Jaroslav Skarvada, September 25, 1973, AG 1441.

¹⁷⁹ Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Jaroslav Skarvada, September 25, 1973, AG 1441.

¹⁸⁰ Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Herbert Leuniger, May 18, 1973, AG 1441; Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Jaroslav Skarvada, September 25, 1973, AG 1441.

Tension between some within the Czech Mission and Opasek persisted through much of the 1970s even as the two organizations cooperated in other ventures, with one Mission representative on Opus Bonum's leadership board even leading a failed campaign to push Opasek to resign.¹⁸¹ Throughout these early years of rocky relations with the Czech Mission the relationship between Opasek and AG directors remained strong. AG directors were active from the beginning in tapping their established contacts for financial resources to raise funds for Opus Bonum's organization and activities¹⁸², and they hosted cultural and academic events with Opus Bonum and also helped organize Opus Bonum partnerships with other

¹⁸¹ The Czech Mission representative at the forefront of this criticism was Karl Wortner, who protested that Opasek did not allow enough discussion and accommodation from other board members about the direction of Opus Bonum. AG leaders suspected he was acting on behalf of other Czech Missions and they came out in support of Opasek when Wortner called for Opasek to step down. For AG suspicions about Wortner as a proxy for higher-ranking Czech Mission officials working against Opasek, see: Letter, Walter Klötzl to Richard Hackenberg, September 28, 1973, AG 1441; Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Herbert Leuniger, May 18, 1973, AG 1441; Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Josef Stingl, September 1, 1975, AG 1441. On tensions relating to Wortner in the board, see: Protokoll, Mitgliederversammlung Opus Bonum, February 17, 1973, AG 1441; Letter, Anastaz Opasek to Richard Hackenberg, October 23, 1973, AG1441; Anastas Opasek, Gedächtnisprotokoll über Gespräch mit Karel Wortner, October 16, 1973, AG 144; Anastas Opasek, Gedächtnisprotokoll über Gespräch mit Karel Fort, October 23, 1973, AG 1441. On Karl Wortner's call for Opasek to resign and the ensuing support of Opasek by AG leaders, see: Karl Wortner, Offener Brief, undated from 1976, AG 1249; Letter, Richard Belcredi to Richard Hackenberg, October 1, 1976, AG 1249; Letter, Walter Klötzl to Josef Stingl, October 28, 1976, AG 144; Letter, Richard Belcredi to Richard Hackenberg, November 25, 1976, AG 1249; Letter, Richard Hackenberg to Richard Belcredi, November 29, 1976, AG 1249.

¹⁸² AG fundraising on behalf of Opus Bonum helped increase opus Bonum's budget from twelve and ten thousand DM in 1972 and 1973 respectively to over one hundred nine thousand by 1975; Protokoll, Mitgliederversammlung Opus Bonum, February 17, 1973, AG 1441; Protokoll, Sitzung des Komitees Opus Bonum, March 5, 1976, AG 1249. This increase in funding was still not enough to cover Opus Bonum's ambitious cultural program, in 1975 they had to cancel planned orders of printers and books as well as publications they wanted to finance in 1975; Protokoll, Sitzung des Komitees Opus Bonum, June 27, 1975, AG 1249.

institutions the AG worked with.¹⁸³ This initial series of educational events prompted Opus Bonum leaders to establish a library of important works on religion, history, and culture in the Bohemian, Moravian, and Slovak lands, which they opened in cooperation with the AG.

As the decade progressed, Opus Bonum's events shifted toward focusing on political issues and began attracting more prominent figures from around Europe. While the events of 1972–1974 centered around topics such as “A Thousand Years of the Prague Bishopric,” “The Self-Image of the Czech Nation,” and “Marriage and Family,” the meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975 ushered in a shift in Opus Bonum programs toward contemporary politics and the state of Czechoslovakian society.¹⁸⁴ Opus Bonum's annual “Academic Week” event organizing held in the September following the Helsinki meeting held the theme “A United Europe: An Appeal to Hope” and featured

¹⁸³ Among these events included annual “Academic Week” gatherings featuring presentations and discussions on various aspects of religion life, culture and history in the Czech lands; Letter, Allgemeine Begründung zum Antrag des “Opus Bonum e.v.” für das Rechnungsjahr 1974 an das Sekretariat der Deutschen Bishofskonferenz, AG 1441. For an overview of these events from 1974–1979, see: Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonum in der Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Vereinen, AG 1441.

¹⁸⁴ Selbständige Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonum 1972–1979, AG 1441.

prominent German and Czech academics and intellectuals who spoke on topics relating to Czechs and Slovaks in Central Europe and European integration.¹⁸⁵

In January 1977 the Charter 77 petition against human rights violations in Czechoslovakia was published and appeared the following day in major western newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Le Monde*, *The Times*, and *The New York Times*. At first glance the brief document seemed relatively innocuous and not unlike other manifestos and declarations that came before it. It appealed to the two United Nations covenants on human rights and their reiteration at Helsinki in 1975 and pointed out the ways in which the Czechoslovak regime was violating these rights. However, the savage attacks against it launched in official Czechoslovak state media and the repressive measures taken against its supporters helped transform Charter 77 from a simple government petition with 240 signatories into what was declared a dangerous act of counter-revolution and treason, thus publicizing it at home and abroad in a way that its initial signatories could not have imagined.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Program der Akademischen Woche, September 1–7, 1975, AG 1441. Other Opus Bonum events with political themes included a 1976 lecture on European integration by the President of the Paneuropean Union, Otto Von Hapsburg, and they also held an international conference together with the CSU's Hans-Seidel Foundation on "The Tasks of the Christian Socialist Movement in Europe and the Status of Intellectuals from the Eastern Bloc"; *Selbständige Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonum 1972–1979*, AG 1441; *Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonum in der Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Vereinen 1974–1976*, AG 1441.

¹⁸⁶ Skilling, *Charter 77*, 4.

Opasek penned the official Opus Bonum opinion on Charter 77 in February 1977 in which he declared Opus Bonum's support and solidarity, calling it "the biggest event in Czechoslovakia since the self-immolation of student Jan Palach."¹⁸⁷ In response to the Charter, Opus Bonum shifted much of its organization efforts to discussing and debating Charter 77 and its origins and impacts on life, society and the future of Czechoslovakia. In 1977 Opus Bonum dedicated its annual Pentecost youth conference, academic week, and other guest lecture events to the topic of Charter 77, and these events drew larger crowds and more prominent Czech émigrés from in and around West Germany like Karl Schwarzenberg, whose budding relationship at the time with Vilem Prečan would result in Prečan's Documentation Center for Independent Czech and Slovak Literature later housed at the Schwarzenberg castle in Scheinfeld, West Germany.¹⁸⁸

In 1978 Opus Bonum decided to add another annual event to its program: a yearly academic symposium aiming specifically to bring together the fragmented Czech and Slovak émigré community in common discussion of current Czechoslovak issues. The symposiums were held at the AG's Pfarrer-Hacker-House event hall in Franconia-Fichtelgebirge, and over the next decade they brought together representatives from all political and social arenas of the Czech and Slovak

¹⁸⁷ Opus Bonum, Erklärung der Gemeinschaft Opus Bonum zur Charta 77, Februarz 1977, AG 1441. Jan Palach was the infamous student who set himself ablaze in front of the National Museum in Prague's Wenceslas Square on January 16, 1969 in protest of the Warsaw Pact occupation.

¹⁸⁸ Selbständige Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonum 1972–1979, AG 1441; Veranstaltungen des Opus Bonum in der Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Vereinen 1974–1976, AG 1441.

émigré community, from Catholics to atheists, conservatives to Social Democrats, and from those in exile since 1948 to the new wave of reform communist émigrés after 1968. The first meeting took place from February 23rd to 26th and brought figures of the Czech émigré community like Zdeněk Mlynář, Pavel Tigrid, Karel Kaplan, Karel Schwarzenberg, Vilem Prečan, and Jiří Pelikán together with AG leaders in a conference discussing developments in Czechoslovakia since 1945.¹⁸⁹ Thus, by 1978 Opus Bonum was well on its way to becoming the premier organization bringing together Czech émigrés of all political and religious leanings, and it was also becoming a bridging organization that brought the AG in cooperation with these prominent Czech intellectuals and activists.

Conclusion

The 1970s were a period of profound change and reorganization on both sides of the German-Czech border. In Czechoslovakia, the Husák regime's reassertion of authoritarian control after the short-lived period of reform in 1968 drove many Czech intellectuals out of the country, where they became activists promoting independent Czech thought and publishing in cities like Munich, Rome, Paris, London, and Stockholm. Many of those intellectuals that stayed behind were purged from the universities, newspapers, and printing houses and were relegated to menial labor positions. Over the course of the 1970s they began to develop an

¹⁸⁹ Bericht über 23. bis 26. Symposium des Opus Bonums über die Entwicklung der Tschechoslowakai in den Jahren 1945–1948, AG 1141.

expansive underground network promoting independent thought and ideas in samizdat and private discussion circles. The prevailing morality in this shadow world revolved around human rights and was reflected in the Charter 77 petition. This focus on human rights would be crucial for revision of Czech expulsion history, as these Czechs soon took up rewriting this history as an immoral act to reflect the current human rights values in Czech national history-writing.

The Czech émigrés that spread across Western Europe were central to this story. Some of them like Prečan and Tigrid helped facilitate the proliferation of independent Czech through by smuggling samizdat and publishing it abroad to enable wider discourse and discussion. These émigrés also became central figures in the historical revision of the expulsion in their own right. Despite resistance from some of his Catholic countrymen, Opasek establish the organization that would bridge Czech émigrés and the AG and begin a host of cooperations between the two groups over the next decade. These contacts engendered further outreach and reconciliation efforts in the 1980s that became the foundation for German-Czech cooperation after 1989, when those Czechs took over control of Czechoslovakia's political and social institutions and spearheaded campaigns for political and social reconciliation with Germans and a moral revision of the socialist expulsion narrative.

The 1978 Opus Bonum symposium in Franken brought many of these émigrés together with the AG to discuss the rise of authoritarian socialism in Czechoslovakia. At the end of the symposium participants issued the "Franken

Declaration,” which placed the expulsion of Sudeten Germans at the beginning of this process and became the first declaration by Czechs that suggested the expulsions were an unjust and unlawful act. It was this declaration, and the subsequent debate it helped unleash in samizdat, that marked a watershed in German-Czech discourse on the legacies of the expulsion. The ensuing debate placed revision of the expulsion narrative at the heart of redefining Czech national identity and Central European heritage that persisted through the following decade and into the processes of post-1989 European integration. It is this debate and the morality of the “shadow world” that fueled the revisionists that is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

EXPULSION NARRATIVES AND CZECH IDENTITY IN THE UNDERGROUND,

1978–1989

Memory is the great provoker of disagreement.

– Milan Šimečka¹⁹⁰

Over 80 prominent Czech intellectuals from Western Europe and North America gathered in February 1978 in Weißenstadt in northern Bavaria for Opus Bonum's first international academic symposium. The theme was the development of Czechoslovakia in the years 1945–1948 with the aim of understanding why the communist takeover in 1948 was seemingly so easy. Conference participants declared that the future progress of the Czech nation relied on overcoming the “myths and illusions” of the past in order to understand how Czechoslovakia had evolved to its current state and how to change it and ensure that past mistakes would not be repeated. At the end of the symposium, a group of presenters and participants signed a declaration of the steps they agreed had eroded democracy and human rights and led to the current state of totalitarian Party rule. They wrote that February 1948 marked the defeat of democratic and humanitarian ideals and a victory for the principle of totalitarianism, which continued to shut out more and

¹⁹⁰ Milan Šimečka, “Naš soudruh, Winston Smith,” afterword to: George Orwell, *1984* (Prague: Typescript *samizdat*, 1981–83), 301, Libri Prohibiti Archive.

more groups from the democratic process until the entire society was without rights.¹⁹¹

This in itself would not have been overly significant were it not for the event they chose as the first step in this process. They wrote: “After the year 1945 in Czechoslovakia, first millions of citizens of German nationality were placed outside the rule of law, and the principle of revenge triumphed over the principles of justice and law.”¹⁹² This was the first Czech public statement that the expulsion might, as a whole, have been unjust and even illegal. Even more significant is the conscious placement of the disenfranchisement and expulsion of Czechoslovakia’s ethnic Germans as the first step toward the loss of freedom and violation of human rights in socialist Czechoslovakia.

This declaration rippled through the émigré community abroad as well as dissident circles in Czechoslovakia, but it was a publication in an émigré journal later that year by a young Slovak historian named Ján Mlynárik that unleashed several years of impassioned debate about the recent history of Czechs and their former German fellow citizens.¹⁹³ Writing under the pseudonym Danubius, Mlynárik wrote his seventeen-page “Thesis on the Deportation of the Czechoslovakian Germans,” (hereafter, Thesis) which gave a scathing condemnation of the expulsions as an inherently immoral and unjust act that had

¹⁹¹ Bericht über das Opus Bonum Symposium in Franken-Fichtelgebirge, February 23–26, AG 1441.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ The full Czech texts of *Svědectví* as well as most other major émigré and *samizdat* journals can be found online at <http://www.scriptum.cz>.

critically weakened Czechoslovakia and paved the way for the Communists' rise to power. A highly polemical text, it rejected the socialist narrative that the deportation of Czechoslovakia's German population was a necessary final step in defeating German fascism and securing postwar peace. Instead, Mlynárik confronted Czech readers with a new moral interpretation, saying, "The resettlement can rightly be compared with the practice of genocide, provided that it was not even an actual genocide."¹⁹⁴ This thesis set off a lively debate in samizdat and exile publications that placed the expulsion issue in the center of discussions about Czech identity and became the single most significant and famous discussion within Czech samizdat, the so-called Danubius Debate.

This chapter explores Czech discourses of identity negotiation from 1978 to 1989 to illustrate how the emphasis on morality and human rights in underground and émigré circles engendered a reevaluation of the expulsion narrative. These discussions took place in the wider context of disillusionment with hopes for reforming Czechoslovakian Socialism from the inside, as these Czechs began a process of redefining Czech identity in samizdat and émigré journals to reflect the current values of human rights. A primary feature in these discourses was redefining Czech identity away from Soviet-inspired Socialism and attaching it instead to a historical multiethnic Central Europe that belonged to the moral value system of the Western European tradition. It was from these early discussions in

¹⁹⁴ Danubius, "Tézy o vysídlení československých Němců," *Svědectví* 57 (1978): 105.

the 1970s that the roots of the “Return to Europe” motto emerged that characterized public Czech sentiment during and immediately after the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

The reevaluation of the expulsion narrative was a moral necessity that stemmed from the widespread belief in the sanctity of human rights and support for reintegration with Western Europe in the Czech underground and émigré circles. Brought together in common dialogue via the international circulation of samizdat and émigré journals, Czechs in geographically distant locations debated the moral narrative of the expulsion and Czechs’ historical relations with Germans, and these underground circles also included academic “home seminars” that expanded in number and size from the late 1970s through 1989. Taking these writings and discussions in underground seminars together we see a transnational process of identity formation, as Czechs worked to redefine their identity free from the value system and narratives of Soviet-backed socialism through a transnational network of discussion. From these discussions emerged a strong tendency in the underground to view the expulsions as a moral failure, and these tendencies later guided the former dissidents to push for reconciliation with Germans after 1989.

The Czech Underground Community as a Site of Identity Negotiation

With the growth of a Czech underground community in the 1970s and 1980s came a concurrent process of identity negotiation within that community, and this negotiation was in direct response to a post-1968 Czechoslovakia that seemed

devoid of any meaningful national identity. The state of the Party and official society during this era devolved into ritualistic disciplinary mechanisms absent of belief in, or dedication to, the principles of socialist revolution that instead trained members to regurgitate bureaucratic rhetoric. Useful here is Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation, wherein symbols and signs (simulacra) of society claim to represent something real—in this case, the values of socialist revolution—but which in fact does not exist. The simulation of revolutionary socialist values in public life comprised a “hyperreality” in which the Party enforced strict adherence to the rhetoric, symbols and rituals of socialist revolution when, in fact, the vast majority of society and even many Party members themselves had ceased to believe that there was truth to the cause behind it.¹⁹⁵ What was left was an empty shell of socialism devoid of the all-encompassing truth that it laid claim to, a state which Havel described as a “post-totalitarian system [where] the last traces of such an atmosphere [of revolutionary excitement, heroism and dedication] have vanished.”¹⁹⁶

The bureaucratic banality of Socialism that permeated everyday life in post-1968 Czechoslovakia left a void of meaning and community bonds in society and placed a large portion of expelled Party members, academics, and others persecuted by the regime into conflict with the Party and its rhetoric, rituals, and

¹⁹⁵ Baudrillard, “Simulation and Simulacra,” 169–174.

¹⁹⁶ Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” 26–27.

symbols. However, sociologists have noted that social conflict can serve a positive function, as social tension can provide a creative force that establishes new bonds and effects social change to diffuse that conflict and return society to equilibrium.¹⁹⁷ In this case, there was a forging of new community and social bonds within the Czech underground that centered on the pursuit of morality above politics, and Czechs began a quest to reflect morality in their conceptions of Czech identity and history in the pages of samizdat and in underground seminar discussions.¹⁹⁸

In this light, the Charter 77 (hereafter, Charter) petition is best viewed as the result of just such an organic drive to forge a new community based on an alternative value system to the banal socialism of post-1968 Czechoslovakia. Its authors explicitly stated that Charter 77 was not an organization, having no fixed membership and rejecting a role as the basis for unified oppositional political activity. Rather, it served as a set of universal values to which individuals could lay claim to and identify with: “[Charter 77] is a loose, informal and open association of people of various shades of opinion, faiths and professions united by the will to

¹⁹⁷ Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956), 140–141 and 151.

¹⁹⁸ The emphasis on morality above politics was elaborated in Havel’s 1984 essay “Politics and Consciousness” where he argued that politics should be morality in practice, and the pursuit of morality became the central concern of the majority of dissidents and comprised the new social bond linking those in the underground; Václav Havel, “Politics and Conscience,” in *Living in Truth*, ed. Jan Vladislav (London: Faber Press, 1987), 136–157; Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: From the Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 59–92.

strive, individually and collectively, for the respecting of civil and human rights in our own country and throughout the world [...] It embraces everyone who agrees with its ideas, participates in its work, and supports it.”¹⁹⁹ By claiming an open association based on shared belief of its expressed moral ideals, the Charter offered a moral foundation for the creation of a common identification among those who shared those values. The Charter, though in actuality it consisted of a small, loose conglomerate of its spokesmen and writers, served as a larger call to the formation of community outside party lines based on respect for human rights that served to spiritually bring together many in the underground.

The rise of a new underground community and the moral reappraisal of the expulsion it engendered reflected a social phenomenon that Émile Durkheim called collective effervescence, where communities or societies come together spontaneously and communicate the same thought and participate in the same action. As Durkheim describes it, collective effervescence lays at the foundation of ordering societies through collective thought and the negotiation of identity, and in post-1968 Czechoslovakia the formation of an alternative identity in the underground resulted in an organically inspired re-narration of expulsion history to reflect the values of that identity.²⁰⁰ In the case of Czechoslovakia’s underground activity, “society” does not refer to all citizens within Czechoslovakia’s national

¹⁹⁹ Text from the original Charter 77 petition, cited from: Skilling, *Charter 77*, 211–212.

²⁰⁰ N.J. Allen, “Effervescence and the Origins of Human Society,” in *On Durkheim’s Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, ed. N.J. Allen, W.S.F Pickering, and W. Watts Miller (New York: Routledge, 1998), 149.

borders. Rather, it refers to a specific sub-society that existed within a loose conglomeration of underground seminars and discussion groups and whose voices reached beyond those spaces through the circulation of samizdat. This “society” was a subnational network of identification in this sense, but it was also transnational through the participation of Czechs living abroad as well as actors from the international academic community who participated as seminar and *samizdat* organizers, financiers, and guest lecturers.²⁰¹

Maurice Halbwachs argued that a group’s narrative of the past is a direct reflection of its current value system, and it is in the context that we can best understand the spontaneous drive to reinterpret the previous narrative of the expulsion from a victory to a moral tragedy.²⁰² By observing this process of negotiation we find common patterns of thought that reflected the values of the underground, including shared heritage with Germans and Western Europeans, democratic values, European integration, and the sanctity of human rights. All of these factors were at play in the drive to rewrite the expulsion narrative, and these values persisted and evolved within the spreading underground community and seminars. The subnational nature of this underground society within Czechoslovakia and the formation narratives of Czech history outside the Czech

²⁰¹ “Network” in this sense refers to a self-contained group of individuals who linked by a web of intellectual and emotional bonds of identification established through direct communication, in this case either through written word (*samizdat*) or discussion in underground seminars; Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, ed. by John Keane and Paul Mier (London: Century Hutchinson Ltd, 1989), 21–22 and 34–36.

²⁰² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38.

mainstream became obvious after 1989, when Havel, Pithart, and other former dissidents encountered strong backlash from the wider public, when they began pressing the latter to adopt the new interpretation of the expulsion.

The Franken Declaration

The Franken Declaration's moral condemnation of the expulsion represented a manifestation of a deeply held belief of its participants in the sanctity of universal human rights, which, by the nature of universal values, also had to be applied to the narratives of the expulsion. It is compelling that this statement against the expulsion, which proved to be a watershed moment in German-Czech social relations and expulsion memory, was not at all controversial among conference participants.²⁰³ The expulsion issue itself was not part of the official conference program nor was it discussed in plenum sessions, yet it found its way into the narrative of the communist victory based on its perceived immorality. Prečan recalls that the focus of the summit and the core of the declaration centered on the idea of human rights:

The idea of the human rights that were violated then [during Party's consolidation of power], and the problem of violated human rights as the basis for each political program was the most important issue. We worked under the assumption that the Communist regime acted on the belief that human rights would not be recognized. And we asked ourselves, "which human rights?" Collective guilt. No one distinguished between who was

²⁰³ Prečan recalled that one of the conference presenters brought up the expulsion during an evening gathering of presenters as they discussed ideas for a declaration to outline the major steps toward the rise of communism. It was briefly discussed and accepted by the group with no disagreement; Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

guilty and not. They were all expelled. The Communist regime expelled people from society as enemies. First, it was the Germans, then the bourgeoisie, then Kulaks, and finally it was a portion of the Communists themselves. That was the core of the statement. And we came to the conclusion that the realization of this process began when the Germans as a whole were expelled from Czech society.²⁰⁴

The 1978 conference in Franken was a cathartic coming-together both for Sudeten Germans and Czechs and for Czech émigrés previously fragmented between non-confessional anti-Communists, reform Communists, and Catholics. Ardent anti-communist émigrés like Paris-based publicist Pavel Tigrid sat down together with reform communists like former 1968 party secretary Zdeněk Mlynář, all under the invitation of the Catholic émigré organization Opus Bonum for an event sponsored by the AG.²⁰⁵ Émigré writer Ota Filip captured this momentous coming-together of the three major groups of Czech exile that mirrored the similar process of unity in the Czech underground back home:

It was too beautiful to be true, but indeed it happened: Before the altar of a church in Upper Franconia, where the exiled abbot of the oldest Prague convent in Břevnov, Dr. Opasek, celebrated mass in his holy vestment, the prominent losers of the 1948 coup knelt down side-by-side with the previous victors. Dr. Opasek gave both groups a blessing, and the historic Czech compromise was concluded exactly 30 years after the communist coup in Prague on 25. February 1948. The once unconciliatory political opponents showed an almost touching willingness for dialogue after 30 years of enmity.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

²⁰⁵ Programm und Verzeichnis der Referenten und deren Themen, Franken Summit 1978, AG 1441.

²⁰⁶ Tätigkeitsbericht Opus Bonum 1978, AG 1441.

The communal blessing that Opasek administered to all the participants on the morning of the first plenum day was significant for two reasons: firstly, it united and blessed the conservatives and socialists as equals, demonstrating critical solidarity in exile that bridged political divides and united former opponents with acrimonious recent pasts; secondly, it showed the solidarity of Czechs in exile with the Czech Catholic Church, which was a particularly symbolic act for atheist reform socialists like Mlynář, who took part despite his wife's resentment at his participation engaging in a religious ceremony.²⁰⁷ In this context of solidarity and joining-together, Czech participants were more than happy to extend an open hand to their former countrymen, Sudeten Germans, and take a step toward reconciliation by condemning the expulsion. "That was the atmosphere," recalls Prečan. "We were all there as expellees. We all felt expelled, and all of us were the losers."²⁰⁸

The symbolism of this event found echo in international press. The Parisian *Le Monde* reported that Opasek had achieved something "extraordinary" by bringing together over 80 victors and victims of the 1948 coup and that those participants had broken a "taboo" by including the expulsion in their declaration.²⁰⁹ The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* also reported on the significance of those

²⁰⁷ Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

²⁰⁸ Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

²⁰⁹ *Le Monde*, March 1, 1978.

Czechs who were driven out of Czechoslovakia by the dictatorship of the communist party in both 1948 and after 1968 jointly placing the expulsion of Sudeten Germans in that same series of injustices, with additional articles published in *Die Welt*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Rheinische Merkur*, and more.²¹⁰ Reports of the meeting as well as the declaration were also published in émigré journals like Pavel Tigrid's *Svědectví* where it circulated within Czechoslovakia's samizdat circles.²¹¹

Origins of the Czech Expulsion Debate

Mlynárik's "Thesis on the Deportation of the Czechoslovakian Germans" and the ensuing debate in samizdat and émigré journals highlighted the necessity of revising the expulsion narrative in the process of negotiating new identities in Central Europe perhaps more so than any other event in post-1968 Cold War Czech history. The debate itself consisted primarily of Czech contributors discussing in terms of Czech history and Czech identity, yet it was all brought about by a Slovak living in Bohemia.²¹² Mlynárik was the son of a Slovak carpenter born in Filákovo, Czechoslovakia in 1933, graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in 1957, and taught history at Bratislava's Academy of Performing Arts.

²¹⁰ Bericht über das Opus Bonum Symposium in Franken-Fichtelgebirge, February 23–26, AG 1441.

²¹¹ "Vítězové a poražení sněmovali," *Svědectví* 56 (1978): 544–545.

²¹² The discussions that follow nearly universally referred to "Czechs" specifically, not "Czechoslovakians" or "Slovaks." This stems from the fact that the vast majority of expelled Germans resided in Bohemia and Moravia, and also because, with the great exception of Mlynárik, contributors to the expulsion discussions were nearly uniformly Czechs or Sudeten Germans.

In the 1960s he belonged to the non-conformist generation of younger historians for which President Antonín Novotný issued him a rebuke for “political deviation.” He was expelled from the Party in 1970 and removed from his position in Bratislava after condemning the Soviet occupation, after which he relocated to Prague and worked as a stagehand and furnace stoker.

It was around this time that Mlynárik began thinking about the expulsion. He purchased a small house in Bedřichov in Northern Bohemia near the German and Polish borders, and it was the encounters with the ruined houses, lost fruit trees where gardens once stood, and the array of broken coffee mugs, silverware, and other artifacts that littered the mountainsides which caused Mlynárik to ask himself, “What actually happened here?”²¹³ He began remembering the several months he spent in the Sudetenland during his mandatory military training as an undergraduate, when he was appalled at the destruction of former German settlements whose traces he could still see. He later wrote, “If the military authorities knew that instead of preparing troops what occurred was an intense study of the barbarism that was recently committed in this region, they would have chosen military installations somewhere in central Bohemia or Moravia as training centers.”²¹⁴ It was a similar story for his neighbor, friend, and underground colleague, Petr Pithart, though his exposure to the remnants of the lost German past

²¹³ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

²¹⁴ Milan Žitný, “Ján Mlynárik, alias Danubius, dopsal poslední list,” *Česká pozice: Informace pro svobodně lidi*, June 17, 2012, http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/jan-Mlynárik-alias-danubius-dopsal-posledni-list-fb1-/tema.aspx?c=A120330_230500_pozice_62186 (accessed January 31, 2017).

came from spending time in the woods of his wife's birthplace near Děčín, fifty miles west near the East German border. Pithart recalls of Mlynárik at the time, "I believe to this day, that had Mlynárik not bought that house there, he never would have engaged in this topic. He was a sensitive and sentimental person, a musical person, for whom those reflections simply changed everything."²¹⁵

As Mlynárik prepared his Thesis in 1977, Pithart was working on a revisionist book on Czech history with fellow historians Petr Příhoda and Milan Otáhal. The trio wanted to work independently so as not to be influenced by the opinions of other historians, with one exception: Pithart asked Mlynárik if he could offer his expertise on German-Slovak relations, the focus of Mlynárik's earlier work. Mlynárik's reply to Pithart was, "I would love to help you with your work, but I have just discovered an enormous topic. I hope you are not disappointed, but I need to dedicate all my efforts toward this."²¹⁶

Mlynárik finished his Thesis in December 1977 and sent it off through underground channels for publication abroad in 1978. He was living in Prague at the time, but in order to mask his identity he wrote in his native Slovak, referred to himself as a Slovak historian, and signed the location as Bratislava.²¹⁷ Prečan received Mlynárik's text in late spring of 1978, shortly after the Franken

²¹⁵ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

²¹⁶ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

²¹⁷ Danubius, "Tézy," 105.

Conference.²¹⁸ Prečan knew he had an important but controversial essay, and he first sent it to his trusted friend and fellow émigré historian Johann Wolfgang Brügel for his opinion.²¹⁹ Prečan then forwarded it to Tigrid in Paris for publication with Brügel's commentary.²²⁰

He chose *Svědectví* as the most widely-circulated and well known exile journal to reach the widest audience possible, and he also knew that Tigrid was one of the few, if only, émigré journal editors who would publish such a controversial and polemical text. Tigrid indeed encountered fierce opposition from the other editorial board members of *Svědectví*, all of whom walked out in protest after Tigrid insisted on publishing Mlynárik's text over their objections. On hearing about this dissention Pithart was not surprised: "I do not believe that another periodical in exile would have published it. It was his [Tigrid's] personal decision."²²¹ The board members were all politicians, philosophers, and historians who fled the Communist repression after February 1948, but even for them Mlynárik's Thesis was too much. Some of them, like Radomír Lůža, went on to be vocal opponents of revisionists like Mlynárik in the ensuing debates.

²¹⁸ Opus Bonum claimed in its yearly report pamphlets that the Franken Declaration inspired Mlynárik to write his thesis, however Mlynárik's compilation of texts *Causa Danubius* published in 2000 dated his Thesis as signed "December 1977." See: Bericht über das Opus Bonum Symposium in Franken-Fichtelgebirge, February 23–26, AG 1441; and: Tätigkeitsbericht Opus Bonum 1978, AG 1441. This claim was repeated in subsequent *Tätigkeitsberichten* for the next several years. Jan Mlynárik, *Causa Danubius* (Prague: Danubius, 2000).

²¹⁹ Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

²²⁰ Johann Wolfgang Brügel, "Úvodem k tomu, co následuje...", *Svědectví* 57 (1978): 103–104.

²²¹ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

The Thesis itself was confrontational and blunt, provoking readers with references to genocide and comparisons to the Nazi regime, calling the expulsion “a method of Hitler’s nation” and “the final solution of the German question in Czechoslovakia.”²²² Mlynárik asserted throughout the text that the expulsion was a gross violation of basic human rights, and he also expounded arguments for the various ways the transfer of Sudeten Germans had damaged Czechs and Slovaks economically, culturally, and spiritually, and precipitated the abandoning of democracy and human rights to the communists. He ended his thesis by saying, “The expulsion of the Czechoslovak Germans is not only a German tragedy, but our own tragedy as well,” and he couched his arguments in terms of morality and equated, “If we recognize the principle of human rights and their defense as the highest of human concerns, we must consequentially distance ourselves from this past.”²²³

Reception of the Danubius Thesis

Mlynárik’s Thesis set off years of discussion that captured the interest of many Czech historians and lay readers, but it was made all the more important by the participation of many of Czech society’s dissident intellectuals, the latter of whom were generally more concerned with passing judgment on the morality and

²²² Danubius, “Tézy,” 110 and 112–113.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 120–122.

wisdom of the expulsion than arguing over historical nuances.²²⁴ The debates centered largely on Mlynárik's essay as well as a later text published under the pseudonym "Bohemus." Some of the initial reactions to Mlynárik were negative, particularly those of former Communists and Marxist historians like Luža, Václav Kural, and Milan Hübl, all of whom argued against morally reappraising the expulsion based on its supposed necessity in historical context. Luža and three other members of *Svědectví's* editorial board published a declaration in the following issue of *Svědectví* making clear that they disagreed with the Thesis, saying, "we regard the deportation of the German minority out of Czechoslovakia as the definitive solution to a very painful and tragic question in the interests of security and territorial integrity and [...] European order and peace."²²⁵ Luža and Hübl attacked those who would rewrite the expulsion history as a moral abomination, with Luža saying, "it goes beyond my understanding why some of our intellectuals must publically beat and whip themselves," and Hübl arguing, "we cannot, however, act like medieval flagellants, placing on ourselves a larger share of guilt than that corresponding to reality [...] The historian is not a flagellant, but a scholar."²²⁶

²²⁴ Abrams, "Morality and Wisdom," 235.

²²⁵ Jiří Horák, Josef Jonaš, Radomír Lůža, and Mojmir Povolný, "Tribuna Svědectví," *Svědectví* 58 (1979): 383.

²²⁶ Radomír Lůža, "Dopis Radomíra Lůži Ladislavu Hejdánkovi," in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 165 and 162; Hübl, "Glosy," 124–125.

Despite these criticisms, Mlynárik's Thesis struck a moral chord within many Czech readers who spoke out in his support. Writing from London, Alexander Tomský argued that seeing the historical context did not prevent one from condemning the expulsion on moral grounds, using the example that understanding the historical context of the rise of the Communist party in Czechoslovakia should not preclude one from condemning the fates that befell the Czech and Slovak peoples because of it.²²⁷ Similarly, émigré author Erazim Kohák argued, "historical necessity can explain something, but not justify."²²⁸ Mlynář, a principle formulator behind the Franken Declaration, highlighted the moral nature of revision, writing, "The use of force against an entire group of people [...] was contrary to the principles of justice and law and resulted from policies of revenge and collective guilt."²²⁹ He looked to the current West German discussion of the Holocaust that emerged from the recent broadcasting of the American television miniseries of the same name as a model for Czechs to follow, saying, "Nothing else but an open and

²²⁷ Alexandr Tomsky, "Tribuna Svědectví," *Svědectví* 58 (1979): 204.

²²⁸ Erazim Kohák, "Tribuna Svědectví," *Svědectví* 59 (1979): 591.

²²⁹ Zdeněk Mlynář, "Tribuna Svědectví," *Svědectví* 58 (1979): 396.

unrestricted discussion about the past and a moral assessment of this past can lead to the way forward.”²³⁰

The Bohemus Document

A shift in the debate came in 1980 with a lengthy publication in the émigré Social Democrat periodical *Právo lidu*, titled “Opinion on the Transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia” and published under the pseudonym Bohemus, Latin for Čech, the mythical ancestral founder of the Czech people.²³¹ This text had the dual effect of tempering Mlynárik’s Thesis with deeper, more nuanced historical analysis to garner more support for the revisionist position, and it also expanded the forum of debate from *Svědectví* to the larger Social Democrat community in exile. Whereas Mlynárik focused on the expulsion itself and its aftermath, Bohemus reinforced their text with a lengthy introductory section tracing historical German-Czech relations since the 13th century that emphasized the very recent nature of

²³⁰ Ibid. Interestingly, the board of the West German public broadcasting station ARD only narrowly approved the broadcasting of the *Holocaust* series in a 5–4 vote. ARD broadcast the miniseries on all five of its regional channels in January 1979 and received the highest viewership of a single broadcast in West Germany up to that point, with an estimated 41–48% of households, comprising over 20 million West German adults, tuning in. ARD received over 450,000 requests for additional teaching materials to supplement the miniseries from teachers, professors, and private individuals in the weeks that followed; see: Jürgen Wilke, “Die Fernsehserie ‘Holocaust’ als Medienereignis,” *Historische Sozialforschung* 30 (2005):9–17, here: 12, 14–15. For more on the wider reception and the immediate public discussions that followed, see: Ernst Tilmann, “‘Holocaust’ in der Bundesrepublik: Impulse, Reaktionen und Konsequenzen aus der Sicht politischer Bildung,” *Rundfunk und Fernsehen* 28 (1980): 509–533.

²³¹ Bohemus (Petr Pithart, Milan Otáhal, Toman Brod, Jiří Doležal, Miloš Pojar, and Petr Příhoda), “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 1 (1980): 3–4, ČSDS; full text can be found in: Bohemus, “Stanoviskvo k odsunu Němců z Československa,” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 179–202. A German translation of this text appeared in *Die Brücke* on March 15, 1980.

nationality problems that emerged in the interwar period, though they were clear in pointing out that understanding the historical context did not preclude the necessity of passing moral judgment on those events.²³²

The Bohemus text highlighted democratic and human rights values in their essay on the implications of the expulsion for Czech national identity, heritage, and culture. They attributed blame to Beneš and Czechs as a whole for failing to find a democratic solution to the German minority problem after World War I, and they described a “psychosis” that befell Czechs after Munich during the Nazi occupation, where nationalist chauvinism, anti-German fervor, and beliefs in the collective guilt of all ethnic Germans, overpowered the already weak foundations of democracy in Czechoslovakia and led to the expulsion of nearly all ethnic Germans. Bohemus took up and expanded Mlynárik’s arguments by outlining the long-term legal, ethical, political, economic, demographic, and cultural consequences for Czechoslovakia that both enabled and encouraged the removal of civil and legal rights of all Czech society under the socialists.²³³

The authors of the Bohemus document were supporters of Mlynárik,²³⁴ but they sought to “soften the sharp edges” and nuance his arguments to make revision of the expulsion narrative more palatable for a wider audience:

²³² Bohemus, “Stanovisko,” 180–181.

²³³ Bohemus, “Stanovisko,” 197–202.

²³⁴ According to Pithart, Mlynárik’s blunt and polemical personality was well known in the Prague underground, and upon the publication of his Thesis everyone immediately recognized who “Danubius” was. Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

We [the supporters of Mlynárik] were initially attacked even by dissidents. We were a very small group at the time. Public opinion was completely ignorant or against us, and the majority within dissent opposed us and our positions. I felt very oppressed [...] We agreed with 95% of Mlynárik's position, but we wanted to make it acceptable for a broader public. And the remaining 5% was slightly reformulated. That is what was important for the former Marxist historians [...] like Křen, Luža, Václav Kural and Hübl.²³⁵

Bohemus succeeded in instigating more critical reflection and discussion of the specific themes of the expulsion than the initial debates of the Danubius thesis, which many had found too polemic and ahistorical for their liking. Marxist historian-turned dissident Jan Křen responded to Bohemus with "Critical Notes," but praised it as a "discussion of scientific excellence" deserving the "greatest attention," whereas he declined to engage the Danubius thesis directly, which he felt was of "questionable quality and motivation."²³⁶

Bohemus brought the debate to a wider readership by being published in *Právo lidu* and inspired an onslaught of letters to the editorial board from readers across Europe and North America. The editor published 43 of these letters in a

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Jan Křen, "Češi a Němci: kritické poznámky," in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 203. Václav Kural, despite maintaining a cautious stance toward revision, nevertheless also engaged Bohemus' arguments, specifically the idea of a social "psychosis": "Was it, however, in the conditions of the given historical situation, really possible to make such a turnaround [and reconsider the decision for expulsion at the war's end]? Are we not asking a bit much of our predecessors from our writing desks? Was not and is not such a call above Czech power, above the power of Czech (or Polish, or Yugoslav, and so forth) politics, which had to contend here not only with the mood of some kind of "mob" (as Bohemus understands the problem), but with the basic societal and international situations, which would have been difficult to change, even if it had wanted to change them?" Václav Kural, "Češi a Němci v československém a německém státě (1918–1945): Pokus o nástin 'logiky' vývoje," in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 261.

special edition of *Právo lidu* which included contributions from four representatives of the Sudeten German Social Democrat group the Seliger Gemeinde, five representatives of the German Social Democrat Party, eight Charter 77 signatories and eighteen members of the Czech Social Democratic party in exile.²³⁷ Pithart recalls the significance of spreading the debate to a wider Czech audience: “He [Jiří Loewy, editor of *Právo lidu*] greatly expanded the previous debate. He reached many more people in exile and at home and brought them in, so that it was representative and one could see what the people actually thought. The answers were sometimes short, sometimes long, but they nevertheless presented the opinions of a much larger base of people to a much wider audience.”²³⁸

The Danubius Debate as a Window to Discourses of Czech Identity

The Danubius and Bohemus texts as well as the letters of support for revision in *Svědectví* and *Právo lidu* illustrated that the impetus for the revisionist position stemmed from a need to rewrite the expulsion narrative to reflect the sanctity of universal human rights. This was an assertion of an attempt to narrate a new Czech national identity which defined itself in opposition to the disregard for human rights by the Party. The revisionists did not write in order to “correct” history for history’s sake; rather, the case for revision rested in the moral conviction that the previous narrative of the expulsion as a victory over fascism did

²³⁷ *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 9–12.

²³⁸ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

not reflect their current values and thus did not serve as a usable historical narrative to help define Czech identity in the present.

Moral beliefs constitute absolute truths in the moments they are invoked, and the revisionists' belief in the sanctity of human rights prompted a need to revise expulsion history to reflect that belief and reinforce the values that defined their identity as Czechs.²³⁹ Mlynárik asserted this when he wrote that recognition of the principle of human rights necessitated revising the expulsion narrative, and others echoed this point with statements like, "[The debate over revision of the expulsion] is by no means the result of the professional interests of one historian, but rather the result of a political-moral need of Czechoslovakian society to research through an analysis of the past the actual causes of those breakdowns of specific values that the 'normalized reality' of the past decade signifies."²⁴⁰ Another writer who countered Luža's oppositional argument that "every beginning student of history knows that you cannot remove history from its historical context" also

²³⁹ For more on moral universals and historical interpretation, see: Jeffrey Alexander, "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002): 10–11. Alexander argues that a traumatic history is a morally neutral set of statistics and reports with no narrative. It is by processes of social interaction that groups label an act as evil, good, or as some level in between. Before an event can be remembered it first passes through a grid of cultural interpretation in which it is evaluated as good or bad, coded, weighted, and ultimately emerges as a narrative with a stamp of moral judgment. This passing of moral judgment tells us just as much about the society or group passing the judgment as it does about the event itself. The resulting representation of a historical event is at the same time a statement of the state of beliefs and values in the contemporary society, and as a society's values change so do its interpretations of past events.

²⁴⁰ Danubius, "Tézy," 89. Erazim Kohák, "Dopis anonymnímu příteli," Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 323–324; Mlynář, "Tribuna Svědectví," 396; Bohemus also made a similar argument for revision on moral grounds; Bohemus, "Stanovisko," 180–181.

invoked the absolute truth of moral judgment, arguing that, “every beginner in moral philosophy studies learns to differentiate between the absolute element of moral judgment of a given human act and the facilitating circumstances that bring about that act but in no way justify it.”²⁴¹

The search for a moral narrative to ground a new contemporary identity lay at the heart of the debate, and deeper analysis of the discussions uncovers three primary ways in which revisionists projected current moral values of democracy, human rights, and a desire for European integration in their calls for re-narrating the past to define Czechs outside of the Socialist narrative. Firstly, there was a common trend of drawing separation between the mentality of 1945 Czechs and Slovaks and the revisionists, often invoking Bohemus’ concept of a “psychosis” in Czech society. The arguments here asserted that an acceptance of the collective guilt of Sudeten Germans, the denial of their rights and citizenship, and their forced deportation were all aberrant events that strayed away from Czech democratic and humanistic values. In order to have a national history that reflected the “true” Czech nature, Czechs would have to revise the ways in which they dealt with these issues

²⁴¹ Tomský, “Tribuna Svědectví,” 204. A number of other authors also joined the debate in support of passing moral judgement against the expulsion, see: Ivan Pfaff and Jiří Loewy, “Tribuna Svědectví,” *Svědectví* 60 (1980): 793; Miloš Hájek, *K dějinám česko-němckých vztahů* (Prague: Samizdat, 1980), cited from: Leopold Grünwald, *Wir haben uns selbst aus Europa vertrieben: tschechische Selbstkritik an der Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen—eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Verlagshaus Sudetenland, 1985), 69–70. The expulsion debate also carried over to the international publication of Czech Social Democrats, *Právo lidu*, where a row of Czechs wrote in to express their support for the ongoing debate about historical revision and spoke of the need for a moral reassessment of the expulsion, see “Slovo k odsunu” sections in: *Právo lidu* 1 and 3 (1980).

in the historical narrative. Ivan Pfaff argued that the Munich Agreement and subsequent complete Nazi occupation, “grew into a severe psychic and moral complex extending over the entire society, which burdened our political development with fatal mistakes.”²⁴²

Other contributors rejected the collective guilt thesis on moral grounds to draw a clear distinction between the writers of the 1970s and Czechs of the wartime generation. “Collective guilt is a concept that a decent society should never use,” affirmed one contributor, while another wrote, “collective guilt is nonsense.”²⁴³ That author went on to argue that collective morality, conversely, is something required of all, and while the expulsion is a stain on Czech history, “the moral burden is even heavier, of which we cannot rid ourselves when we deny it or make a glorious victory out of it. It was in reality a terrible defeat.”²⁴⁴

The second major theme of the discussions concentrated on the expulsion as a failure of democratic values which cast a long shadow over Czech politics for the coming decades. Bohemus placed twofold blame on “Czech anti-German sentiment and the weakness of democratic traditions [as] the necessary preconditions,” arguing, “our democracy did not show itself able, or even willing at all, to solve the German problem in a different manner from the way that would be the most

²⁴² Ivan Pfaff, untitled contribution in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 351.

²⁴³ Ivan Medek, “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 10; Jaroslav Strnad, “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 11; for similar statements on collective guilt see: Ivan Pfaff, “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 11.

²⁴⁴ Strnad, “Slovo k odsunu,” 11.

comfortable from the viewpoint of shortsighted political interests and that would most quickly meet the mood of the mob [...] Czech society had not previously had enough positive experiences, knowledge or concrete experiences with democracy.”²⁴⁵ It was on this point that several Sudeten Germans commented that a democratic method of determining guilt and innocence would have rendered the expulsion unnecessary and involved Sudeten Germans in a rebuilding process that could have preserved a multinational Czechoslovakia.²⁴⁶

Some took the idea of Czechs’ democratic failure and placed it in a larger context of continental Europe that was unable to efficiently solve the many political, social, economic, cultural, and nationality problems that plagued prewar Europe and ultimately led to the rise of fascism and fervent nationalisms.²⁴⁷ But for others, the root cause of the expulsion was not a European failure but a Czech one that required Czechs to come to terms with their own national guilt: “These and other factors are only partial aspects. The decisive factor was our own attitude, or rather, our own failure. I admit this is a melancholy judgment, but it is the only possible way to catharsis.”²⁴⁸ The centrality of criticizing a failure of democratic practices in 1945 during the expulsion debates illustrated how firm the belief in democratic values was for the revisionists, which is not surprising considering many of them

²⁴⁵ Bohemus, “Stanovisko,” 195.

²⁴⁶ Rudolf Hilf, “Dopis redakci Svědectví,” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 338–340; Brügel, “Úvodem,” 104.

²⁴⁷ Jaroslav Opat, “K Bohemovu ‘Slovu o odsunu,’” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 284.

²⁴⁸ Milan Nauner, “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 10.

were the leaders of the push to democratize socialism in the 1960s and all of them were suffering the effects of the single-party system.

The third major theme of the discussions illustrated that values of multiculturalism and post-nationalism were central to the new discourses that sought to redefine Czech identity from the Communist narrative. Many writers saw in the removal of Czechoslovakia's German population the loss of a multiethnic Czechoslovakia where ethnic Germans and Czechs both claimed shared culture and heritage, and they regretted the turn eastward that followed it. Mlynárik mourned the loss of Czechoslovakia's position as a bridge between East and West, lamenting that "there remains for Czechs and Slovaks today only the one, the Eastern alternative of cohabitation, from now on with a totalitarian, undemocratic power that has presented a bill to pay for supporting the expulsion and will also present [this bill] in the future."²⁴⁹ Writing from his exile in the United States, poet Rio Preisner echoed the "cruel irony" that, "with the evacuation of the Germans the Czechs evacuated themselves from the West and were deported from their own historical borders."²⁵⁰ Nearly all the revisionists and even some of the skeptics like Křen and Hübl shared the viewpoint that the expulsion was a preview to the

²⁴⁹ Danubius, "Tézy," 80–82.

²⁵⁰ Rio Preisner, "Tribuna Svědectví," *Svědectví* 59 (1979): 571.

spiraling persecution by the Communist Party during their ascension to total power.²⁵¹

Many authors searched the decades before 1945 for the roots of the failed multicultural and multiethnic spirit of the Czech lands. Bohemus looked at the nationalism of the 19th century and asked, “Is the path that we chose since the National Revival truly the proper way?”²⁵² Erazim Kohák argued that if the first Czechoslovak Republic had supported a historical-geographical concept of citizenship without regard for ethnic nationality during the state’s founding in 1918 then Sudeten Germans could have joined a nation of “Bohemians” that could have resisted the nationalist allure of Nazism.²⁵³ Other authors invoked multiethnic cohabitation and a multicultural “Bohemia” in similar ways that devalued nationalism and expressed support for a Czech identity that was tied to German heritage and a Central European past more broadly.²⁵⁴

For the revisionists, the way to proceed away from the Soviet Union and toward reintegration with Western Europe depended on reassessing the expulsion

²⁵¹ Bohemus used the official terminology of the “transfer” to describe the continued violations of democracy, human rights, and law that Czechs suffered under the Communists after 1948: “They were ‘transferred’ out of a share of political power and from all independent institutions of public life. Individuals—often millions of them—were ‘transferred’ from their economic positions and denied property and land. Many were ‘transferred’ to prison and forced-labor camps, finally even the Communists themselves.” Bohemus, “Stanovisko,” 202. For similar opinions, see: Danubius, “Tézy,” 83; Brügel, “Úvodem,” 103–104, and Johann Wolfgang Brügel, “Z diskuse v Právu lidu,” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 348–349; Hübl, “Glosy,” 114–116; Křen, “Doslov,” 362; Ladislav Hejránek, “Dopis příteli,” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 149–150.

²⁵² Bohemus, “Stanovisko,” 190.

²⁵³ Erazim Kohák, “Dopis anonymnímu příteli,” in Černý et al., *Češi, Němci, Odsun*, 327–29.

²⁵⁴ Brügel, “Úvodem,” 104; Preisner, “Tribuna,” 572–573.

narrative, as one author wrote, “A revision is necessary. If we lay the foundations of the future on the—forgive my pathos—many errors of the past, we will fare no better than the Czechs and Germans in 1945,” and, “If we have not found a better way to solve the problems of the coming years [...] it will be proof that we are reverting to a society that is not only primitive but barbaric.”²⁵⁵ The emphasis on the link between the expulsion and the rise of the Communist Party as well as the moral judgment of the expulsion were responses to the immediate situation of repression in Czechoslovakia and discussed in the context of a desire to look toward future change. The writers called for a revision of the expulsion narrative and a coming to terms with its immorality precisely because they saw a moral linkage with the oppression and total control of the Communist Party against which they currently struggled. Prečan summarized this sentiment best when he wrote:

A nation or a society that does not only wait passively for the next historical opportunity but helps to create it and prepares for such a chance feels an irremissible necessity to reflect on its own past [...] One cannot avoid these questions only because they are caustic and provoke polemics that are unpleasant for some people. [...] Perhaps all generations in all categories of politics and world views in exile and back home should reflect on a passage from [Bohemus'] “An Opinion on the Expulsion.” I quote the argument: “The distance of time that enables a deeper recognition of the functions of one’s own totalitarian state, its instruments of social manipulation and the personal experiences of millions of deceived and abused people calls forth the necessity to judge the Germans more justly and appropriately.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Ota Filip, “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 9; Medek, “Slovo k odsunu,” 10. Bohemus argued that “a true peace in a free Central Europe cannot prevail without sincere German-Czech reconciliation.” Bohemus, “Stanovisko,” 183.

²⁵⁶ Vilém Prečan, “Slovo k odsunu,” *Právo lidu* 3 (1980): 11.

Summarizing the Expulsion Debates

On the whole, the debates that the Danubius thesis inspired illustrated a widespread association among most Czech writers between the expulsion of Czechoslovakia's Sudeten Germans and the loss of civil rights associated with the rise of the Communist Party. All of the contributors to the debate had abandoned identifying Czech identity with the official Socialist narrative by this point, and the Danubius debates illustrated a reappraisal of past Czech history as a process of national self-reevaluation of what constituted Czech national identity. One Prague-born French observer recalled that the father of modern Czech historiography, František Palacký, saw in the antagonistic German-Czech coexistence in Bohemia the very "meaning" of Czech history, and he posited that what was taking place in the debates was a search for meaning of the Czech question now that the nation's main antagonist had been removed.²⁵⁷

The resulting debate showed that the "meaning" of Czech history, and hence, identity, was still very much tied to the era of German-Czech cohabitation, but it was undergoing a process of redefinition. German-Czech history and relations remained a central problem for the revisionists, yet Germans were no longer the perennial antagonists they were for Palacký. Rather, echoing the Franken Declaration, they viewed the decision to expel Czechoslovakia's Germans as the

²⁵⁷ Jacques Rupnik, "The Politics of History-Writing in Czechoslovakia," *History Workshop* 11 (1981): 168.

first step in a connected series of processes that disassociated Czechs with their true heritage as multicultural Central Europeans. Many of the contributors were signatories of Charter 77 and believed that those values lay at the core of what Czech identity was or should be, and revision of the expulsion narrative served as an example of the process of negotiating a new identity through historical revision. Arguing that the expulsion was a tragedy that helped disjoin Czechs from Europe, exemplified the desire to reorient Czech identity toward the West and connect it to the democratic values and human rights discourses of Western Europe. It was a manifestation of a multicultural Central European identity that included Germans in its heritage. Czech independent writing and underground seminars continued to pursue this discourse throughout the 1980s which is the subject of the following section. But the Danubius debates showed that the currents behind Central Europeanism were set in motion with the lost hopes for reform in 1968 and were gaining traction and consensus in the underground and in exile by the time Mlynárik published his Thesis in 1978.

Střední Evropa—Samizdat for Central Europe

Central European discourses were widely entrenched in the Czech underground in the 1980s and could be found in many forms of samizdat outside the pages of the expulsion debate as well, yet no samizdat journal embodied this more so than Rudolf Kučera's *Střední Evropa* (Central Europe). The founding of *Střední Evropa* was very closely tied to the Jan Hus Educational Foundation

discussed later in this chapter. With their help, Kučera began what to his knowledge was the only underground seminar in Prague specifically on political theory and international relations in 1982, referred to by Jan Hus Educational Foundation trustee Roger Scruton as “Kučera and his neo-conservatives.”²⁵⁸ Kučera first became interested in the intellectual idea of Central Europe in the 1960s when he traveled around Western Europe during his university studies and began thinking about the intellectual and spiritual connection of Czechs with Western Europe. After 1968, he understood Central European identity as a way to reject Communism and Czechoslovakia’s association with the Soviet Union, and Kučera felt this must be pursued through samizdat. The beginning of his seminar afforded an opportunity to discuss and debate ideas of Central Europe in an organized setting. But Kučera himself was aware that his seminar only reached a small number of people, usually 15–20 regular participants, and because it was monitored by the secret police (*Státní bezpečnost*, hereafter, StB), his participants were mostly restricted to known dissidents willing to meet under such circumstances. Kučera sought to expand beyond this limited circle, and the Jan Hus Educational Foundation provided the funding and support to do this via samizdat.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Trip Report, Roger Scruton, October 13–16, 1983, JHEF.

²⁵⁹ Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014.

Kučera and a handful of his colleagues discussed the idea of publishing a journal from their seminar as early as 1983.²⁶⁰ The main motivator for the journal was to assert through written word that Czechoslovakia was not part of the Soviet imperium in a spiritual sense, but belonged to a distinct “Central European” region with its own traditions, culture, and politics that were tied to Western Europe through a long history of development within the Holy Roman and Hapsburg Empires. Having obtained a stipend from the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, they published the first edition of *Střední Evropa* in 1984 that ran just north of one hundred pages and continued publishing into the 1990s.²⁶¹

Střední Evropa published articles on a variety of cultural and political issues relating to Central Europe. The first edition defined Central Europe as “a spiritual continuum with changing borderlines,” and a later edition clarified its editors’ view of Central Europeanism as an idea that demonstrated a desire for freedom and civic rights as well as cultural superiority over Soviet totalitarianism.²⁶² They promoted Central Europeanism as a way to join Czechs with “all those—be they in the west or the east—who seek to establish a new European unity [...] and new Europe in the spiritual and political sense.” Its editors promoted the education of Czechs’

²⁶⁰ Trip Report, Roger Scruton, April 3–9, 1983, JHEF.

²⁶¹ Jan Hus Educational Foundation financial reports indicate a steady allocation of money for Kučera for *Střední Evropa* from 1984 through 1989. Bernd Posselt also recalls that his office in the Paneuropean Union worked together with Milan Kubes of Opus Bonum to supply Kučera with additional books and printing materials. Interview, Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016.

²⁶² Jan Ulrich, “Úvod,” *Střední Evropa* 1 (1984): 2.

historical position in Central Europe as a guide for future political and cultural progress, saying, “It is simply necessary to proceed from dissidence to Europeanism.”²⁶³

Kučera recalls that the expulsion issue was “an important topic” in the underground, and he and other colleagues followed the expulsion debates in samizdat closely. In particular, he remembers that the expulsion debates as a watershed event for Havel personally, and foreshadowing Havel’s post-1989 campaign for open dialogue, he remembers Havel lamenting the fact that the expulsion was not discussed by the wider Czech society and agreed that something must be done to remedy this. Kučera had long been interested in the expulsion and the need for reconciliation, describing his connection to the theme as “spiritual” rather than political and tied closely to his views on Central Europe as a distinct cultural, political, and social region. Yet he also remembers the importance of the expulsion narrative for others in the underground who began viewing themselves not as citizens of a Socialist country but as Central Europeans: “What I found was that for most people [condemning the expulsion] was a natural consequence of thinking Central European. For other people it was a way to challenge the communist narrative.”²⁶⁴

²⁶³ “Úvodní poznámka,” *Střední Evropa* 3 (1985): 2.

²⁶⁴ Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014.

A central part of establishing Czechs' historical Europeanism involved resurrecting positive ties with Germans, and *Střední Evropa*'s contributions maintained a strong pro-Habsburg stance towards its construction of Czech and Central European heritage. Its editors promoted "critique of the first Masaryk-Beneš Republic as a nation-state as well as a negative opinion of the previous forms of Czech nationalism." They supported "reorienting relations toward Austria" as part of promoting a Central European manifestation of Judeo-Christian culture and saw in this the "deepest foundation of their activities."²⁶⁵ One contribution asserted that the period of Habsburg rule over the Czech lands was the cultural high-point in Czech history. Its author wrote:

It is necessary to present an outline [...] of the views of those [...] who not only disapproved of the expulsion of the Germans [...] but who also disapproved of Masaryk's program of de-Austrianization, his program of Hussitism [...] as well as [the views held by] those who regard the destruction of Austria as the primordial mistake and as harmful to the Czechs and to Europe and who perceive the principles on which the First Republic was built as the cause of the subsequent victory of communism in our country.²⁶⁶

The author lamented the expulsion of Sudeten Germans as a monumental failure of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia and argued that Sudeten Germans shared the author's pro-Habsburg view of Czech history, and he stated that the

²⁶⁵ Letter, Rudolík Kučera to Reiner Lustig-Leignitz, June 2, 1988, JHEF; see also: Letter, Urbinus (Rudolf Kučera) to the JHEF, (no date, marked "July 1985?" by Barbara Day during her preparations for *Velvet Philosopher*), JHEF.

²⁶⁶ Andreas, "České bloudění," *Střední Evropa* 8 (1987): 5.

purpose of his essay was to “show the relationship between the dismemberment of Austria and the defective foundations of the republic, on the one side, and the enthronement of communism in our country on the other.”²⁶⁷

Střední Evropa would become one of the most widely circulated samizdat journals inside Czechoslovakia, with twelve more lengthy editions following and a self-reported readership in the hundreds by the end of 1989 with strong support and sympathy from younger generations.²⁶⁸ Its popularity was strong in the Moravian city of Brno as well, although it was rather difficult to come by one of the limited copies that made its way from Prague. For this reason Jiří Müller began publishing a Brno version in 1988 which dedicated roughly half the space to reprinting major essays from the original Střední Evropa and filled the second half with contributions from Moravian authors. The idea stemmed from a young student in Brno, František Mikš, who approached Kučera in Prague with a group of friends in search of contacts to create a Brno samizdat journal. Kučera suggested printing a Moravian version of Střední Evropa and eventually put Mikš in touch with Müller to oversee the operation.²⁶⁹ The Brno branch of Střední Evropa published four complete editions (between 100–250 pages each) in the two years it was active before the Velvet Revolution rendered it obsolete, but it remains a testament to the widespread popularity of Central European discourses in Moravia.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

²⁶⁸ Urbinus (Rudolf Kučera), Letter to JHEF requesting financial support, July 1985, JHEF; Radio Free Europe Research Papers, Czechoslovak SR/16, November 3, 1987, 32.

²⁶⁹ Interview, František Mikš, June 20, 2013.

Central Europe and Czech Underground Seminars

In evaluating the history of the rise of Central European discourses and revision of the expulsion narrative it is paramount to include treatment of the other primary forum for discussion and debate on discourses of Czech identity besides samizdat, and that forum was the underground seminars that expanded in frequency and number from the late 1970s onward. These underground seminars were part of a transnational network of supporters and participants that connected Czech participants directly with western intellectuals who were frequent guests at many of these seminars.²⁷⁰ The development of Czechoslovakia's underground seminars underwent two pivotal changes in the late 1970s that led to a significant increase in frequency and impact in the 1980s. The first shift was the publication of the Charter 77 petition which served as a rallying cry for the creation of a civil society outside Party constraints. The Charter represented an assertion that the foundations on which this civil society should rest lay in post-Helsinki values of democracy, respect for human rights, and European integration, and this civil

²⁷⁰ In addition to the regular seminars many westerners like H. Gordon Skilling and author Philip Roth made regular visits to Prague in the 1970s before the proliferation of the seminars and forged lasting friendships with Czech dissidents like Havel, Ivan Klíma, Ludvík Vaculík, and Milan Kundera; see: Skilling, *Charter 77*, xiii–xiv; Remarks of Philip Roth on the occasion of receiving the Literary Service Award at the PEN Gala on April 30, 2013, published online as: Philip Roth, "In Prague," *The New Yorker Online*, May 3, 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/in-prague> (accessed February 12, 2016); Philip Roth, "The Romance of Oppression," in *A Besieged Culture: Czechoslovakia Ten Years after Helsinki*, ed. A. Heneka et al. (Stockholm: The Charter 77 Foundation, 1985), 52–53; Ivan Klíma, "Letter to Philip Roth," in *ibid.*, 54–58.

society found a gathering place in the proliferation of underground seminars that increased in the late 1970s and 1980s.²⁷¹

It was on the Helsinki themes of the right to knowledge, education, and freedom of thought that the second major shift impacted, which came with the expansion of underground organization and activities through the sponsorship and active involvement of an array of Western intellectuals through the creation of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation.²⁷² A Prague philosopher sent an open letter to the philosophy departments of four Western universities in 1978 with a plea for guest lecturers to bring badly needed expertise to the students of Prague's independent home philosophy seminars.²⁷³ Oxford was the only institution to respond, but they did so in grand fashion. The first visitor came that April to assess the situation and see what could be done, and she brought back alluring stories of clandestine meetings and travel, proud and defiant dissidents, and most importantly, eager

²⁷¹ Although the Charter was initially written by a handful of dissidents and initially signed by 242 individuals, it remained an open, ongoing call to inspire wider civic organization and encourage civic disobedience by asserting the individual rights outlined in the Helsinki Accords, and the final tally of signatories totaled around 1,900 by the Velvet Revolution. Signatory numbers taken from the website of the Libri Prohibiti Archive of independent Czech and Slovak writing, <http://www.libpro.cz/cs/archiv/charta77> (accessed March 15, 2016).

²⁷² For a full history on the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, see: Barbara Day, *The Velvet Philosophers* (London: Claridge Press, 1999).

²⁷³ Those four universities were Oxford, Harvard, the Free University of Berlin, and Heidelberg University. Writing in the name of the dissident philosophers from Prague, Julius Tomin described the plight of intellectuals and students craving outside knowledge and information, frustrated by academic and literary censorship and unable even to buy English or German newspapers and journals. Tomin invited visitors to speak on a range of humanities, social science, and natural science topics, saying "we wish to understand the world we live in [...] the society we live in [...] [and] the development of mankind [...] there is no discipline, no subject we can possibly exclude out of hand." Julius Tomin, Open Letter to Four Universities, May 20, 1978, JHEF.

students yearning for dialogue with the Western world. Within a year the faculty had created the charitable organization Jan Hus Educational Foundation (JHEF) and began nearly a decade of sending regular foreign speakers as well as books and printing materials and technology for samizdat ventures.²⁷⁴ The number of visitors that made the trip rose in the following years to no less than sixteen visitors per year before 1985, and no less than thirty-one per year from 1985–1989, and the technology would eventually grow to include entire computers, copiers, and printers. Through their efforts Czechoslovakia's home seminars became more expansive and better funded and created a clandestine transatlantic network of Western intellectual exchange that trained the generation of Czechs that took over the leadership of academic and political institutions after 1989.

An Intellectual Exchange with Precedent

The formation of a transnational network linking Czech thinkers to major European sites of intellectual and cultural activity was not a new phenomenon in Central Europe. In the 1890s a generation of young Czech literati led a movement out of Prague, Vienna, and Berlin to redraw the imaginary geographies of Central Europe. The connection centered on an intellectual exchange between the literary circles of Arnošt Procházka in Prague, Josef Svatopluk Machar in Vienna, and Polish

²⁷⁴ Charity Registration, Jan Hus Educational Foundation, March 16, 1981, JHEF. In the summer of 1980 Oxford University's Literae Humanities Board refused a grant proposal to fund future trips by the philosophy department, likely due to pressure behind the scenes by other faculty members afraid that the unofficial visits by Oxford philosophers might damage their official working relationships with academic institutions in Prague. Day, *Velvet Philosophers*, 59.

writer Stanisław Przybyszewski in Berlin. Through their writings and publications in their respective literary journals, these young literati led a movement that opposed the narrow nationalist ideas of the Old Czechs like František Palacký and worked to recast Czechs' spiritual position in Europe by joining in and promoting the new literary and social movement of European modernism.

If the older Czech nationalists were concerned with asserting the “Czechness” of Bohemia and Moravia as a microcosm within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Machar and the Vienna-Prague-Berlin connection sought to relocate Prague and the Czech lands on the periphery of modern Europe.²⁷⁵ This cultural exchange promoted a concept of intellectual life in Central Europe that Europeanized Czechs as more than a provincial minority within the Hapsburg Empire and included a rare late-19th century rapprochement with German culture.²⁷⁶ This Czech rapprochement with Germans had a later proponent in Emanuel Rádl, who wrote in 1928 that the nationalist frameworks established in the new Czechoslovak state had led to the oppression of minorities and a misguided attempt to excise German culture from Czech heritage.²⁷⁷ Although bitterly attacked

²⁷⁵ Katherine David-Fox, “Prague—Vienna, Prague—Berlin: The Hidden Geography of Czech Modernism,” *Slavic Review* 59 (2000): 736. This literary circle of younger Czechs is not to be confused with the Young Czech Party that swept many of the Old Czechs from political offices in the 1890s, which Machar and other writers in his circle also satirized; *ibid.*, 744–745. For more on the decline of the Czech National Party (Old Czechs) and rise of the Young Czech Party, see: Bruce Garver, *The Young Czech Party, 1874–1901: The Emergence of a Multi-party System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

²⁷⁶ David-Fox, “Prague—Vienna, Prague—Berlin,” 740–742, 749–750, 758.

²⁷⁷ Emanuel Rádl, *Václav Čechů s Němci* (Prague: Cin Publishing Co, 1928).

by most of the Czech thinkers of his time, Rádl's stance on relations with Germans continued the tradition of the young Czechs in the Vienna-Prague-Berlin connection and offered a prewar precursor to 1970s critiques in samizdat of the Masaryk state in precipitating national divisions that ultimately led to the failure of peaceful cohabitation between Germans and Czechs.

The intellectual exchanges of the 1970s and 1980s paralleled this earlier movement in many ways. As the underground discussion circles expanded over the 1970s, they took on an international dimension through links with émigrés and Czech publishing houses in cities like Vienna, Paris, Rome, London, Stockholm, and Toronto.²⁷⁸ Writings by both domestic authors and those abroad reached ever-wider audiences through the smuggling and circulation efforts of individuals like Prečan and Jan Kavan, and they were recirculated by Czech societies from North America to Australia. Similar to the late-19th century network of cosmopolitan-minded writers, it was in this international samizdat context that rapprochement with Germans over the expulsion narrative first developed. It was also within these circles and the expanding network of underground seminars that stemmed from them that ideas of a cosmopolitan, Central European identity found salience and

²⁷⁸ Vienna was the home to Zdeněk Mlynář, who published regularly in local and international journals. Paris was the home of Tigríd and *Svědectví*, Rome hosted the émigré journal *Listy* and its editor, Jiří Pelikán, London was the location of Jan Kavan's Palach Press, Stockholm was where the European branch of the international Charter 77 Foundation was located, and Toronto hosted the 68 Publishers émigré press.

began growing in popularity. This trend expanded as the introduction of foreign guest lecturers helped forge a deeper spiritual and personal link to the West.

The British philosophers did not remain alone in their activism in Czechoslovakia, with separate branches established in France, North America, the Netherlands, and West Germany.²⁷⁹ In West Germany, work with the JHEF was the product of cooperation with a young graduate student, Wolfgang Stock. Born in Hannover in 1959 to parents that fled East Germany, Stock was influenced by his identification as a refugee child from an early age and took an interest in the politics of Central Europe. His views were molded by the European activism of Otto von Habsburg, president of the International Paneuropean Union and one of the initial members of the European Parliament elected in 1979.²⁸⁰ Stock spent a year working on von Habsburg's 1979 campaign before returning to West Germany for his studies. He shared von Habsburg's vision of a reunited Europe and volunteered his spare time to working with the International Society for Human Rights in Poland, being one of the first Westerners to arrive in Danzig after the imposition of martial law in 1981 driving a truck filled with relief supplies and books and literature from the West.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ For more on these separate organizations see the respective chapters and sections in: Day, *Velvet Philosophers*.

²⁸⁰ Von Habsburg was an outspoken advocate for including Central and Eastern Europe into the drive for European integration, and he was the principle force behind the "empty chair" placed in the European Parliament that symbolically recognized that the absent Eastern European countries were part of Europe and had a reserved right to be European.

²⁸¹ Interview, Wolfgang Stock, June 22, 2014.

Stock began his affiliation with the JHEF in 1984 as a master's student at Oxford, when a colleague and Polish activist introduced him to JHEF trustees Timothy Garton Ash and Roger Scruton.²⁸² Believing that his efforts were more needed in ČSSR than in Poland, Stock focused the majority of his work there for the remainder of the 1980s.²⁸³ He founded the Academia Copernicana (AC) in 1985 as a way to funnel donations and to serve as the unofficial JHEF and Jagiellonian Trust partner in West Germany.²⁸⁴ The AC was an important West German asset to underground seminars and samizdat in ČSSR and contributed to their operations in two primary ways. The first was by sending guest lecturers, primarily to Brno. Stock's interests in Central Europe were more broadly political than the JHEF's interest in teaching philosophy, and he organized speakers from various non-academic circles, which culminated in the 1989 visit of future SL chairman Berndt Posselt.

The second primary contribution of the AC was sending computers, video recorders, and VHS players to modernize samizdat operations in ČSSR. This

²⁸² Ash and Scruton had founded the Jagiellonian Trust in 1984 to organize aid for Poland, and both were heavily involved with the JHEF, with Scruton being arguably the JHEF's most active trustee.

²⁸³ By the mid-1980s, Stock recalls that the strength of the Polish Solidarity and the Polish opposition had resulted in a sort of stalemate that left the Polish people considerably more "free" than in Czechoslovakia in terms of passively allowing underground seminars in Poland in the so-called "Flying University." For more on Poland's "Flying University," see: Hanna Buczynska-Garewicz, "The Flying University in Poland, 1978–1980," *Harvard Educational Review* 55 (February 1985): 20–33.

²⁸⁴ Academia Copernicana Vereinsregister, Freiburg, West Germany, June 25, 1985, WSA. There were seven official trustees of the AC, the minimum required to found a charitable association in West Germany, however in actuality the AC itself was little more than an association on paper—they were unable to secure significant funding in West Germany, and Stock was the only permanently active trustee. Interview, Wolfgang Stock, June 22, 2014.

enabled a massive expansion of samizdat publishing operations that significantly increased both the quantity and quality of printed materials. Before the AC, those wishing to copy samizdat often had to place multiple carbon paper pieces into a typewriter and firmly hammer each letter of an entire book in order to produce just seven carbon copies. This placed publishers at higher risk of arrest, as they had to deal with enormous stacks of paper that were not easily hidden in the event of a police raid. With the importation of computers and printers, books could be kept digitally and out of immediate sight during any police intrusions. This made it easier to print more copies of a text at a time and much quicker than before, greatly expanding the scope of samizdat proliferation and with it, the spreading of Central European discourses and arguments for revising the expulsion narrative.

The West Meets the Czech Underground

In an era where caution dictated that nothing incriminating be written down, the JHEF documents and trip reports provide a rare trove of first-hand accounts that details the inner workings of the underground seminars and the communities of thought they helped foster. Western visitors stepped into a world that was wholly foreign and characterized by cloak-and-dagger secretiveness and the ever-present threat of police harassment. Before departing, each new visitor was given guidelines detailing how to remain inconspicuous, including what to do when being followed, what to say to police if questioned about books or supplies they transported, and to always memorize names and addresses and never carry

them on paper.²⁸⁵ Police harassment was not uncommon, particularly in the early years of the JHEF's operations. The StB in Prague knew of the seminars by prominent dissidents like Hejdánek and Tomin and routinely monitored those who visited; the police raided seminars and arrested and interrogated participants with varying frequency. By the time the JHEF began operations, regular seminar participants were accustomed to this danger and always carried a small overnight bag with a tooth brush and toiletries in case they had to spend the night in jail. JHEF visitors were swept up in these raids on several occasions²⁸⁶, but the most infamous case was the Derrida Affair.

In December 1981, as renowned French philosopher Jacques Derrida was attempting to return from speaking at seminars in Prague he was arrested at the airport and accused of drug smuggling. Airport guards singled him out at security check, and after two searches of his luggage with dogs produced nothing they made a phone call, whose content Derrida could not understand, searched again and found four packets of a brown substance hidden in his suitcase lining, ostensibly placed there while the suitcase was alone in Derrida's hotel room. Derrida was

²⁸⁵ If questioned about their visit visitors were instructed to say they were visiting a friend. In Prague, this contact was most often Hejdánek, and in Brno it was playwright Petr Oslzý, both of whom were known to have many international friends and colleagues and thus it was not out of the ordinary for them to receive visitors.

²⁸⁶ In 1980, while on two separate visits, JHEF speakers Anthony Kenney and William H. Newton-Smith were arrested during raids, interrogated, and transported via police escort to the West German border where they were unceremoniously deported. Trip Report, Anthony Kenney, April 1980, JHEF; Email, J.R. Lucas to Barbara Day recalling his visit in February 1981, September 1, 1997, JHEF.

arrested, interrogated about the substance as well as his purpose for being in Prague and contacts there, and transported to prison overnight, though not before he asked the defense lawyer present at his interrogation to phone his wife's relatives in Prague and inform them of the situation. Shocked upon hearing the news, Derrida's wife phoned friends with contacts in the French government who hastily worked to secure his release.

Derrida was in Prague as a guest lecturer for Ladislav Hejdíánek's home philosophy seminar and became caught in the crossfire of "Operation Isolation," a plan of the StB to publically discredit leading Charter 77 signatories like Hejdíánek by smearing their visitors and friends with criminal charges.²⁸⁷ Derrida became the first victim of this plot directed at Hejdíánek, but the police at the airport were woefully unaware of the stature of the man whom they had detained and that his imprisonment would spark an international incident. Word of Derrida's imprisonment reached French President Mitterand, who did not hesitate to make use of the hot line to President Husák's office. Derrida was roused from his cell between 10 and 11pm on day two of his detention, wearing prison pajamas and two left-footed shoes he had hastily grabbed from a pile on the floor upon his admittance, and he was brought back to the police station. Police brusquely informed him that while he was still considered guilty of drug trafficking, he was

²⁸⁷ Jiří Gruntorád, "ŠtB proti Chartě—akce 'Izolace'," *Listy* 27 (1997): 91–96.

being expelled from the country. Derrida spent the night in the French embassy before boarding a morning train to Paris, where he was met by a crowd of admiring French journalists on New Year's Eve, 1981.²⁸⁸

After the embarrassment of the Derrida Affair the StB was much more hesitant to be openly hostile toward foreigners at the seminars, though they often still followed visitors and warned them verbally on several occasions not to proceed to the seminar where they were to give a lecture.²⁸⁹ A notable exception to this was the deportation of Roger Scruton in June 1985, although by this point Scruton had been a regular visitor to Brno for four years and was known to the StB, who upon confronting him in a park said, "We know very well that you speak Czech, Mr. Scruton. We should like you to come with us for questioning." After several hours of unproductive interrogation, Scruton was driven to the Austrian border for deportation "by squads of cars, all containing the kind of gum-chewing heroes who in England would be doing their bit for the Liverpool Fan Club."²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ For more on Derrida's incident in Prague, see: William Echikson, "French Professor's Arrest Part of Prague Crackdown on Intellectuals," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 8, 1982; Day, in *Velvet Philosophers*, 92–96; Jason Powell, *Jacques Derrida: A Biography* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 151; Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 334.

²⁸⁹ Trip Report, Kathy Wilkes, April 13–15, 1982, JHEF; Letter, Kathy Wilkes to Alan [Montefiore], September 1982, JHEF; Trip Report, Jessica Douglas-Home, September 26–October 2, 1985, JHEF; Trip Report, John Hale, September 1985, JHEF; Trip Report, RAD Grant, March 20–24, 1986, JHEF. In 1985 visitor Paul Flather was detained at the border and questioned for ten hours and allowed to exit after having his papers confiscated, Trip Report, Paul Flather, November 14–18, 1985, JHEF

²⁹⁰ Trip Report, Roger Scruton, June 1985, JHEF.

Despite the inherent danger in such trips, most visitors returned with glowing reports of their visits. Above all, they were inspired and highly impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of seminar participants. Sociologist David Levy noted the interest and excellent questions and discussions of the participants at his first lecture in Brno and contrasted it to his regular students in Middelsex who often seemed apathetic and disinterested.²⁹¹ Seminar participants, ranging in age from college students to retirees, would crowd in living rooms in groups typically between 10–30 in the evening to hear the presentations of the visitors and engage in discussion. It was not uncommon for discussions to continue long after the initial presentation and extend into the early morning hours. For participants, the seminars offered a much-desired venue to learn and discuss freely outside Party control, and they comprised a central venue of organization in the underground world for the discussion of Czech history, identity and heritage. Participation in these seminars, and especially the threat of police raids, helped forge a common sense of identity and solidarity and created breeding grounds for the creation of collective identities beyond Party control that emphasized multiculturalism and common identification with the moral value system of Western Europe.

²⁹¹ Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

Reaching Beyond Dissident Circles: The Brno Operation

Harassment and monitoring of the seminars had both a positive and negative effect on the underground world: On the one hand, it reinforced a sense of community and bond among seminar goers that reinforced impetuses for forging shared identities based on the value of human rights which engendered sympathy for revising the expulsion narrative. On the other hand, the threat of police retaliation relegated many of these gathering sites to a core group of dissidents and their families and close friends, and discouraged participation by students enrolled in university and professionals with something to lose, hampering the seminars' reach. For those who wished to see free education and learning for wider Czech society this development was unacceptable, and the JHEF quickly found a partner with the same goal of reaching wider audiences in Jiří Müller.

Müller helped form a loose group of other signatories of Charter 77 in the late 1970s to organize activities, and Brno soon had no shortage of evening seminars, underground theater productions, and samizdat publications.²⁹² However, Müller sought to expand the reach of the underground education in Brno beyond these circles. Müller was convinced that Socialism would end in Czechoslovakia during his lifetime, and he felt a responsibility to educate and prepare society, particularly younger Czechs, to take over afterwards. This included

²⁹² Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014. For an overview of some of the literary, archaeological, Catholic and theater seminars and discussion groups, see: Day, *Velvet Philosophers*, 141–149.

those in the so-called “gray zone” of reform-minded Communists who still held official positions but maintained contacts with dissidents.²⁹³ It was this group that would ultimately help Müller organize educational events in Brno that reached a much wider audience and showed that the European way of thinking of the dissidents and even their critical approach to the expulsion narrative was also shared by many non-dissident professionals and students.

Müller maintained contact with many dissidents in Prague, and it was them that put him in touch with Roger Scruton to assist in expanding his operations. After sizing up the dedication and capabilities of his British contact during Scruton’s first visit in summer 1981, Müller and Scruton began discussing ways to expanding the seminars and unofficial education to wider audiences. He wrote to Scruton, “Our foreigner friends often want to support dissidents, their independent culture and their independent way of life, first of all. But dissenters are living in a ghetto. It is important to support the life of that ghetto, but it is more important to seek and discover bridges from the ghetto to society. The organization of lectures, as I suggest it, is one such potential bridge.”²⁹⁴ He and Scruton hashed out a plan to

²⁹³ Jiřina Šiklová, “The Gray Zone” and the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia,” *Social Research* 57 (Summer 1990): 347, 363. Barbara Day estimated that by the second half of the 1980s, 80% of the JHEF’s work was done in cooperation with, or directed at, those in the the gray zone; Barbara Day, “The Jan Hus Educational Foundation: It’s Origins, Intentions and Development,” in *Filosofie v podzemí—Filosofie v zázemí: Podoby filosofie v českých zemích v období normalizace a po sametové revoluci*, ed. Markéta Bendová, Johana Borovanská, and Daniela Vejvodová (Prague: Nomáda, 2013), 103.

²⁹⁴ Letter, Jiří Müller to Roger Scruton, August 12, 1984, JHEF.

funnel Western lecturers and aid to “impromptu” evening discussion sessions organized by people who were not established dissidents and who had the ability to work “above ground.”²⁹⁵

The result was the drastic expansion of the reach of seminars in Brno via an intricate system of separated seminar organization that insulated participants from all knowledge of illegal activities and protected each branch of Müller’s activities from discovery in the event that a particular seminar was harassed or investigated by police.²⁹⁶ The Brno operation was a post-Charter development in the sense that while Prague’s seminars were organized directly by Charter 77 signatories and many of them began even before Charter 77 emerged, activities in Brno were directed at non-dissidents, with Charter 77 signatories being forbidden from participating.²⁹⁷ The goal was to take the Charter’s call for the creation of a civil society and use independent education as a means of sowing those ideas without

²⁹⁵ Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014.

²⁹⁶ Separate meeting places were established for JHEF lectures from different countries, with British visitors—the most frequent group to visit—alternating between speaking in the homes of Petr Oslzý, Miroslav Pospíšil, and Rostislav Pospíšil. French visitors spoke in the home of the Milan Jelínek family, and German visitors spoke in the apartment of Jaroslav Blažke. Participants were discouraged from “cross-visiting” seminars to prevent the StB from connecting the various groups, and anyone involved in Müller’s multiple samizdat operations was strictly forbidden from visiting a seminar and vice versa. This system of separation proved incredibly successful, and not a single seminar under Müller’s organization was ever raided. Moreover, Müller worked in the former StB archive in the early 1990s and had the opportunity to scour all relevant files from Brno, and he discovered no mention of seminars connected to him and found no indication that the StB had any knowledge of the existence of the JHEF. Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014; Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

²⁹⁷ Miroslav Pospíšil, the primary translator for the British speakers, wanted to put his signature on Charter 77 in the mid-1980s but was discouraged by Oslzý and Müller indirectly, as that would have violated Müller’s policy of trying to draw as little attention as possible to the seminars and their organizers. Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

actively claiming opposition to the regime. The seminars took place roughly once a month and were spread via word of mouth and billed as informal discussion gatherings, or “evening tea,” where by “coincidence” a foreign visitor was in town and decided to give an impromptu lecture. The core group of regular attendees soon understood that there was more behind the lectures than happenstance, but they learned nothing further, certainly not Müller’s name or the name of the JHEF. Even the seminar hosts themselves like Miroslav Pospíšil were kept in the dark about the extent of the organization behind it all, keeping in line with the central tenant of underground activity, which maintained that “you only know two people—the person you hear or receive something from and the person you pass it on to.”²⁹⁸

The extent of the reach of the Brno seminars is impossible to quantify, which provides further testament to the growth of an underground civil society even if that society was not fully integrated. There was a core group of about thirty

²⁹⁸ The full extent of the operation was only known by Müller himself and the trustees of the JHEF. Müller enlisted Petr Oslzý to find hosts for the British visitors, but Oslzý did not know about the JHEF. Oslzý then visited the home of Miroslav Pospíšil, whom he knew from his involvement in Oslzý’s theater “Goose on a String” and asked him to go for a walk, code that he needed to discuss something sensitive. Pospíšil was thirty-one and teaching English at the language institute in Brno at the time, having been barred from post-secondary education for refusing to join the Party or to work for the StB as a translator. Pospíšil readily agreed to help and become one of the three hosts for British visitors and the primary translator for the British visitors. He was involved from the first visitor to Brno in 1982 and remained active throughout the decade, yet it took five years before Pospíšil learned Müller’s name. Pospíšil eventually assumed there must be someone higher than Oslzý behind it all, but this was not something one inquired about, and in actuality he only *knew* for certain that foreign visitors would arrive on certain days and he was to host or translate for them. Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014; Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014.

students that attended most British lectures, and Pospíšil estimates there was a larger, solid group of sixty to seventy potential participants that would regularly attend lectures on specific topics of their interest. This was in addition to others who came less frequently. Many of the core participants were also active in their own separate undertakings, and they often brought the lecture content and copies of books that the visitors provided back to their other groups for discussion and further dissemination, so that it was impossible to know just how far the information was traveling.²⁹⁹

The visitor base of the Brno lectures increased significantly toward the end of the decade as people in the “gray zone” increasingly dared to become more involved and take more risks as the rhetoric coming from Moscow concerning censorship softened. The language school that Pospíšil worked at had an English Club discussion group for advanced students, and since obtaining approval for an official guest lecturer at a university was very difficult and brought with it its own oversight and regulations, Pospíšil and Oslzý had the idea of bringing foreign

²⁹⁹ Petr Fiala was one such visitor who also ran his own independent history discussion seminar with seven or eight other people. After the British visiting lectures became more regular, he began requesting materials from the JHEF lectures to introduce to his seminar. Pospíšil recalls this case as one of many that surprised him by how many other unknown ventures taking place in Brno. Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

speakers to the English Club instead.³⁰⁰ The cooperation with the language school grew to encompass more from the “gray zone” to allow for the English Club to meet in larger halls that attracted ever larger audiences and met more frequently as the decade progressed.³⁰¹ Pospíšil recalls of this expansion, “It became so popular that they had to move us into a larger room. And then into another. Between two hundred and three hundred people started coming to these talks.”³⁰² Pospíšil similarly began bringing JHEF speakers to other official organization meetings, like the local youth clubs officially operating under the Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth and the unions for architects and artists, and eventually they involved the lecturers in more and more official groups: “I remember the day we said it,” Pospíšil recalled. “That was the first time we said, ‘The end is near.’ Because it started

³⁰⁰ The language school English courses already served as a forum for subversive discussion. The head of the English department at the language school was an Anglophile who had spent time in Britain during WWII involved in the war effort, and he hired his teachers strictly along anti-Communist ideological lines. Students were mostly young, often rejected from university entrance on political grounds, and many of them tried to study from foreign literature on their own time and discuss it in class. Instructors did not only teach language, but also culture, politics, and daily life in Britain and the USA, and most of the courses had a resounded anti-regime atmosphere; Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

³⁰¹ Pospíšil met with the director of the language school, a Party member, and convinced him to form a partnership with the Section of Education of the Revolutionary Trade Unions Movement (ROH) in Brno so that the English Club could use their larger meetings rooms and increase capacity beyond the twenty-five they had space for. The head of the ROH’s education section in Brno was a Party member, but also a childhood friend from Pospíšil’s theater group, and he happily agreed to the partnership. After a few sessions Pospíšil gradually introduced native speakers to the meetings, first from the group of four or five native speakers living in Brno, then with a writer sent through the JHEF. When no backlash came down, they started sending nearly all British JHEF visitors to speak at the English Club in addition to their evening home lectures. Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

³⁰² Ibid.

snowballing and more and more people were involved. You couldn't keep track any longer of the new initiatives starting. It was fermenting everywhere."³⁰³

Inside Brno's Unofficial Education

The seminars in Brno provide a window through which we can broach the feelings, emotions, and mindset of many of those Czechs participants who thought very differently about Czech identity and history than the official Socialist narrative. Initially many participants in the seminars were disillusioned by not receiving the absolute truths and solutions to Czechoslovakia's problems they longed for, but most quickly began understanding that they were learning critical thinking skills and non-partisan scholarly information, something that was absent from traditional public education in Czechoslovakia at the time.³⁰⁴ Above all, the seminars provided respite from a daily life where everything else was controlled, from what you could read, say, what kind of music you could listen to down to what sorts of clothing were acceptable. Pospíšil recalled a gathering of former lecture participants twenty years later where they discussed what the seminars meant to

³⁰³ Pospíšil could recall this exact moment shared with Oslzý but not the year for certain, though he believed it was 1985. Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014. The JHEF also became heavily involved in the ecological movement in Brno and the underground jazz community. These two fields, along with the seminars and samizdat, comprised the "four pillars" of the JHEF's work in Brno. Interview, Jiří Müller, June 11, 2014.

³⁰⁴ Pospíšil recalled discussing the problem of disappointment and unrealistic expectations with Oslzý after the first few visitors, and both worked thereafter to convey to participants that the focus of the education should be on expanding general knowledge and building critical thinking skills. Interview, Miroslav Pospíšil, June 12, 2014.

them, and the general consensus agreed that the biggest impact was, “the liberating feeling where suddenly you were in a capsule where you could discuss freely, something you couldn’t experience in your everyday life [...] The basic feeling under that regime was humiliation. The regime deliberately tried to humiliate you from the moment you woke up to the moment you went to bed [...] A return to simple human dignity was the strongest emotional experience.”³⁰⁵

During those gatherings beyond the confines of Party rhetoric and censorship, the collective feelings and sentiments about Czech identity and history reflected much of the cosmopolitanism seen in the expulsion debates and other samizdat publications. Pospíšil recalled that the collective “we” in the lectures was, “us in Central Europe under Soviet rule. In the political science and philosophy lectures the ‘us’ often meant a reference to history,” searching the past for traditions of liberalism, humanism, and democracy from which participants could draw a blueprint for the future.³⁰⁶ This cosmopolitan sentiment of identity and heritage caused a strong desire for visitors from Germany to connect and discuss with, and seminar organizers repeatedly pressed their Western colleagues for more visitors from West Germany from the early visits throughout the decade.³⁰⁷ In the

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Trip Report, Richard Rorty, June 23, 1981, JHEF; Trip Report, Alan Montefiore and Catherine Audard, September 3–8, 1981, JHEF; Trip Report, Roger Scruton, April 1981, JHEF; Trip Report, W.H. Newton-Smith, July 2, 1981, JHEF; Trip Report, Roger Scruton, January 11, 1983, JHEF; Trip Report, unnamed visitor to Prague, February 1987, WSA; Letter, Wolfgang Stock to Barbara Day and Roger Scruton, March 27, 1987, WSA.

early years only two visitors from West Germany came, albeit very famous ones in Jürgen Habermas and Ernst Tugendhat, who spoke in March 1982 at Hejdánek and Peter Rezek's seminars in Prague and brought over a dozen books for their hosts.³⁰⁸

Speakers from West Germany increased once Stock founded the Academia Copernicana and began actively recruiting visitors, and many of them came from outside academia from civil society organizations like human rights foundations.³⁰⁹ Magdalena Kaufmann of the International Society for Human Rights in West Germany (IGMF) was the first AC visitor to travel to Brno and spoke in the seminar for German visitors. Kaufmann was surprised to hear the participants express a general consensus that the right to return to one's homeland was the most important human right, and they requested her to organize Sudeten German visitors and visitors who could speak about the history of Czechs and Sudeten Germans, German-Czech heritage and relations.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Tugendhat himself was originally born in Brno and left as a child in the 1940s. He and Habermas had been discussing the idea of visiting Czechoslovakia together for some time when they received an invite to visit Czechoslovakia from Richard Rorty from Princeton University, who had already visited the previous year through the JHEF and came back highly impressed with the seminars. Letter, Ernst Tugendhat to Roger Scruton, September 27, 1981, JHEF; Letter, Ernst Tugendhat to Roger Scruton, January 23, 1982, JHEF.

³⁰⁹ Professor Anna von Stockhausen from Freiburg University visited Prague in February, but the majority of the visitors concentrated on Brno, where Stock was also more involved than in Prague. Von Stockhausen's trip was complicated due to a concurrent visit by Belgian Professor Herman Parret by a scheduling mix up with Oxford. Letter, Barbara Day to Roger Scruton, March 18, 1987, WSA; Trip Report, unnamed visitor to Prague, February 1987, WSA.

³¹⁰ To her surprise, her audience even included the wife of the deputy head of the philosophy faculty at Purkyně University (renamed Masaryk University after 1989) in Brno as well as a mixture of banned academics, Catholic activists, and students. Trip Report, Magdalena Kaufmann, December 12, 1987, WSA.

Stock and Müller had already been planning as early as September 1987 to send over Sudeten German activist Berndt Posselt. “At that point, we already wanted to prepare for the period after Communism and prepare for reconciliation between the two neighboring peoples,” recalls Stock of the decision to send Posselt.³¹¹ Posselt was the son of Sudeten German parents and was a member of the SL, where he regularly worked together with leaders of Opus Bonum and the Ackermann Gemeinde. He was also an active member in international societies as a member of the board of the Paneuropean Union—West Germany, the founder of the Paneuropean Union Youth organization in West Germany (*Paneuropa-Jugend Deutschland*), and a member of the IGMF, and he later became a Member of the European Parliament from 1994–2014, the Bavarian state head of the Christian Social Union (*Christlich-Soziale Union*, hereafter, CSU) party’s Union of Expellees since 1997, and the national chairman of the SL from 2000–2008, a position that he currently holds again since 2014. Posselt came to Brno in October 1989 as both a Sudeten German and a Paneuropean Union representative and spoke to the German circle as well as the English, since by fall of 1989 the threat of police intervention had dwindled to the point that visiting multiple seminars was no longer forbidden.

Posselt was originally scheduled to travel to Brno in 1988, but he postponed this visit after a personal phone call from the former director of the French external

³¹¹ Wolfgang Stock, e-mail message to author, March 9, 2016.

intelligence services, Alexandre de Marenches, who warned Posselt of a planned plot against him by the StB should he enter the country.³¹² His talks in Brno centered on three major topics: Pan-Europeanism, the immediate political future of Eastern Europe in light of the ongoing revolutions in Poland and elsewhere, and on the expulsion of Sudeten Germans and the future of German-Czech relations. He presented Pan-Europeanism and European integration as a solution to reunite Germans and Czechs that had been torn apart by nationalism during and after WWII, and also as a blueprint for lasting European peace after the fall of the Iron Curtain. He portrayed the expulsion as a consequence of Nazi crimes, but not an inevitable one, and he stressed the need for reconciliation as a path toward successful European integration. Posselt recalls that his audiences were wholly receptive and enthusiastic about his talks and were “completely European-minded.” He described their reception of his discussion of the expulsion as “very positive,” saying, “They were very open-minded to this topic. They were a very positive group of people. Democratically-oriented, most of them with a certain

³¹² De Marenches did not share details of the alleged plot, but shortly after Posselt cancelled his 1988 trip, a friend of Posselt who often helped him smuggle books and materials into Czechoslovakia, Martin Leitner, was arrested during a trip to Czechoslovakia under suspicious circumstances. Police found a list of addresses of people involved in underground activities in Leitner’s suitcase bearing his name, although Posselt was certain that the letter was not in the suitcase when Leitner left West Germany. Leitner spent a few days in prison in Plzeň until Posselt and the Paneuropean Union secured his release through diplomatic channels via Bonn; Interview, Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016; Bernd Posselt, “Erstgeburtsrecht auf Europa,” http://de.paneuropa.org/index.php/pan/publikationen/aktuelle_beitraege/erstgeburtsrecht_auf_europa_von_bernd_poselt_mdep (accessed April 4, 2016).

[religious] moral foundation [...] They were people with a clear Central European tradition and a Pan-European future.”³¹³

One of Posselt’s biggest takeaways from his visit was a strong impression of the level of education, intellect, and cosmopolitan European sentiment of the seminar participants, especially as it regarded their critical stance toward the expulsion. Posselt was not the only visitor to encounter Czechs who held revisionist views of the official expulsion narrative. British philosopher John Lucas recalled being “corrected” on the subject by his two young hosts that were showing him around Prague during his visit in 1980. As they walked through Prague’s Jewish quarter Lucas commented that the expulsion was a sort of requital for the atrocities Germans inflicted on Czechs, and his two hosts challenged his statement: “[They] sharply disagreed: The expulsion of Sudeten Germans had been a crime, and one that had damaged Czechoslovakia. They had originally come at the invitation of the King of Bohemia, and had greatly contributed to the cultural life of Prague in particular and Czechoslovakia generally. Prague had been an international city, the third greatest in the German-speaking world, and now was a provincial backwater.”³¹⁴ Another host reminisced to his visitor about the German districts he

³¹³ Interview, Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016.

³¹⁴ It is interesting to note that this discussion stood out in the visitor’s mind eighteen years after the fact, as he wrote a belated report for Barbara Day for her research on the *Velvet Philosophers* book, see: Trip Report, John Lucas, February 1980, recalled in an email sent to Barbara Day on September 1, 1997, JHEF.

knew as a child in his hometown, pondering how secretly ashamed of the violence and massacres that older Czechs must have been as he grew up.³¹⁵

Conclusion

Discourses of Central European identity permeated all aspects of underground life in the 1980s, and the revision of the expulsion narrative was a common thread running throughout those discourses. This discussion was by no means restricted to Czechs living in Czechoslovakia, as evidenced from Milan Kundera's 1984 essay written from abroad, "The Tragedy of Central Europe."³¹⁶ Kundera's essay expressed a way of thinking generally in line with much of the underground—he argued that Central Europe was, in fact, a part of the West "kidnapped" and held against its will by the Russian-Soviet tradition, and although he argued that its spirit was still alive and visible in the underground activities that revolted against this occupation, he lamented that the rest of the Western world seemed to see Central Europe as "just a part of the Soviet Empire and nothing more, nothing more."³¹⁷

Yet the expulsion debates illustrated that Kundera's image of a Central Europe tied to the west was not new, nor was there a singular interpretation

³¹⁵ Trip Report, C.H. Sisson, June 3–8, 1988, JHEF.

³¹⁶ Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books*, April 26, 1984, 33–38. Kundera's article is one of the most well-known essays on Central Europe, along with Hungarian dissident György Konrád's "The Dream of Central Europe." For more on these essays and the Central European discourse more broadly, see: Wessel, "Die Mitte liegt Westwärts," 325–344.

³¹⁷ Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 37.

accepted for what defined Central Europe or Czech's position within it.³¹⁸ A rebuttal to Kundera in *Střední Evropa* rejected his interpretation of Central European identity on the grounds that it was a secular one that disregarded the role of religion in Central European societies, and this and other responses to Kundera refuted his totalitarian perspective of a passive Central Europe being acted upon by the greater Soviet behemoth: "Our situation is not entirely the work of a usurping totalitarian power. The bed was already made by the romantic consciousness of a 'Slav mutuality' in our country. And when the Russians perfidiously entered the bed, we got what we had asked for."³¹⁹ This perspective echoed the expulsion debates in their sense of urgency in national historical self-reflection and demonstrates that the Central European discourse was not simply taken at face value, but rather it was a discourse of debate and negotiation over how to understand the past in a way that would reflect current values and build a blueprint for the future.

As with the Danubius expulsion debates, opinions and perspectives on how to define Central European identity were multifaceted and contested. But, also as

³¹⁸ For discussions of Kundera's essay and debates surrounding it, see: Donskis, *Yet Another Europe*; George Schöpflin and Nancy Woods, eds., *In Search of Central Europe* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1989).

³¹⁹ Josef Hradec, unknown title (translation of an article the author published in the journal *Střední Evropa*) *Salisbury Review* 4 (1986): 37. For a similar perspective see the rebuttal of Milan Šimečka in, Milan Šimečka, "Another Civilization? An Other Civilization?," in *In Search of Central Europe*, eds. George Schöpflin and Nancy Woods, 159. For this discussion in the context of debating totalitarianism, see: Jacques Rupnik, "Totalitarianism Revisited," in *Civil Society and the State*, ed. John Keane (London: Verso, 1988), 263–289; and: Noël O'Sullivan, "The Concept of Totalitarianism in East-Central European Political Thought, With Some Reflections on its Post-Cold War Relevance," *Politeja* 21 (2012): 49–64.

with the expulsion debates, what is most significant is the fact that these discussions were taking place and drew widespread interest, indicating the mindset of many Czechs at the time that sought to redefine Czech identity in the post-1968 era. The idea of Central Europe served as a way to distinguish Czech identity from Soviet socialism and identify it with Habsburg and West European Judeo-Christian traditions, while also functioning as a tool to delegitimize the Communist narrative. In samizdat and underground seminars Czechs young and old discussed and debated what exactly Central Europe was, what the nature of German and Czech heritage was, all debated with an eye toward a future reunited Europe. Defining Czech identity and German-Czech heritage was to form a framework for understanding past Czechoslovakian history and to build a blueprint to guide future action. Standing behind it was the yearning for a “Return to Europe,” which became the public motto in Czechoslovakia after the Velvet Revolution that guided international politics for the early 1990s.

Participants in underground activities were the ones who took over politics and education in Czechoslovakia after 1989. They became the mayors, rectors, and department heads, ambassadors, ministers, cabinet men, and advisors in Havel and Pithart’s Civic Forum government formed after the Velvet Revolution, and many more of the former seminar participants moved into jobs in civil society as journalists, academics, and more. Many of them carried with them the desire to change the public narrative of the expulsion and rehabilitate German-Czech relations expressed in samizdat and in underground seminars. Yet, as chapter five

illustrates, the popularity of revising the expulsion narrative among these individuals did not translate into immediate and lasting acceptance by the wider Czech public. As former dissidents and seminar participants took over political reins in 1990 and followed the Central European discourse of rehabilitating historical German-Czech heritage, they encountered strong resistance from sectors of the Czech public, showing that, while expansive, the underground networks still only comprised a small subsection of the Czech population. The task at hand after 1989 would be teaching and guiding the rest of Czech society to adopt the same value system and tenants of multicultural identity and heritage established in the underground.

CHAPTER IV

SUDETEN GERMAN IDENTITY DEBATES AND ACTIVISM, 1975–1989

Czechs were not the only ones in Central Europe engaged in polemical identity debates during the 1970s and 1980s, nor were non-confessional dissidents the only group to organize underground and build an independent sub-society in Czechoslovakia with Western contacts. This period also saw bitter disagreement within the Sudeten German community over what constituted Sudeten German identity, and it was similarly a period of forging widespread and important contacts between Sudeten Germans and underground Czech clergy. The identity debates highlighted a conflict among Sudeten Germans over whether to identify themselves as a historical ethnic group distinct from Czechs and demand a right to return and reclaim lost property, or whether Sudeten Germans should emphasize shared heritage with Czechs and pursue cooperation, dialogue, and reconciliation to achieve many of the same ends. And during the same era when the Western contacts of Czech dissidents molded a generation of leaders to guide Czechs toward German-Czech reconciliation and European integration after 1989, so too did Sudeten German contacts with Czech clergy help lay the groundwork for reconciliation efforts and rebuilding German-Czech relations after the end of Communism.

This chapter highlights these developments by focusing on the ideological differences that surfaced during a conflict between the SL and Sudeten German

academic researchers with the Collegium Carolinum (CC) and the AG, and it uncovers extensive cooperation and contacts between the AG and underground clergy in Czechoslovakia. The conflict between the SL and the CC echoed the expulsion debate in that it centered on competing notions of collective identity, in this case what it meant to be an ethnic German from the Czech lands. History-writing was the primary battleground here as well, as the conflict manifested in a struggle for control of the most prominent Sudeten German research organ for the Czech lands, the Collegium Carolinum. Both sides wanted publications that would support and reinforce their particular view of ethnic identity in the Czech lands, yet their views were grounded in opposing notions of what constituted that identity. The Czech debates over the expulsion and the SL-CC conflict echoed the same wider European currents of emphasizing increased European integration, bridging the East-West divide, and promoting human rights expressed in the 1975 Helsinki Accords.

At the same time, AG leaders became more heavily active in spreading their network of cooperation with Czechs to Czech clergy in Czechoslovakia. They forged a large network of contacts and helped supply materials for religious samizdat operations, financed dioceses, and sent travel groups of Sudeten Germans across the border to bridge the information and contact divide on a local level at a time when organized religion in Czechoslovakia was strongly repressed, underfunded, and understaffed, and largely isolated from the Vatican and the Western world. These local contacts forged a grassroots network of Sudeten Germans and Czechs

that laid the foundation for future initiatives after 1989 and contributed to understanding on both sides that would help smooth the transition toward European integration after 1989.

The Sudeten German Homeland Association, the Collegium Carolinum, and the Struggle for the Soul of Sudeten Germans

Leaders of Sudeten German organizations keenly followed the new developments in opinion expressed in the Czech expulsion debates. It was a central issue in discussions of the Council in preparing the annual resolution to be read at the 1979 Sudeten German Day, of which Stingl was a member, and the AG board roundly agreed with the importance of spreading its awareness among wider West German society.³²⁰ Later, when the StB uncovered Mlynárik's identity behind the Danubius essay in 1980 and drove him into exile in West Germany, the AG and the Council supported him financially and invited him as a guest speaker at AG functions as well as the annual Sudeten German Day gathering on Pentecost.³²¹

The AG continued their push for increased integration with the Czech exile community, with Opus Bonum remaining the primary partnership in this

³²⁰ Vorstandssitzung der AG, January 13, 1979, AG 131; Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

³²¹ Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, January 10, 1981, AG 132. Franz Olbert was one of, if not the, first to receive Mlynárik upon his arrival in Munich in 1981, and paid for his hotel out of his own pocket. Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014. The Council also secured a 2500 DM stipend for Mlynárik upon his arrival in West Germany; Sitzungsprotokoll der Sudetendeutscher Rat, June 25, 1982, BayHStA SDA NL Becher 126.

cooperation.³²² Opus Bonum's annual summits in Franken were the premier events highlighting the Opus Bonum-AG cooperation, and Olbert and other AG leaders were present every year for discussions that included many contributors to the Danubius debates, including Mlynárik in 1985, as well as papers read in absentia written by Havel and Josef Zvěřina, a close contact of the AG and advisor to the Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal František Tomášek.³²³ Many of these same Czechs as well as other prominent émigrés were featured speakers at AG national summits and meetings throughout the 1980s.³²⁴

However, a difference of opinion persisted within the Sudeten German community between those who shared an inclusivist multicultural and multiethnic view of historical Sudeten German identity and those who took an exclusivist national view and sought to reinforce an inward-oriented Sudeten German identity that involved Czechs only insofar as they reinforced a distinctly separate Sudeten German *Volksgruppe* (ethnic group). Similar to the Czech debates on expulsion history, proponents of these two camps aired their differences out in a very public

³²² Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, January 10, 1981, AG 132; Ernst Nitter, Bemerkungen zur Top 5 und 6 der Vorstandssitzung vom 4. Oktober, 1980, October 1, 1980, AG 132. AG leaders also sought to sponsor more prominent Czechs like Mlynář and Tigrid to speak at their own events for primarily Sudeten German audiences to further promote such cooperation; Vorstandssitzung der AG, December 22, 1979, AG 132.

³²³ In addition to regular Franken summit attendees Prečan and Tigrid, the 1981 summit featured Danubius debate contributors Erazim Kohák, Jiří Lederer, Rio Preisner, Jan Tesař, and Ivan Medek; Pozvánka na 4. Setkání ve Frankenu, 13.–17.5 Franken 1981, ČSDS Opus Bonum Franken 1981. Havel and Zvěřina sent papers for the 1984 summit on totalitarianism; Pozvánka s předběžným programem Franken 1984, ČSDS, Opus Bonum Franken 1984. Mlynárik spoke in 1985; Pozvánka Franken 1985, ČSDS Opus Bonum Franken 1985.

³²⁴ Raimund Paleczek, "Übersicht über die Jahrestagungen bzw. Bundestreffen (ab 1969)," in Paleczek, *Integration und Dialog*, 156–157.

way during a debate in the 1970s and 1980s over the academic program and future direction of the Sudeten German-founded research institute Collegium Carolinum seated in Munich.

On the surface, the rift resembled a power struggle between the SL and the CC, when the latter declared its intention not to relocate its office into an SL-conceived Sudeten German Center to be built in Munich and which was to share space with the SL and the Sudeten German Archive. Underlying the power struggle, however, were fundamentally different visions of Sudeten German identity and what role the research and publications of the CC should play in reinforcing those distinct visions. The SL called for a strict concentration on Sudeten German-only historical research that would foster an exclusivist heritage of Sudeten Germans as a historically distinct ethnic group, and they attacked the multiethnic approach of the CC that focused on all cultures and nationalities of Bohemian society. The CC, with support from leaders of the AG, argued in favor of a comprehensive inclusivist focus that highlighted Sudeten German as well as Czech, Slovak, Jewish and other histories and emphasized cosmopolitanism and multiethnicity in the historical Czech lands.

This conflict, however, cannot be reduced to a simple institutional power struggle. AG and SL leaders of the time equally stress that these two organizations were not fundamentally at odds, as many AG leaders were also members of the SL and vice-versa. They tell instead that there were two separate camps within the larger Sudeten German umbrella organizations like the SL and the Council divided

between those with inclusivist and exclusivist views of Sudeten German identity and heritage.³²⁵ The only Sudeten German organization that these leaders claimed was too nationalistic to effectively cooperate with was the Witikobund, of which the SL speaker and chairman, Walter Becher³²⁶ was also member.³²⁷

The conflict that played out between the SL and the CC in the 1970s and 1980s, though carried out in the name of the SL, was in fact largely a product of Becher, who wrote a number of position pieces defining his view of Sudeten German identity that he and others felt the CC and its Bohemian outlook was not promoting. That the conflict over viewpoints and ideas took place within the SL as opposed to between the SL and other institutions is further evidenced by continual calls of the AG and Seliger Gemeinde to encourage their members to run for SL

³²⁵ Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014; Interview, Anton Otte, June 10, 2014; Interview, Berndt Posselt, March 4, 2016; Interview, Matthias Dörr, June 16, 2014.

³²⁶ Walter Becher (1912–2005) was one of the original activists involved in organizing Sudeten German lobby institutions after 1945, including being a founding member of the Council and its general secretary until 1982. He was assistant director of the SL from 1968 onward until he becoming its director in 1982, and he also served in the German Bundestag from 1965–1980. For more on his life, see: Walter Becher, *Zeitzeuge: Ein Lebensbericht* (Munich: Langen Muller, 1990).

³²⁷ Posselt and Olbert refrained from categorizing Becher as a fundamentally polarizing person or challenging individual to work with, and neither dismissed him as merely a radical Witikobund functionary. Posselt described him as a “very unique” person who was originally close to the Witikobund but who was a Bohemian at heart and wrote near his death that the Witikobund should not be allowed to be named after Adalbert Stifter’s *Witikonen* because they did not stand for German-Czech understanding; Interview, Berndt Posselt, March 4, 2016; Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

leadership positions to offset the strong representation of exclusivist-minded members, especially from the Witikobund.³²⁸

Origins of the Sudeten German Center

The conflict between the SL and CC emerged during planning for an initiative between the SL and the Bavarian government to erect a Sudeten German Center in Munich for the preservation and promotion of Sudeten German heritage and history in the 1970s. An earlier discussion about establishing a permanent center for expellees in Bavaria began in 1951 and led to the opening of the House of the German East (*Haus des deutschen Ostens*) in 1970. Throughout its planning and development, various representatives of the SL pushed for a floor in the house dedicated solely to Sudeten Germans, or for a separate center altogether. For the latter idea, the concept from the SL was to create a common “house for the political Sudeten German institutes,” including the CC in this concept.³²⁹

³²⁸ AG leaders also expressed their concerns about the Witikobund having too much influence in the SL and their working to marginalize the AG to the West German Cardinal and future pope, Joseph Ratzinger, in preparation for his celebration of mass at the 1979 Sudeten German Day; Themenvorschlag für Gespräch mit Erzbischof Kardinal Ratzinger am 14.5.1979, AG 1586. For internal discussions about more AG and Seliger Gemeinde members running for SL board positions, see: Durchschrift, Franz Ohmann an SL-Bundesgeschäftsstelle im Hause, November 11, 1979, AG 1586; Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, September 23, 1983, AG 132; Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, May 14, 1983, AG 132. See also rebuttals to accusations that the SL is overrepresented with Witikobund members: Letter, Walter Becher to Franz Olbert, November 15, 1979, AG 1586; and: Letter, Erich Kukuk to Herr Ullman, February 12, 1980, AG 1586.

³²⁹ Betreff: Besuch von Vertretern der SL (SL) bei Herrn Staatsminister, Vormerkung von Fritz Wittmann für Staatsminister Fritz Pirkel, December 6, 1968, BayHStA MarbLaFlü 2186.

The idea for a separate Sudeten German Center altogether gained traction in 1972 as three SL members and Bavarian ministerial employees began working behind the scenes to rally political support for a separate house. They found an open ear in Fritz Pirkl, Bavarian Minister for Employment, who was also responsible for overseeing the official state patronage (*Schirmherrschaft*) of Sudeten Germans that the Bavarian state declared in 1954.³³⁰ Pirkl announced the intention to erect a cultural house for Sudeten Germans at the 1973 Sudeten German Day and formed a working group to plan for its establishment, while also soliciting the political backing of Bavarian Minister-President Alfons Goppel.³³¹ Pirkl remained one of the core proponents and facilitators of erecting the Sudeten German Center up through its dedication, and worked closely with Becher and the SL, whose members comprised the bulk of the working group for the establishment of the house.³³²

Bavarian political support for the Sudeten German Center took place in the larger geopolitical context of Ostpolitik and the negotiation of the 1973 Treaty of Prague between the Federal Republic of Germany and the ČSSR. The treaty declared the 1938 Munich Agreement, the legal basis for the annexation of the Sudeten lands, to be void. This was something SL leaders and the Bavarian CSU party, to

³³⁰ Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 301.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 295–298.

³³² *Ibid.*, 296–305.

which the overwhelming majority of SL leaders belonged, had adamantly opposed, and it was part of the wider decline in expellee political influence in Bonn that began with the election of Brandt's SPD-led coalition government in 1969.³³³ The SL had previously held to the Munich Agreement as the legal basis for their claim to lost property and the right to return to their former homeland. With this basis effectively gone, and with expellees and their children having successfully integrated and largely prospered in West German society over the previous decade, Becher and many other Sudeten German political leaders feared that this integration would mean the end of Sudeten German legal claims: with the Munich Agreement repudiated, no representation of their claims in the Brandt regime, and without a strong and unified Sudeten German community, who or what would provide the basis for legitimizing their legal claims?³³⁴

Thus, planning for the Sudeten German Center took place at a critical turning point in expellee history: Sudeten German organizations not only had to contend with an aging population, dwindling numbers, and concerns over how to preserve a strong Sudeten German identity to legitimize legal claims, but they also faced increased marginalization in West German society. Their political influence was waning, and their opposition to Ostpolitik framed expellees as out of sync with the rest of society as ideas of a German "East" disappeared from the political and

³³³ Ibid., 405–423.

³³⁴ Walter Becher, "Der permanente Betrug," *Deutscher Ostdienst* 28, January 23, 1986, 1–2. For SL reactions to the Treaty of Prague, see: Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 405–412.

cultural mindset of West Germany. This dual crisis for Sudeten Germans heightened a sense of imperativeness and importance in defining the mandate and purpose of the Sudeten German Center as well as the CC and sparked heavy debate about what view of Sudeten German identity these institutions should promote.

From the beginning it was clear from ministerial discussions with the SL that the Sudeten German Center would serve as a symbol of defiance against Ostpolitik and the concessions made to Czechoslovakia in the Treaty of Prague. Discussions of the Sudeten German Center's mandate reflected the SL's continued insistence on the right to return to their former homes (*Heimatrecht*), a policy line that the Brandt regime abandoned, with phrases stating that the center should project the "spiritual and cultural emanations" of Sudeten Germans "internally and externally," referring to demonstrating their assertions of *Heimatrecht* toward West Germany's eastern neighbors.³³⁵

Mounting Tensions between the Collegium Carolinum and the Sudeten German Homeland Association

The political symbolism of the house, and being publically associated with the political arm of Sudeten Germans, the SL, were things that CC leaders were

³³⁵ Errichtung eines Sudetendeutschen Zentrums in München. Bericht über die bisherige Entwicklung und den gegenwärtigen Sachstand, July 4, 1975, BayHStA MArbLaFlü 2189. For similar statements see: Entwurf einer Ministerratsvorlage: Errichtung eines Sudetendeutschen Zentrums, BayHStA MArbLaFlü 2189; Zwischenbericht über die Fragen, die mit der Errichtung eines Sudetendeutschen Zentrums in München zusammenhängen, July 12, 1973, BayHStA MArbLaFlü 2188.

wary of from the initial planning stages for the Sudeten German Center. In an early meeting between the CC and SL discussing the concept of the Sudeten German Center as a site of Sudeten German identity and cultural preservation, the SL proceeded under the assumption that the CC would go along with the SL's concept, but CC board member Ferdinand Seibt took exception to the presumption that the CC would fall in line and serve the SL's agenda, raising among other objections that, "One cannot conduct Sudeten German research, only object-related research."³³⁶ This statement by Seibt drew a distinction in opinion between Becher and the CC concerning how to view Sudeten German history and heritage that defined the ensuing conflict, and it reflected the institutional and intellectual shift away from Sudeten German circles toward the wider West German and international scholarly community taken by the CC.

The CC was founded in 1956 two years after Bavaria took over patronage of the Sudeten Germans, and it received annual financing from the Bavarian state with funds earmarked under the *Schirmherrschaft*. Yet from its early years, its directors and board members hesitated to describe it as a "Sudeten German institution," opting to highlight the wording of its charter as a "research institute for the Bohemian lands" and directing research to issues of Czechs, Slovaks, and Bohemian

³³⁶ Niederschrift der Besprechung mit Vertretern sudetendeutscher Einrichtungen am 12.11.1973 im großen Sitzungssaal des Bayrischen Staatsministeriums für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, BayHStA MarbLaFLü 2190.

Jews in addition to Sudeten Germans.³³⁷ An overt shift to a more cosmopolitan scholarly approach began in 1958 when Karl Bosl took over as director and worked to reduce the SL and the Sudeten German Archive's influence within the CC, replacing many older personnel with younger scholars of a more European outlook. He declared his intention to disassociate the CC with Sudeten German "revanchism" by the "renouncing of all ideologies" and a turn to a "strict scientific approach" to the CC's work that would focus on "de-ideologization, de-mythification, objectification [and] Europeanization."³³⁸ The title of the CC's scholarly journal that began under Bosl, *Bohemia*, is telling in this regard.

Bosl's redirection of the CC toward a Bohemian approach began two and a half decades of conflict between the CC and SL that rested in ideological and political differences spearheaded by Bosl and Seibt on the one side, and Becher on the other.³³⁹ Over the next decade SL leaders often criticized that the CC "no longer

³³⁷ Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 346–349. Despite these early statements promoting Bohemian studies, the first two years of CC publications covered topics such as questions of a right to one's homeland (*Heimatrecht*), the state and constitutional law in the Czech lands, the Sudeten minority question between 1918 and 1938 and other Sudeten German-focused issues; Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 346–347.

³³⁸ Karl Bosl, "Zehn Jahre Collegium Carolinum, 1958–1968," in *Böhmen und seine Nachbarn: Gesellschaft, Politik und Kultur in Mitteleuropa*, ed. Karl Bosl (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1976), 275–276; for an overview of internal discussions within the CC see: Christoph Cornelißen, "Nur noch 'strenge Wissenschaftlichkeit.' Das CC im Gründungsjahrzehnt (1955–1965)," in *Geschichtsschreibung zu den böhmischen Ländern im 20. Jahrhundert. Wissenschaftstraditionen—Institutionen—Diskurse*, ed. Christiane Brenner et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2006), 348–356.

³³⁹ See an early letter on concerns about the direction of the CC by Walter Becher addressed to fellow Sudeten German politicians (*Volksgruppenpolitiker*): Letter, Walter Becher to Wenzel Jaksch, Hans Schütz, Johannes Strosche, Ottokar Chyla, Wolkmar Gabert, Frank Gaksch, and Richard Reitzner, March 28, 1958, BayHStA SDA NL Lodgman von Auen 1956–1962 XIV-10.

considers itself a ‘Sudeten German institution’” and complained that their connection to the SL was “only through coincidental relationships between individuals. The CC does not even invite board members of the SL to their scholarly presentations, conferences, and seminars.”³⁴⁰ SL leaders were growing discontented with the shift in focus of what they regarded as “their” research institute, and they used the creation of a Sudeten German Center as an opportunity to exert more influence over the CC’s research program and redirect it toward enhancing Sudeten German history and identity.

The Collegium Carolinum-Sudeten German Homeland Association Conflict and Competing Notions of Sudeten German Identity

The ensuing conflict was a messy affair involving attempts to coerce and strong-arm either side via political posturing and influencing public opinion. Previous scholarship has outlined some of these maneuvers elsewhere, yet the conflict emerges largely as a turf war between rival institutions that fails to grasp the deeper ideological rift between how differing camps within the Sudeten German community sought to remember and tell Sudeten German history and heritage.³⁴¹ As tensions rose between the SL and the CC during the early planning years of the Sudeten German Center, the conflict turned to a debate about what

³⁴⁰ Memo, Fritz Wittmann, Betreff: Besuch von Vertretern des Bundesvorstands der Sudetendeutschen Landsmannschaft bei Staatsminister Fritz Pirkl, December 6, 1968, BayHStA MarbLaFLü 72; Heinrich Kuhn, “Die Arbeit der kulturellen und wissenschaftlichen Institutionen der sudetendeutschen Volksgruppe,” *Literaturspiegel* 22 (1979): 9–21, here: 14.

³⁴¹ See: Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 307,346–352.

constituted Sudeten German identity—or for the CC, whether that concept was even useful or historically accurate. While SL leaders felt the CC should concentrate on Sudeten German issues for the good of the *Volksgruppe*, scholars of the CC followed wider value-driven trends in Western Europe that emphasized multiculturalism and European integration and identified themselves and their work more with the international scholarly community than with Sudeten Germans.³⁴² Moreover, the conflict centered on the function of history writing to reinforce a specific vision of group identity. Discussion over whether the CC would indeed join the new Sudeten German Center and under what terms became a debate between two competing notions of the present and future function of the CC—a research institution for the Bohemian lands that promoted ethnic inclusion, or an institute whose research aimed at documenting and preserving a distinct vision of a separate Sudeten German identity and heritage.

In a series of essays, Becher laid out his arguments for an exclusivist view of Sudeten German identity as he sought to coerce the CC to fall in line with his view in terms of their research program and to quite literally bring the CC under the roof of the SL. The first text was a 1975 speech published in the SL's *Sudetenland* bulletin titled "History and Historical Consciousness" in which he argued for a historically fixed concept of Sudeten German-ness (*Sudetendeutschtum*) as spiritually and

³⁴² The shift in focus was visible in the CC's first conference under director Bosl in 1959, titled "The Sudeten Question in European Perspective."

geographically the most central group of the German people, and “the ‘people at the heart of Europe’ in the true sense of the word,” referring to Sudeten Germans’ spiritual and political location at the crossroads of Central Europe.³⁴³ On the surface this statement seemed to echo views of AG leaders and other inclusivist Sudeten Germans that Sudeten German heritage represented modern European multiculturalism and integration, but here Becher intended for his statement to illustrate pride in Sudeten Germans as a separate group whose values and work ethic contributed to European progress, not as Sudeten Germans as a model for multiculturalism.

In a publication aimed at rallying support of the old and younger generations of Sudeten Germans around pride in their identity and inspiring cultural work to preserve it, Becher praised the significance of Sudeten Germans for historical European progress, but he argued that this heritage and identity risked extinction without continued historical research to nourish and foster a sense of unified identity and heritage.³⁴⁴ He laid out a list of suggested themes for research to strengthen Sudeten German’s self-consciousness that he would repeat in future

³⁴³ “*Es [Sudetendeutschum] ist im echten Sinne des Wortes ‘Herzvolk Europas,’*” cited from Becher’s recounting of this essay in: Walter Becher, “Identität und historisches Selbstverständnis der Sudetendeutschen,” presentation given at a summit at *Der Heiligenhof*, January 20, 1978, AG 829, 12.

³⁴⁴ Walter Becher, “Identität und Geschichtsbewusstsein,” AG 829; original publication came in *Sudetenland* 17 (1975).

essays and speeches over the coming decade.³⁴⁵ Becher referred to the CC as an institution with a duty to Sudeten Germans to pursue these themes, though for now he refrained from direct criticism and simply called on them to expand on his suggested themes in the future. Interestingly, Becher appealed to his audience by connecting the plight of Sudeten Germans and that of Palestinians led by Yasser Arafat, a comparison which became a popular theme among Sudeten Germans during the late 1970s and 1980s trying to relate the struggle for Heimat to a human rights issue that was more popular politically in post-1968 West Germany and was supported by recent United Nations resolutions concerning national minority rights.³⁴⁶

Conflict ramped up in 1977 when Bosl announced his intentions to end the CC's partnership with the Sudeten German Archive for a jointly-held library and instead to forge a partnership with the Munich Institute of East European Studies.³⁴⁷ Becher responded to this by threatening to redirect the CC's funding to a

³⁴⁵ These included the Sudeten German worker's movements, the origins of the social democrats, the history of Sudeten German cultural centers and activism, "people without a capital," and other themes that focused on the role of nationally-defined Sudeten German organizations in the agricultural development and industrialization of the Czech lands; Becher, "Identität und Geschichtsbewusstsein."

³⁴⁶ For a more in-depth look at how Sudeten Germans invoked the Palestinian cause to further their political aims in West Germany, see: Komska, "Heimat in the Cold War," 1-47. For the adoption of human rights as a legitimization of Sudeten German claims to the homeland, see: Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 405-406.

³⁴⁷ This institute has since relocated to Regensburg has been renamed the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies.

new research institute that would focus on Sudeten Germans exclusively.³⁴⁸ In 1978 Becher penned his second major essay on Sudeten German identity as part of a larger attempt to put additional pressure on the CC to move into the Sudeten German Center and maintain its ties with the SL and Sudeten German Archive.³⁴⁹ That January, Becher read the essay, titled “Identity and the Historical Self-Conception of Sudeten Germans,” at a summit at the Sudeten German educational institute *Der Heiligenhof* in Bad Kissingen, in which he criticized the previous work of the CC and argued for a “right to identity” inherent for all Sudeten Germans that the CC was failing to reinforce with its scholarship.³⁵⁰

Becher argued for a strict vision of Sudeten German identity that was distinctly separate and delineable from their Slavic neighbors in the Czech lands and needed to be remembered and preserved as such: “That which we call a people

³⁴⁸ The new institute would be called the *Collegium Sudeticum* and would hold Sudeten German issues as its main focus of research and publication. Becher argued that the purpose of the CC had always been to foster a self-consciousness and self-understanding of the Sudeten German people, while Bosl argued that the CC was an institute for the Bohemian lands, and he expressed concerns about maintaining close working relationships with the Sudeten German Archive and SL for fear of appearing biased to the wider academic community; *Besprechung des Bundesvorstandes der Sudetendeutschen Landsmannschaft mit dem Vorstand des Collegiums Carolinum am Dezember 20, 1977*, AG 1586. The concept of the *Collegium Sudeticum* was realized in 1979 with separate funding as the Sudeten German Academy of Sciences and Arts and is seated today in the Sudeten German House.

³⁴⁹ *Besprechung des Bundesvorstandes der Sudetendeutschen Landsmannschaft mit dem Vorstand des Collegiums Carolinum am Dezember 20, 1977*, AG 1586; Letter, Walter Becher to CC, January 3, 1978, AG 1586. Becher also wrote to Stingl requesting he appeal to Bosl on Becher’s behalf, though Stingl would remain neutral if not on Bosl’s side; Letter, Walter Becher to Josef Stingl, February 2, 1978, AG 1586.

³⁵⁰ Copies of this speech circulated widely within the various Sudeten German organs including the CC, AG, Seliger Gemeinde, Adalbert Stifter Verein and Witikobund; Walter Becher, “Identität und historisches Selbstverständnis der Sudetendeutschen,” presentation given at a summit at *Der Heiligenhof*, January 20, 1978, AG 829.

[*Volk*] or ethnic group [*Volksgruppe*] is a naturally given, legitimate area of life larger than the individual—a subdomain of humanity bestowed by the divine order of creation [*Schöpfungsordnung*] [...] Whoever nourishes this conviction [...] must prize and respect this [identity] as a requirement of its cohesion.”³⁵¹ For Becher, the need for preserving Sudeten German identity stemmed from the Brandt regime’s opening of relations to the east and the political marginalization of expellees, as he wrote: “a general dissolution of spiritual, religious and political values also disassembles national consciousness and allows the liberal-social regime and [new] relations to the East to place the commitment to German identity in question.”³⁵²

A central tendency of negotiating and fostering a sense of collective identity is to create historical narratives that reflect the values and contours of identity in the mind of those that hold it, and a primary emphasis of Becher’s essay argued that the CC was not fulfilling this function for Sudeten Germans. He wrote that, “to the protection of our right to identity belongs a historical consciousness that corresponds to this reality,” and he devoted a vast portion of his essay to the ways in which the CC and Bosl in particular were failing in this regard and damaging to Sudeten Germans. He singled out Bosl’s 1976 publication “Bohemia and its Neighbors” in which Bosl eschewed referencing Sudeten Germans as a distinct ethnic group and referred to Sudeten German-ness as “a late form of community

³⁵¹ Becher, “Identität und historisches Selbstverständnis,” 3.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.

consciousness [*Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein*], which ethnologically and sociologically eludes classification.”³⁵³ Becher criticized Bosl for “neutralizing” the history of the Bohemian lands and for largely excluding the term “Sudeten German-ness” from the lexicon.

Becher’s essay was a rallying call for Sudeten German unity under Becher’s exclusivist vision of the Sudeten German *Volksgruppe* and a declaration against the Bohemian outlook of the CC. Becher warned his audience that Bosl was “dangerous,” saying, “we should not indulge in the illusion that the man that has stood at the top of the CC founded by us [Sudeten Germans] is hereby declaring as a requirement of his historical writing the disappearance of Sudeten German-ness from the consciousness of our fellow men and the loss of his identity.”³⁵⁴ Becher ended his essay by praising Sudeten Germans’ role in developing the agriculture and economy of the Sudetenland that bound them as a distinct ethnic group, and he called on “all landmen, but especially the framers of our history writing, to praise the truth as the eye of our history and to never allow it to be distorted!”³⁵⁵

This highlighting of Sudeten Germans’ role in transforming the economic landscape of the Sudetenland was part of a redefinition of the basis for legitimizing Sudeten Germans’ claim to the homeland to fill the void left by the renunciation of the legal terms of the Munich Agreement in the 1973 Treaty of Prague. The

³⁵³ Karl Bosl, ed., *Böhmen und seine Nachbarn* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1976); Becher, “Identität und historisches Selbstverständnis,” 6–7.

³⁵⁴ Becher, “Identität und historisches Selbstverständnis,” 7–10.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

“Manifesto ’79”—a joint statement of goals by the SL and the Council presented at the 1979 Sudeten German Day gathering—encoded this new basis for legitimizing Sudeten Germans’ claims. It adopted Becher’s assertion of a “right to identity,” and it also highlighted Sudeten Germans’ historical role in tilling the countryside, developing the economy, and in the industrialization of the Czech lands. Next, the manifesto declared as a separate, single-sentence paragraph: “These accomplishments constitute the legitimate claim of Sudeten Germans to their ancestral homeland, irrespective of agreements and treaties.”³⁵⁶

The redirection to a historical-moral basis for legitimizing Sudeten Germans’ claim to the homeland helps explain the importance that Becher and others placed on preserving a distinct Sudeten German identity and heritage and why Becher fought so hard against the CC, which he felt was weakening the foundation for this claim. In Becher’s eyes, a CC that promoted a cosmopolitan, Bohemian outlook of society in the Czech lands and downplayed the historical existence of a distinctly separate Sudeten German ethnic group obfuscated the formative role that Sudeten Germans as a distinct minority group played in developing the Sudetenland and presented a direct threat to the (newly defined) legitimacy of Sudeten Germans’ claim to their homeland.

³⁵⁶ “The right to one’s homeland includes an inherent right to identity. The right to foster and preserve this [identity] is the right of all who avow themselves to a shared homeland.” Manifest ’79 der Sudetendeutschen Landsmannschaft und des Sudetendeutschen Rates, 1979, full text can be found in: Becher, *Zeitzeuge*, 465–467.

The CC's response to Becher's and other SL leaders' campaigns against it came primarily from Ferdinand Seibt, who was a former student of Karl Bosl, an active member of the AG since 1949, and the new head of the CC beginning in 1980.³⁵⁷ He exchanged a series of unproductive letters with Becher in the summer of 1980 where both gave arguments and accusations and reiterated their previously stated positions concerning the mandate of the CC and its research.³⁵⁸ Seibt also forwarded copies of this correspondence to Stingl, who circulated it among other AG leaders to find a common stance.³⁵⁹

Seibt then took his position to the pages of the Sudeten German periodical *Volksbote* and the *Sudetendeutsche Zeitung* in a seven-page essay titled "The CC and

³⁵⁷ Articles by Becher and other SL leaders at this time against the research outlook of the CC include: E.M., "Die Eigenkraft der Volksgruppe SL-Bundesvorstand tagte in München," *Volksbote*, May 2, 1980, 1; Walter Becher, "Die Gründungsintentionen des 'Collegium Carolinum,'" *Volksbote*, July 4, 1980, 10. Meanwhile, Becher had already begun pressing the relevant Bavarian ministries to have the CC's funding redirected to a new Collegium Sudeticum if the CC refused to move into the Sudeten German Center and align their research program with Becher's vision. The Bavarian Ministry of Employment's office under Pirkl supported Becher, while Hans Maier of the Bavarian Ministry of Culture felt the CC was operating within its mandate; Letter, Walter Becher to Alfons Goppel, February 24, 1978, AG 1586; Letter, Walter Becher to Fritz Pirkl, February 24, 1978, AG 1586; Letter, Walter Becher to Hans Maier, February 24, 1978, AG 1586.

³⁵⁸ Becher criticized the CC's *Bohemia* journal as "cheap, third-class pamphlets" that "distorted Sudeten German-ness from Czechoslovakian and Marxist perspectives," while Seibt challenged Becher to provide evidence of his accusations and asserted confidence in the public and international support and respect for the CC's body of work; Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to the SL Bundesvorstand, May 13, 1980, AG 829; Letter, Walter Becher to Ferdinand Seibt, May 19, 1980, AG 829; Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Walter Becher, June 12, 1980, AG 829; Letter, Walter Becher to Ferdinand Seibt, June 12, 1980, AG 829; Letter, Walter Becher to Ferdinand Seibt, June 19, 1980, AG 829.

³⁵⁹ Letter, Josef Stingl to Ernst Nittner, August 1, 1980, AG 829. Stingl cc'ed his letter to Nittner with copies of the correspondence between Seibt and Becher to Erich von Hoffmann, Paulus Sladek, Franz Olbert, Angelus Waldstein, and Seibt.

the Independence of Scholarship.”³⁶⁰ In this rebuttal to Becher, Seibt laid out an alternative vision of the role of the CC in presenting the history of the Czech lands grounded in historical research. Quoting the 1956 CC mandate which called for an institute for “the Bohemian lands,” Seibt argued that the need to encompass the entire scope of Bohemia was due to the historical reality that before the 19th century, “Sudeten German history” was actually a history of a multiethnic, non-nationally-delineated middle class. The attempt by Becher to focus on Sudeten German history was a mere projection of Becher’s idea of a culturally-distinct ethnic group onto a past whose reality did not reflect those views, with Seibt clarifying, “there is a long history of Sudeten Germans” but a “short Sudeten German history.”³⁶¹

In this essay and letter exchanges with Becher, Seibt articulated the interconnections between Sudeten Germans and wider Bohemian society that eschewed national separation, and he likened Becher’s desire to isolate Sudeten Germans in history to the political postulates and history writing of the National Socialists.³⁶² Seibt and the CC’s view was of historical multiculturalism and intertwined ethnicities in the Czech lands, and “Sudeten German history” was a study of the roots of nationalist conflict and the end of peaceful cohabitation

³⁶⁰ Ferdinand Seibt, Letter to the editorial board of *Volksbote*, May 12, 1980, AG 829; Ferdinand Seibt, “Das CC und die Unabhängigkeit der Wissenschaften,” AG 829; Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, July 18, 1980, AG 829.

³⁶¹ Seibt, “Das CC.”

³⁶² Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Walter Becher, June 12, 1980, AG 829.

between Germans and Czechs. Stingl echoed this sentiment in a letter to Pirkl where he wrote that the SL's push for "unity at any price" within the Sudeten German community was a "repeat of the developments back home before 1938."³⁶³ In this letter Stingl advocated for the CC and AG's alternative view of an inclusive stance toward German-Czech history, heritage and relations, saying the AG had achieved much reconciliation and understanding between Germans and Czechs through their outreach and their cooperation with Opus Bonum.

AG leaders took a tempered approach to the conflict that supported the CC and expressed their opposition to certain views of Becher while being sure not to generalize his ideas to the SL as a whole. Privately, they spoke of a "hardening" stance of the SL leadership that was not accepting the changing political and social times and that aspired to coerce all Sudeten German institutions under the SL and drown out opposing views.³⁶⁴ Publically, they published a resolution which spoke in favor of the CC in the conflict and praised their work. Their official statement was that the SL's calls to create a separate "Collegium Sudeticum" research institute to focus solely on Sudeten German history was "worthy of discussion" but that it should not turn into an opposing institute to the CC and should not divert any funding from the CC whatsoever.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Letter, Josef Stingl to Fritz Pirkl, August 12, 1980, AG 829.

³⁶⁴ Ernst Nitter, Bemerkungen zur Top 5 und 6 der Vorstandssitzung vom 4. Oktober, 1980, October 1, 1980, AG 132.

³⁶⁵ EntschlieÙung zur SL Diskussion über die Gründung eines Collegium Sudeticums, Führungskreis der AG, AG 829.

In July 1981 the AG published a longer statement that spoke to the heart of the identity debate that was behind the conflict between Becher and the CC. They expressed support for allowing a plurality of opinion among Sudeten Germans while also justifying the AG's support for promoting an inclusive, Bohemian identity of Sudeten Germans over the SL's desire to define Sudeten Germans as an exclusive group. Based on AG board member Ernst Nittner's observations in an internal memo called "Critical Remarks on Tendencies within the SL" and signed by the managerial board of the AG, the AG statement posed the questions of what exactly all Sudeten Germans supposedly had in common with each other, whether they were a cohesive group, and importantly, whether their historic situation in Bohemia had not bestowed them with a special duty to serve a bridging function to bring Germans and Czechs together into a common community.³⁶⁶ Whereas Becher sought to rally Sudeten Germans around an exclusivist identity for political ends, the AG saw promotion of an inclusive, multicultural Sudeten German identity as a tool, indeed even an obligation of Sudeten Germans, to promote reconciliation between the two peoples. The AG's viewpoint emphasized the plurality of philosophies, beliefs, and social interests among German inhabitants of the Czech lands over centuries which were nationally homogenized through "fervor and fanaticism" in the 19th and 20th centuries to the detriment of the region.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Ernst Nitter, "Kritische Bemerkungen zur Tendenzen in der SL," AG 132.

³⁶⁷ "Stellungnahme des Vorstands der AG," *Sonderdruck aus Mitteilungsblatt der AG, Juli/August 1981* 32. Jahrgang, Folge 4, AG 132.

The AG furthered this point by noting that the AG's own history of inclusivism and outreach followed wider European trends of the decades since 1945 that brought strong arguments against the nationalist model, and they warned that the SL's discourse on Sudeten German identity threatened to restrict a complex, multi-faceted history of relations stretching over centuries to the handful of problematic decades before World War II. The narrow term "Sudeten German," they wrote, cannot encompass the complex interconnectedness of Bohemian society and culture. Recent SL tendencies, they argued, brought insecurity, unrest, and hysteria to legitimate discussions of identity, turned off the younger and scholarly circles of Sudeten Germans, and brought unwanted negative press. Signaling their impression of a power struggle on the part of Becher, the AG reaffirmed that they were not questioning the importance of the SL, however they asserted that, "the [SL] cannot view itself as a superior organization or an authority for making value judgements" for all Sudeten Germans.³⁶⁸

Relations between the SL and the AG, as well as the entire conflict between the SL and the CC, exposed a path that Becher took to expand the SL's authority over the non-political Sudeten German organizations. Becher and other SL leaders often spoke in presumptuous terms of assuming a monopoly over Sudeten German voices internally when discussing taking a harder stance against the CC, and they

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

described themselves as the “legitimate representative of the *Volksgruppe*” in their letters to the AG, CC and Bavarian ministries on the CC conflict.³⁶⁹ According to their mandate they were indeed the legitimate *political* representative to government organs, but here Becher was attempting to claim a monopoly over all Sudeten German voice and opinion concerning identity and the CC.³⁷⁰

When the AG spoke out during the CC-SL conflict, Becher tried to reign them in and align them with the SL’s position. Becher wrote to Stingl that he was “able to accept” the AG’s statement on the CC conflict only if the AG publically held to their position that the idea of creating a Collegium Sudeticum was worthy of discussion. Still, Becher discouraged the AG from publically disagreeing with the SL: “I do not find it very useful when the AG—for whatever reason—raises objections here, because the state regime must then draw the impression that the Sudeten German side is of split opinion.”³⁷¹ To avoid this, Becher asked Stingl to task his colleagues in the AG with educating themselves on the conflict and attached a copy of his 1978 essay “Identity and the Historical Consciousness of Sudeten Germans.”

³⁶⁹ Niederschrift über die 9. Sitzung des VI. Bundesvorstandes der Sudetendeutschen Landsmannschaft on 2.2.79, November 12, 1979, AG 1586. See also the collection of correspondence between Becher and the AG, CC and Bavarian ministries in AG 829.

³⁷⁰ These institutional power moves played out in regional AG offices as well, with the North Rhine-Westphalia office reporting that they had to remind SL representatives directly that they AG was an independent organization and did not blindly follow the SL’s lead; Protokoll, Vorstandssitzung der AG, December 22, 1979, AG 131.

³⁷¹ Letter, Walter Becher to Josef Stingl, May 16, 1980, AG 829.

The Collegium Carolinum-Sudeten German Homeland Association Conflict Comes to Resolution

As the public relations campaigns of both Seibt and Becher ramped up in 1981 and 1982, two major changes finally resolved the conflict.³⁷² The first change was political, and involved Hans Maier of the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, whose office was responsible for administering state funds under the *Schirmherrschaft* to the CC.³⁷³ After years of maintaining that the CC was operating within its mandate as a research institute for the Bohemian lands independent of the SL, Maier switched to Pirkl's and the SL's position and warned the CC that they would face significantly reduced state funding were they not to move into the Sudeten German Center.³⁷⁴

However, after nearly a decade the conflict would not be easily resolved. Pirkl had been increasingly active in attempting to bring both sides together since

³⁷² Stefan Dietrich, "Die 'Bekenntnisgeneration' löst die 'Erlebnisgeneration' ab," *Die Welt*, May 25, 1982; Oskar Hatz, "Blick hinter die Kulissen," *Passauer Neue Press*, May 22/23, 1982; Hermann Rudolph, " 'Es gibt unheilbare Versehrungen.' Sudetendeutsche wollen das CC umfunktionieren," *Die Zeit*, May 7, 1982; Ferdinand Seibt, "Kann es eine Sudetendeutsche Geschichte geben?" *Die Welt*, March 17, 1982; Martin Rehm, "Ackermann-Gemeinde korrigiert Becher. Lob für Arbeit des Collegiums Carolinum," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 24, 1982; Interview, Walter Becher in "Rundschau" on *Bayrischer Rundfunk*, February 14, 1982.

³⁷³ Report, Kießling to the bayrische Staatskanzlei, October 8, 1979, AG 829; Letter, Hans Maier to Josef Stingl, September 18, 1981, AG 1618.

³⁷⁴ Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, February 2, 1981, AG 1618. For previous reports of Maier's support for the CC's position, see: Report, Kießling to the bayrische Staatskanzlei, October 8, 1979, AG 829; Letter, Hans Maier to Josef Stingl, September 18, 1981, AG 1618.

1980, with minimal success.³⁷⁵ Newly-elected Bavarian Minister-President Franz Josef Strauß also proposed a resolution that same year in which the CC would not join the Sudeten German Center but would preserve the jointly-held library with the Sudeten German Archive, and the SL would gain representation in the CC's decision-making process. Becher refused this offer, though Seibt agreed to it.³⁷⁶ In 1982 Maier proposed a set of guidelines for the CC's entry into the center that contained a number of provisions that the CC board found unpalatable, including creating a separate Sudeten German department within the CC that would receive half of the CC's overall budget. If the SL was not willing to compromise on this point, Seibt threatened a mass exodus of the CC's administrative board as well as a majority of its researchers who were prepared to resign their posts in protest.³⁷⁷

A second major development helped resolve the conflict and bring the CC into the center with all its members. In 1982 Becher stepped down as chairman of the SL and Franz Neubauer was elected as his successor. Neubauer was also a

³⁷⁵ Letter, Josef Stingl to Fritz Pirkl, August 12, 1980, AG 829. Pirkl appeared resigned in 1981, writing to Maier not to bother with organizing a meeting with Stingl and Becher to discuss a resolution, saying such a meeting would not be useful [*zweckdienlich*]. He seemed to have a pulse on the issue after years of involvement, because Becher turned down a separate invitation from Maier later that year to meet with him and Seibt, saying, "I do not see it as expedient for me to once again lead a discussion with individuals who are not official dialogue partners of the Bavarian state regime for the issue in question." Letter, Fritz Pirkl to Hans Maier, June 10, 1981, AG 1618; Letter, Walter Becher to Hans Maier, September 3, 1981, AG 1618.

³⁷⁶ Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, February 18, 1982, AG 1618; Letter Hans Maier to Josef Stingl, September 18, 1981, AG 1618; Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Franz Josef Strauß, September 25, 1981, AG 1618.

³⁷⁷ Letter, Gerhard Hanke in the name of Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, August 31, 1982, AG 1618. Seibt also expressed a firm conviction to Stingl that the SL should not be officially associated with the CC in any way; Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, May 26, 1981, AG 1618.

member of the AG, and Stingl referred to him as a friend.³⁷⁸ Although Becher had internal support within the SL in the conflict and many of his supporters still remained, he nevertheless was the driving force within the SL and their voice and face to the public, and much of the tension with the CC rested in personal animosity toward Becher and his narrow view of Sudeten German identity that had developed over the preceding years. While his succession by Neubauer did not bring any major platform changes for the SL, private correspondence indicates that Becher's absence at the negotiating table had reduced tensions significantly and enabled a reset of discussions.³⁷⁹

The increased intervention and ultimate decision of the Bavarian ministries as well as Strauß's more active role took place during an important turning point in West German politics. The 1982 election brought the Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union*, hereafter, CDU) back as the ruling party in Bonn with Helmut Kohl as chancellor, ending more than a decade of expellee issues being ignored in Social Democrat-led coalition governments. Strauß and Kohl had been embroiled in a fierce leadership battle within the CDU/CSU coalition for much of the 1970s, which included Strauß temporarily annulling the CDU/CSU alliance in

³⁷⁸ Letter, Josef Stingl to Fritz Pirkel, June 15, 1982, AG 1618.

³⁷⁹ In his acceptance speech Neubauer made a blanket statement that the SL's goals would proceed without "ifs or buts"; Claus-Einar Langen, "Bayern ist nicht nur Schirmland der Sudetendeutschen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 1, 1982. For statements that tensions had reduced through Becher's retirement, see: Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, May 24, 1982, AG 1618; Letter, Josef Stingl to Fritz Pirkel, June 15, 1982, AG 1618; Letter, Josef Stingl to Josef Jungschafer, May 25, 1982, AG 1618.

the Bundestag after Kohl's failed 1976 bid as the union's chancellor candidate, and Strauß managed to displace Kohl as the union's candidate for the 1980 election.³⁸⁰ The power struggle remained after Kohl's rise as chancellor in 1982, and Strauß was shut out of nominations for prominent positions in the regime as head of the Ministry of Finance, the Foreign Office, and Ministry of Defense.³⁸¹

One of the legacies of Ostpolitik for expellees was their marginalization by, and widespread abandonment of, the liberal SPD and Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, hereafter, FDP) parties, and over the course of the 1970s Sudeten Germans formed a stronger partnership with the Bavarian state majority party, CSU, than the CDU, which was now in the national minority.³⁸² But after the 1982 election Kohl began courting expellee support in Bavaria by appearing at rallies and pandering to expellees by questioning the permanence of Germany's Eastern borders for a future reunified Germany.³⁸³ This made the Kohl-Strauß rivalry a continuing issue in the struggle over the support and partnership of Sudeten Germans during Strauß's tenure as Minister-President of Bavaria. Also

³⁸⁰ Manfred Behrend, *Franz Josef Strauß: Eine politische Biographie* (Cologne: ISP Verlag, 1995), 175–179 and 210–216; on the budding rivalry in the early 1970s, see also: Geoffrey Pridham, *Christian Democracy in Western Germany: The CDU/CSU in Government and Opposition, 1945–1976* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 221–231.

³⁸¹ Behrend, *Franz Josef Strauß*, 239–246.

³⁸² Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 255; Hopp, *Machtfaktor auch ohne Machtbasis*, 124–125.

³⁸³ In one example, Kohl said in a speech to expellees that the official recognition of Poland's borders by West Germany did not necessarily apply to "a future reunited Germany"; Helmut Kohl at a Bund der deutschen Vertriebenen rally, September 2, 1984, in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Mieczyslaw Tomalka, eds., *Bonn—Warschau 1945–1991: Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen. Analyse und Dokumentation* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1992), 368.

interesting is the possibility that Strauß may have felt a need to make up lost ground with the SL, since there was SL protest against Strauß during his 1980 bid for chancellor due to a belief that SL members were inadequately represented in his list for Bundestag members and cabinet positions.³⁸⁴

It was in this context that the Bavarian regime took on a more active role in negotiating the CC-SL conflict to resolution in a way that left both sides happy and with Strauß in their good graces. The increased action from the Bavarian government, along with the important absence of Becher from the negotiating table, led to negotiations that enabled the CC to move into the Sudeten German Center largely on its preferred terms. It secured assurances that the SL would cease its campaign to push the CC to align with the exclusivist view of Sudeten German identity that Becher promoted, while consenting to SL representation in the CC board's decision-making process.³⁸⁵ With the overt conflict over identity and the CC's research program effectively over, Seibt was more willing to move the CC under the same roof as the SL, though he still had to fight SL attempts to create a sub-department of the CC specifically for Sudeten German research.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Letter, Unnamed AG member to Walter Becher, May 12, 1980, AG 829.

³⁸⁵ Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, February 24, 1981, AG 1618; Letter, Gerhard Hanke in the name of Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, August 31, 1982, AG 1618. In a 1981 letter to Hans Maier Bosl wrote that the CC would "never in any way profess itself to any form of 'Sudeten German identity'" if it joined the Sudeten German House; Letter, Karl Bosl to Hans Maier, August 8, 1981, AG 1618.

³⁸⁶ Letter, Ferdinand Seibt to Josef Stingl, April 19, 1983, AG 1618.

The Sudeten German House (renamed from “Center” at the request of the CC) was opened in 1985, and Strauß was able to present himself as a champion of Sudeten German interests during its inauguration, saying, “The free state of Bavaria has taken a legal, political and moral obligation to represent the issues of the Sudeten German ethnic group by all possible means and to protect the existence of the *Volksgruppe* [...] and to defend their *Heimatrecht*.”³⁸⁷ The SL-CC conflict over the CC’s inclusion, though over, remained testament to the differing currents of opinion within the Sudeten German community concerning how to portray Sudeten German heritage and identity. For Becher and his supporters, the exclusivist view was intertwined with their political goal of restitution and a right to return to their former homeland. Given Sudeten German’s declining influence in national politics since the late 1960s, these were political demands which they could only hope to realize through strength in numbers, solidarity, and a unity of opinion. To this end they sought to exert their influence over the CC to create a program of historical research that would reinforce their version of Sudeten German identity and legitimize their political claims.

Conversely, the CC and AG held a vastly differing view of what it meant to be Sudeten German. While the AG still held to the idea of a right to return, this right rested in shared heritage with Czechs, and they sought to achieve it through

³⁸⁷ Quote on display at the Sudeten German House, cited from: Franzen, *Der vierte Stamm Bayerns*, 305.

dialogue and reconciliation, not political demands. AG leaders had spent the entirety of their existence building an institutional culture and identity that emphasized pluralities of opinion and highlighted the peaceful cohabitation of Germans and Czechs in centuries past as grounds for future reconciliation. Thus, they supported the Bohemian outlook of the CC and spoke out in their favor when that institution faced the threat of becoming a research mill for the SL.

In some respects this conflict was born from two different reactions to the crisis of existence that Sudeten German organizations were facing in the 1970s as the older generation with firsthand memories of the homeland steadily declined. The SL sought to meet this crisis by rallying Sudeten Germans and their descendants around a proud identity, but this identity needed historical reinforcement. One aspect of the research that Becher called for was recording testimonies of eye witnesses to the former homeland before they passed away.³⁸⁸ But the most important theme for the SL in combating the membership and legitimacy crisis was the oft-stated cry to “preserve the identity of the *Volksgruppe*.” The AG faced the same membership crisis since the late 1960s, but their reaction was radically different, moving away from terms like *Volksgruppe* and even

³⁸⁸ Becher, “Die Gründungsintentionen des ‘Collegium Carrolinum.’ ”

“Sudeten German” and focusing on outreach to Czechs, European integration,³⁸⁹ and cultural exchange.

This outlook mirrors the discourses found in the Czech identity and history debates taking place at the same time. Czechs faced a set of monumental social and political changes and challenging circumstances that were vastly different from those facing Sudeten Germans in West Germany, yet the responses found in the rewriting of expulsion history mirrored the same values of understanding and cooperation that the AG and CC showed. Actors on both sides adopted a multicultural, inclusive approach to the identity of former inhabitants of the Czech lands as a foundation for future integration in the European community, and both sides worked to create history-writing that would reflect those values. What resulted from these concurrent events was the manifestation of a cosmopolitan identity based on a particular vision of historic German-Czech relations in Central Europe. As the following section illustrates, outreach associated with this vision was not restricted to AG members or the CC, but also included many other activists within the SL and other West German institutions.

³⁸⁹ A symbolic example of this difference can be found in the same *Volksbote* edition. On the same page that Becher was arguing about the founding intentions of the CC and defending the right to identity of the *Volksgruppe*, there was a report of an AG-organized youth trip to Luxemburg and Trier to learn about the European Community, local monuments, and historical sites as “origin[s] of Europe” and sites of German-French reconciliation, because it was “important to strengthen the historical consciousness to be able to better understand [one’s] neighbors.” see: F.B., “Kurz berichtet: Aus der AG Bamberg und Eichstätt,” *Volksbote*, July 4, 1980, 10.

The Paneuropean Union and Sudeten German-Czech Cooperation

The CC-SL conflict and Becher's exclusivist view of Sudeten German identity did not define the entire SL or its members. For starters, his replacement, Neubauer, was an AG member who helped maintain positive relations on an institutional level by speaking at AG engagements as the SL's leader.³⁹⁰ Many more SL members were involved in various levels of contact and cooperation with Czech émigrés and Czechs in Czechoslovakia, but much of these activities took place outside the official program of the SL through organizations like OB and the Paneuropean Union. The Paneuropean Union—West Germany played an important role in cooperating with OB and bringing Sudeten Germans, particularly younger ones, into activism directed at Czechoslovakia, and this took place largely through the personality of Bernd Posselt.

Posselt was a friend and colleague of Otto von Habsburg, president of the International Paneuropean Union since 1973, during whose campaigns for the European Parliament Posselt also worked closely with Wolfgang Stock. Posselt describes himself as a "European" from his early life onward, and as both an expellee child and a Catholic, he worked closely together with the AG and Opus Bonum, especially Opus Bonum leaders Milan Kubes and Richard Belcredi. For

³⁹⁰ Neubauer was one of the principle speakers at the AG's national summit in Limburg in 1982; Paleczek, "Übersicht," 156.

Posselt, Sudeten German-Czech reconciliation and the drive toward European unity and were “two sides of the same coin.”³⁹¹

Because of his work with von Habsburg, whom as the former last crown prince of Austria-Hungary the ČSSR declared an enemy of the state, Posselt was denied visas to Czechoslovakia for most of the 1980s until his planned 1988 trip to Brno. Despite this, he was involved in assisting underground operations there long before he visited Müller’s seminars in 1989. From the end of the 1970s onward Posselt organized a weekly courier service to Prague with the help of Kubes. They operated by sending a courier to Prague via direct bus connection, and a third person would place a suitcase in the cargo room that the courier had never seen, usually filled with messages, books and manuscripts, printers, binders, or other technical equipment. The courier would wait to be the last off the bus at its final stop and would simply take the last remaining suitcase and be on their way.

Because they did not know what the suitcase looked like and there was no chance of their fingerprints being on it, they were (usually) safe from reprisals in the event border police searched the suitcase.³⁹²

³⁹¹ Posselt was often invited to dinner at the Belcredi’s during his younger years, and he describes Kubes, Belcredi, Opasek, Olbert, Stingl, and himself as a very close group who were constantly together; Interview, Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016.

³⁹² On at least two occasions Posselt’s couriers were arrested and detained. One was a young SL member, Daniel Langhans, and the other was Martin Leitner, whose temporary detention under suspicious circumstances is referenced in chapter three; Interview, Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016; Bernd Posselt, “Erstgeburtsrecht auf Europa,” http://de.paneuropa.org/index.php/pan/publikationen/aktuelle_beitraege/erstgeburtsrecht_auf_europa_von_bernd_posselt_mdep (accessed April 4, 2016).

The couriers were one avenue that involved young Sudeten Germans from the AG and the SL in clandestine operations assisting the Czech underground, as Posselt and Kubes used many volunteers from both those institutions. Olbert was always cautious in keeping official shipments in the AG's name from transporting anything blatantly illegal like contraband items, but this did not mean that he did not approve of individual members of the AG or Junge Aktion engaging in such activities.³⁹³ Posselt recalls Olbert often referring young, adventurous Sudeten Germans to him and Kubes to travel as couriers and working behind the scenes to help with organization and ensure safe and successful trips.³⁹⁴ Posselt's work also overlapped with some of the same people in Prečan's smuggling channels. The two often met at Opus Bonum meetings and Kubes also worked closely with Prečan, yet Posselt and Prečan both kept their courier organization separate for security and redundancy reasons.³⁹⁵

Over the course of his activism before 1989 Posselt built a network Czech contacts that included émigrés like Tigrid, Opasek, Karel Schwarzenberg, and Kubes as well as Czechs at home like Vaclav Malý, Václav Havel, and Rudolf Kučera. Beginning in 1984, Posselt was responsible for coordinating Paneuropean Union contacts with civic opposition groups in Eastern Europe, but because he could not obtain a visa for Czechoslovakia most of his contacts with Czechs took place in

³⁹³ Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

³⁹⁴ Interview, Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.; Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

Hungary where he frequently traveled to. His extensive contacts with Hungarian dissidents later enabled Posselt to organize the August 1989 Paneuropean Picnic on the Hungarian-Austrian border. During the picnic the border was symbolically opened for a few hours and over six hundred East Germans crossed the border into Austria, paving the way for a larger exodus of East Germans to the West via Hungary in the months before the final collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Kučera was an important contact for Posselt and Kubes which proved lucrative for both sides in the long run. Kučera received a steady supply of printing machines and materials from the Paneuropean Union which enabled the widespread proliferation of his *Střední Evropa* journal.³⁹⁶ When Stock recruited Posselt to visit Müller's seminars in Brno in October 1989, Posselt used the opportunity to travel to Prague afterwards to meet Kučera in person and recruit him to form an underground Paneuropean Union branch in Czechoslovakia. Happy to finally be meeting the man who had helped his operations so much, upon Posselt's arrival Kučera ceremoniously placed a five-liter gas canister filled with South Moravian white wine on the table in preparation for a long night. The two sat until the morning discussing the Paneuropean Union, Kučera's journal and other activities, and the future of Central Europe. Kučera readily agreed to begin a Czechoslovak Paneuropean Union branch, which later became a branch for

³⁹⁶ Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014; Interview Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016. The JHEF supported Kučera primarily with stipends as well as books and essays from the West.

Bohemia and Moravia after 1993 and whose president Kučera remains in 2016. At around five o'clock in the morning, with the wine gone and Kučera due at work, Kučera left for his job at the cement factory and Posselt boarded a train back to Munich, having successfully made a new friend and important contact that he would capitalize on for German-Czech relations after 1989.³⁹⁷

Sudeten Germans Visit the Homeland: The Ackermann Gemeinde's

Heimatsreisen

The 1980s were characterized by the extensive travel of people, books, and materials back and forth across the Czechoslovak border, and Sudeten Germans were no exception. Early AG-organized trips to Czechoslovakia began in the late 1960s, but the Warsaw Pact invasion and a tightening of visas in the 1970s temporarily halted these trips. They picked up again in the late 1970s and expanded through the course of the 1980s. Trips ranged in size from a handful of travelers to tourist groups of twenty to thirty. The trips typically served the dual purposes of assisting and expanding the AG's large network of contacts with Catholic parishes in Czechoslovakia, while also serving as pilgrimages for Sudeten Germans and their children visiting their homeland and create opportunities for interaction and discussion with Czechs. Some trips were organized under the guise of vacations for young AG and Junge Aktion members but were in fact coordinated

³⁹⁷ Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014; Interview Bernd Posselt, March 4, 2016.

with Czech youth groups who would coincidentally be leading youth retreats at the same camping grounds and other installations.³⁹⁸ Trips were often very emotional and educational experiences for participants. After passing the Czechoslovakian border, one visitor in a large tour group turned to her elderly mother, both with tears in their eyes, and said, “it has finally come. We are back in Czechoslovakia now,” and she wrote that this simple sentence meant more to both of them than she could ever convey in words.³⁹⁹ In addition to personal emotional experiences, these trips provided an opportunity to meet and befriend Czechs living in their former villages and regions, often provoking tearful and emotional goodbyes when they had to part ways again.⁴⁰⁰

Olbert was a frequent participant in these trips, having finally been able to secure a visa in the late 1970s after nearly a decade of annual visa rejections. Olbert typically drove separately to have more freedom to meet with contacts during official tour visits. On one occasion Olbert was leading a student group and skipped an afternoon tour to meet secretly with Czech priests to discuss their samizdat operations and what assistance the AG could provide, and during the 1980s Olbert remained the most frequent AG traveler and builder of relationships with Czech clergy.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ *Junge Aktion Festschrift*, 74–75.

³⁹⁹ Trip Report, unsigned, Vertriebene in die alte Heimat, June 17, 1989, AG 1129.

⁴⁰⁰ Trip Report, unsigned, Studien-und Wanderfahrt in die Tatra und Zips, September 2–10, 1989, AG 1129.

⁴⁰¹ Trip Report, Franz Olbert, Streng vertraulicher Aktenvermerk für Herrn Prälaten Prof. Dr. Josef Rabas, May 23–28, 1983, AG 1152.

Olbert and the AG had an important contact in the figure of František Tomášek, who was secretly ordained as a Cardinal by Pope Paul VI in 1976 and appointed Archbishop of Prague in 1977. Tomášek was a vocal supporter of the Prague Spring reforms and remained a critic of government policies, including the formation of the regime-sponsored organization for the Catholic clergy, *Pacem in terris*, which lasted from 1971 to 1989 and pushed its priests to take instruction from the Party over the Vatican. Tomášek had to walk a fine line between following his faith and loyalty to Rome while not provoking unnecessary punitive action of the regime against the clergy and parishes in Czechoslovakia he presided over. After the publishing of the Charter 77 petition, Tomášek penned a statement on behalf of the Catholic Church that only said, “We do not belong to the signatories of Charter 77” while not denouncing the document itself. He then went on to clarify that only he as the archbishop could speak for Czech Catholics, a statement aimed at delegitimizing the critical statements against Charter 77 that were swiftly issued by the Czech and Slovak *Pacem in terris* organizations.⁴⁰²

Tomášek was instrumental in helping the AG build an expansive network of contacts, as previous AG practices of identifying and contacting clergy directly ran

⁴⁰² Erklärung der Ordinarien der Tschechischen Sozialistischen Republik, AG 506; “Bischöfe und kirchliche Institutionen zu Erklärung gegen Charta genötigt,” *Katholische Presse*, February 3, 1977, 3–4, AG 506.

the risk of endangering the recipient.⁴⁰³ He gave Olbert a list of 200 clergy in desperate need during Olbert's first meeting with him in the late 1970s/early 1980s, and the list of AG contacts with Czech clergy swelled to 1,258 by 1989.⁴⁰⁴ Tomášek remained a regular contact person for Olbert and other AG visitors, and he helped spread the AG network to include other prominent dissident Catholics clergy like Vaclav Malý and Josef Zvěřina as well as non-clergy dissidents like Havel and Václav Benda.⁴⁰⁵ All of these figures visited the AG in Munich after 1989 and became important partners in AG summits and events aimed at promoting understanding and reconciliation during the 1990s.⁴⁰⁶

During their trips to Czechoslovakia, Olbert and other AG leaders travelled extensively to meet with as many contacts as possible to deliver stipends, aid, materials, and to discuss the concerns of the parishes. The most common requests from the Czech side were religious books (by far the most frequent and heavily

⁴⁰³ An internal AG memo from 1976 warned all AG members to refrain from contacting any Czech clergy directly or from visiting them in person, citing day- and week-long interrogations that were taking place for clergymen with contacts to the West; Memo, Sozialwerk der AG, February 3, 1976, AG 667.

⁴⁰⁴ Olbert could not recall the exact year of his first encounter with Tomášek and the author could not find specific evidence establishing this year in the archives; Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014; Namenskartei-Priesterkartei des Sozialwerks der AG, index of names for the Ackermann Gemeinde archive in Munich.

⁴⁰⁵ Josef Zvěřina was a theologian who had been a prisoner of both the National Socialist and Communist regimes. He was a signatory of Charter 77 and later became one of the founding members of the Civic Forum in November 1989.

⁴⁰⁶ For reports on these individuals' first official visits to the AG in Munich after 1989, see AG file 128 in the AG archive.

stressed request), copiers, binders, printers, Tusex money⁴⁰⁷, medications, and the occasional car for transporting religious samizdat.⁴⁰⁸ Most of the support the AG organized was technically legal, even if the reasons behind some of the requests were not.

There remained an element of danger for AG visitors, since trips frequently combined smuggling with official visits. On one occasion, an unmarked box containing a brand new copy machine hidden underneath the suitcases was discovered by the border police, but the tour guide convinced the guard not to open it, saying it contained her dirty laundry and pressed him as to why he absolutely had to see it.⁴⁰⁹ On another occasion all the travelers had to disembark the bus and transfer to a train due to the driver's visa being expired. The border guard at the train station was unprepared to thoroughly search the belongings of some forty people now at his station, and travelers managed to pass the bags containing contraband back and forth behind their backs to keep them away from the overwhelmed guard. This prompted one of the children on board to ask his mother, "Mommy, I thought we're not supposed to smuggle?" She replied, "We're not smuggling for our own profit. We're smuggling for the dear lord."⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ Tusex money was currency which could be used to buy otherwise unobtainable imported goods at special Tusex shops.

⁴⁰⁸ Trip Report, Franz Olbert, Streng vertraulicher Aktenvermerk für Herrn Prälaten Prof. Dr. Josef Rabas, May 23–28, 1983, AG 1152; Trip Report, unsigned, Aktenvermerk, ČSSR-Reise vom 23. Bis 25. Juni 1989, AG 1129.

⁴⁰⁹ Dieter Salomon, "Schmugel für den lieben Gott," in Paleczek, *Integration und Dialog*, 56.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

Those traveling outside of the groups naturally faced even more danger. On one occasion Olbert was searched at the border and interrogated about papers he carried with him, but he was able to convince the border guard, who did not read German well, that they were innocuous official correspondence to the Husák regime and had to be allowed through due to diplomatic protocol. Olbert later recalled slyly, “They were actually letters of protest, but if he doesn’t read them...”⁴¹¹ Another early visitor had a small amount of legal gifts confiscated at the border under suspicious circumstances that involved high-ranking officials being called out to interrogate her for several hours about who she knew and where she was going. Upon learning of this, her contact person for the gifts, a nun, would only speak to her in a public park and recommended that she leave immediately and meet with no one else in order to protect the network.⁴¹²

The Underground Church and the “Parallel Polis”

Occasions like these and others where discussions only took place with loud music playing, in public places, or were entirely written down and then burned, gave Olbert and other AG visitors a personal glimpse of the very real danger of reprisals that church organizers and parishioners faced.⁴¹³ The Czechoslovak

⁴¹¹ Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

⁴¹² Trip Report, unsigned, Bericht über meine diesjährige Reise in die ČSSR im Oktober 1982, AG 1152.

⁴¹³ Trip Report, Franz Olbert, Streng vertraulicher Aktenvermerk für Herrn Prälaten Prof. Dr. Josef Rabas, May 23–28, 1983, AG 1152; Trip Report, Stoujck, Kurzbericht über Kontakte mit Priestern etc. bei der Fahrt in ČSSR im August 1984, AG 1152; Trip Report, Heinz, Kurzbericht von der Prag-Fahrt, November 3, 1986, AG 1048.

regime strongly repressed religious education and practice from the Stalinist era onward, and although imprisonment and persecution of clergy drastically reduced during Normalization compared to the 1950s, clergy were still routinely subjected to house searches, interrogations, and harassment. Clergy were very happy to receive visitors and gifts from the West, with one group of priests telling Olbert that his visit was the best Christmas gift they had in years, saying, "You must understand, we are trapped here. We live like in a prison."⁴¹⁴ Religious education was heavily suppressed, and harassment at work or being barred from university studies and forms of employment, like teaching, were regular occurrences for those participating in church activities.⁴¹⁵

New enrollees at seminaries were interrogated at length, harassed, and otherwise discouraged from becoming priests, leading to a dire lack of ordained priests. In 1982 there was roughly one priest for every four parishes in Czechoslovakia, and although seminary enrollment increased somewhat in the following years, Tomášek estimated in 1987 that he would still need one thousand new priests to adequately staff all the dioceses.⁴¹⁶ Much of the church was driven underground in order to survive and continue to provide pastoral care for

⁴¹⁴ Trip Report, Franz Olbert, Aktenvermerk, Gespräch mit Erzbischof František Tomášek am 19. Mai 88 in Prag, AG 1129.

⁴¹⁵ Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," 151–152. See also personal accounts of Catholic parishioners harassed for church attendance in: Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke, *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 36–37.

⁴¹⁶ Pedro Ramet, "The Czechoslovak Church under Pressure," *The World Today* 38 (1982): 355–360; Trip Report, unsigned, Kurzbericht von einer ČSSR Reise vom 11. bis 13.01.87, AG 1048.

parishioners. Rites like baptisms and marriage ceremonies were often performed secretly in private homes to protect the parents and children alike from reprisals, whether from authorities, employers and co-workers, or to spare children from the ridicule of fellow schoolmates. Priests also reported to the AG a growing movement of “home churches,” or private religious discussion groups and mass celebrations held secretly in apartments much the same way that academic seminars were driven underground.⁴¹⁷ The underground church included hundreds of secretly ordained priests, including a number of female priests.⁴¹⁸

The underground experience of Catholic and Protestant churches led to a similar unifying process between clergy and dissidents that took place among Czech émigrés. Persecuted clergy sat in the same prisons, worked the same menial factory jobs, and experienced the same repressed status and general police harassment as non-confessional dissidents, which helped to build a level of solidarity and community between two groups which otherwise would not have

⁴¹⁷ Trip Report, Maria Weiß, Bericht über meine Aufenthalt in Mähren: 29.4–9.5.84, AG 1048.

⁴¹⁸ Felix Corley, “The Secret Clergy in Communist Czechoslovakia,” *Religion, State and Society* 21 (1993): 171–206; Petr Fiala and Jiří Hanuš, “Women’s Ordination in the Czech Silent Church,” *The Month*, July 1998, 282. While the Vatican was aware of some sixty-five of the secretly ordained priests, hundreds more were ordained outside of their control, including women and married men. The women priests, as well as many of the men secretly ordained, were not recognized by the Vatican at the end of the Cold War; “Czech Hierarchy Bars Some Priests,” *The New York Times*, December 8, 1991, 19; Burton Bollag, “Vatican Rejects Secret Priests Ordained in Czechoslovakia,” *The New York Times*, April 12, 1992, 1. For more on Ludmila Javorová, the first women ordained priest in Czechoslovakia in 1970, see: Miriam Therese Winter, *Out of the Depths: The Story of Ludmila Javorová Ordained Roman Catholic Priest* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009).

interacted.⁴¹⁹ They found common ground in mutual beliefs in human rights and democracy, and Charter 77 reinforced this solidarity with a general policy that one of its three designated speakers would always be an active Christian.

Integrating a religious element to Charter 77 extended religious moral authority to Charter 77's calls for human rights. It also reciprocally enhanced the status of organized religion in the eyes of non-confessional Czechs as a progressive oppositional group pushing for political and social change—a stance not commonly associated with the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia given its centuries-long association with German-Habsburg repression of the Czech nation.⁴²⁰ The Charter 77-founded “Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted” regularly included sections for persecuted clergy in their periodic reports on individuals suffering from government repression.⁴²¹ Thus, the “parallel polis” of underground society that expanded in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s included non-confessional dissidents and clergy alike, all of whom were bound

⁴¹⁹ Tomáš Halík, “Verantwortung für die Untergrundkirche in der Tschechoslowakei,” article found copied in AG archive with no indication of the originating publication but was written post-1989, AG 550.

⁴²⁰ Tomáš Halík, “Tschechien: Kirchen als Faktoren des Umbruchs 1989,” in *Kirche und Revolution: Das Christentum in Ostmitteleuropa vor und nach 1989*, eds. Hans Joachim Veen, Peter März, and Franz-Josef Schlichting (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 112; R.W. Seton-Watson, *A History of Czechs and Slovaks* (New York: Hutchinson & Co., 1943), 130–151 and 161–170.

⁴²¹ “Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných.” The committee was founded in 1978 by Charter 77 members, though it remained a separate initiative from other Charter publishing activities. The AG followed these reports, many of which can be found in AG files 85 and 1270.

together by mutual repression and activism in pushing the regime to support human rights and democracy.⁴²²

It is interesting to note that involvement in religious activities increased over the course of the 1980s as religion became a means of defiance and empowerment for more and more Czechs. In 1985 over 300,000 Czechoslovak citizens gathered in Velehrad⁴²³ and Levoča to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Methodius despite strong warnings of the regime and a heavy police presence.⁴²⁴ The large swell of participation in this event, especially by younger people, inspired Tomášek to take a more vocal stance against the regime and turned him into one of the great religious heroes of Czech opposition during the 1980s.⁴²⁵

Attempting to keep the parishes under his wing afloat and operational was a tasking job that took a heavy toll on Tomášek's health, though he insisted to concerned AG visitors that he "had no right to be tired" from his efforts and always

⁴²² Václav Benda, Milan Šimečka, Ivan M. Jirous, Jiří Dienstbier, Václav Havel, Ladislav Hejdránek, Jan Šimsa, and Paul Wilson, "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry," *Social Research* 55 (1988): 211–246.

⁴²³ Velehrad is one of the oldest stone churches in Moravia. According to Czech lore, Saints Cyril and Methodius celebrated mass here during their pilgrimage to promote Christianity in the Kingdom of Great Moravia, and it has been an important pilgrimage site since the 13th century.

⁴²⁴ The gathering saw pilgrims spontaneously chanting "We want religious freedom!" at on-looking authorities. Despite the strong uniformed police and StB presence and barricades, the gathering proceeded without major incident; David Doellinger, *Turning Prayers into Protests: Religious-based Activism and Its Challenge to State Power in Socialist Slovakia and East Germany* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 232–234; Trip Report, unsigned, Kurze Anmerkungen zu meiner ČSSR-Fahrt vom 25.09. bis 03.10.85, AG 1048.

⁴²⁵ Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," 152–153; Doellinger, *Turning Prayers into Protests*, 232–234.

pointed to all the work that remained. Concerning police harassment, Tomášek responded to Olbert in 1985 that, “whoever works for the Church works a lot; whoever prays for the Church works more; whoever sacrifices themselves and is persecuted does the most.”⁴²⁶ Tomášek pursued a more public role in opposing the regime as best as his health would allow, but Olbert observed in 1988 that the Cardinal was aging quickly, and in 1989 one of Tomášek’s advisors disclosed to Olbert that Tomášek had been unable to effectively make decisions since the previous autumn and that his memory was failing badly.⁴²⁷ Tomášek passed away in 1992 at the age of 93, though not before living to see the end of Communism in his country and being able to finally fulfill his dream of receiving Pope John Paul II in Czechoslovakia during his first papal visit in 1990.⁴²⁸

Conclusion

Increased religious participation during the mid- to late-1980s led to a gradual, though still woefully inadequate, rise in the number of priests ordained

⁴²⁶ Trip Report, unsigned, Kurze Anmerkungen zu meiner ČSSR-Reise vom 25.09. bis 03.10.85, AG 1048.

⁴²⁷ Trip Report, Franz Olbert, Besprechung mit Kanonikus Matejka am 10. April 1989 in Innsbruck, AG 1129; Trip Report, Franz Olbert, Aktenvermerk, Gespräch mit Erzbischof František Tomášek am 19. Mai 88 in Prag, AG 1129.

⁴²⁸ Havel met with Tomášek’s advisors in December, 1989, before he was even elected president to discuss inviting the pope as quickly as possible. He hoped the pope’s visit would help calm the atmosphere and provide additional religious moral authority to the revolution; Tomáš Halík, *Alle meine Wege sind Dir vertraut: Von der Untergrundkirche ins Labyrinth der Freiheit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2014), 253–254.

before 1989.⁴²⁹ The AG forged close contacts to the underground church and greatly assisted them during a time of dire need.⁴³⁰ This brought the AG into common activism with Charter 77 dissidents in cases where both appealed to the Husák regime and international institutions on behalf of imprisoned Catholic and Protestant clergy.⁴³¹ AG trips and support earned them the goodwill of the clergy and non-confessional dissidents alike, creating a trusting band of allies that could extend their moral authority and support to future AG reconciliation initiatives in the 1990s.

The AG trips and support of Czech parishes comprised a different level of cross-border cooperation that assisted the underground church, which was an important underground sector largely untouched by the JHEF, Paneuropean Union and many other organizations that focused on assisting the internationally-known, non-confessional dissidents. To be sure, the AG's cooperation with Opus Bonum and their close contact with émigrés and dissidents Havel showed that the AG's network reached much further than Catholic circles. These contacts became instrumental in adding legitimacy and a moral imperativeness for the AG's work

⁴²⁹ Trip Report, Wolfgang Schwartz, *Noch eine Fahrt in die alte Heimat: Sudetenland vom 23. Juni bis 8. Juli, 1989*, AG 1129. See also: Reban, "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia," 152–154.

⁴³⁰ Tomášek was always very grateful toward his AG visitors and expressed on a number of occasions that the Church would not be able to survive without AG support; Trip Report, Franz Olbert, *Kurzbericht von einer ČSSR Reise vom 11. bis 13.01.87*, AG 1048.

⁴³¹ Two large cases were the imprisoned evangelical priest Jan Šimsa and Protestant priest Jan Litomiský, who sat with Havel in a Plzeň prison; Jiří Müller, "Brief einer Gruppe ehemaliger politischer Gefangene an den Präsident der Republik in Angelegenheit von Jan Šimsa," December 7, 1978, AG 85; Letter, Jan Dus to Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, April 25, 1984, JHEF.

toward reconciliation after 1989, as these dissidents-turned national political leaders spearheaded efforts to confront Czechs with the new moral interpretation of the expulsion, and these same people were regular participants in AG events promoting German-Czech reconciliation.

But the contacts the AG forged on a local level with churches and parishes later provided a crucial lynchpin in the AG's reconciliation efforts by enabling grassroots initiatives like Sudeten German groups helping rebuild churches and cemeteries, bilateral educational trips (*Studienreisen*), and engaging in local discussion forums. These initiatives added a local dimension to compliment the higher-profile events with Czech leaders aimed at promoting understanding, reconciliation, and overcoming the mistrust of the Czech public after forty years of the socialist expulsion narrative and threats of an impending re-invasion of Germans. SL leaders fueled these fears in the first half of the 1990s with continued demands for a right to return, to reclaim lost property or sue for damages, and other concessions from Czechs. It took AG-sponsored initiatives from the local level up to bilateral state meetings to quell these fears and enable peaceful reconciliation between Czechs and Germans and to pave the way for eventual Czech accession to the European Union.

CHAPTER V

OLD PARTNERS AND NEW PROBLEMS: THE ACKERMANN GEMEINDE AND ITS ALLIES IN THE 1990S

Have we managed to say everything that ought to be said from our side? I am not sure.

– Václav Havel, 1990⁴³²

By mid-December 1989 much of the initial euphoria of the former dissidents at the collapse of the old Czechoslovak regime had given way to the sobering reality that they now bore the responsibility of ensuring a peaceful transition to democracy and guiding the country out of over four decades of authoritarian Socialism. For many in the Civic Forum like Pithart, Havel's televised comments calling for the moral reappraisal of the expulsion were hasty, ill-advised, and threatened to engender a public backlash that might discredit the dissidents and endanger Havel's election as president. Early the next morning the Civic Forum assembled a crisis team to figure out how to spin Havel's comments in a way that they would not provide fodder for the remaining Communists to drum up fear of an impending German threat and paint the dissidents as naïve intellectuals who would

⁴³² Václav Havel, Speech on the Visit of West German President Richard von Weizsäcker in Prague, March 15, 1990; text taken from: <http://www.Vaclavhavel.cz> (accessed July 20, 2016).

inadvertently deliver Czechoslovakia into the hands of the revanchist Germans.⁴³³ When they could find no realistic way to do this, they then turned their focus to the voting procedures.⁴³⁴

Constitutionally, the task of electing the president fell to the Federal Assembly, but in the atmosphere of political change and democratization, the method of electing the president was very much under debate. Opinion polls conducted during the demonstrations suggested that over four-fifths of the population favored a vote via general referendum, which the Communists incidentally also supported, believing that Havel's name was unknown enough in the countryside to make his defeat a possibility.⁴³⁵ The Federal Assembly itself was split nearly in half between support and opposition for a public referendum, and young student activists were converging on the capital by the hundreds and demanding transparency outside the Federal Assembly.⁴³⁶

Pithart and many in the Civic Forum were previously confident that Havel would easily win in either form of vote, but after his television appearance on December 23 the majority of the Civic Forum suddenly became very concerned that

⁴³³ Indeed, there were many reports of communists in the border regions spreading flyers and rumors that Sudeten Germans were preparing to invade and force everyone from their homes in December 1989, and these rumors continued for the next several months; Franz Olbert, Aktenvermerk, Anruf von Abt. Dr. Anastáz Opasek, January 4, 1990, AG 1129; Kurzbericht ČSSR Reise vom 11. bis 14. Januar 1990" AG 1129; Bericht über Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen anlässlich einer Fahrt nach Mähren in der Osterwoche 1990, AG 1129.

⁴³⁴ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015; Pithart, "Über Gesten in der Politik," 70.

⁴³⁵ Petr Holubec, *Kronika sametové revoluce II* (Prague: Pragopress—ČTK, 1990), 4.

⁴³⁶ Holubec, *Kronika sametové revoluce*, 6; Wheaton and Kavan, *Velvet Revolution*, 109.

Havel could lose a referendum, and the deadline was fast approaching. Pithart and the Forum worked frantically and ultimately persuaded reluctant members of the Federal Assembly to a compromise wherein the Assembly would vote to elect the president, but those votes would be made public to appease concerns of transparency.⁴³⁷ The Federal Assembly elected Havel unanimously on December 29, though this episode proved merely a foreshadowing of the troubles to come with calling for a moral reevaluation of the expulsion.

And yet Havel's early missteps on the path to German-Czech reconciliation were not over. On January 2, 1990, Havel and the new foreign minister Jiří Dienstbier, who no less than two months prior was employed as a furnace stoker, took their first official diplomatic visit to West Germany. Since the 1919 unification of Czechoslovakia, newly-elected Czech presidents would first travel to Slovakia as a symbol of respect and solidarity. However, Havel, being a playwright with a penchant for the dramatic, wanted to make a grand statement that German-Czech reconciliation was a top priority and granted this issue the respect of deserving the first official visit of the new democratic Czechoslovak president. Pithart recalls the Slovak dissidents then in the Federal Assembly feeling slighted by this lack of respect at a time when Czech and Slovak relations were already on rocky ground:

⁴³⁷ Pithart credits the hard work of the interim prime minister, Marián Čalfa, for helping sway the Federal Assembly to vote itself instead of calling for a referendum; Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015; Wheaton and Kavan, *Velvet Revolution*, 108-112.

“Havel thought he would travel to Munich as a great dramatist as catharsis to heal the feelings of vengeance against the Munich Agreement and expulsion [...] but for the Slovaks it was simply insulting. There are many people today who believe that this marked the beginning of the separation of Czechoslovakia.”⁴³⁸

This chapter follows the main actors of the previous chapters as they worked to guide Germans and Czechs toward reconciliation in the post-1989 era. Since the rise of Willy Brandt’s SPD government in the late 1960s the political arm of the Sudeten Germans (the SL) steadily lost political influence in Bonn. Despite having the ear of Kohl and being able to influence his foreign policy toward the Czech Republic in the early 1990s, the SL ultimately faced disappointment and rejected the two major bilateral documents of the decade dealing with the expulsion: the 1992 German-Czechoslovak *Treaty on Neighborly Relations and Friendly Cooperation* and the 1997 *German-Czech Declaration on Mutual Relations and Their Future Development*.

For the AG, the 1990s saw their domestic and international relevance and political and social influence reach new heights. Beginning in 1990 the AG suddenly found itself with friends and partners holding the highest of public offices in the Czech Republic. Both the AG and the new Czech leaders shared a sense of Central Europeanism built over the previous two decades and sought to promote reconciliation between Germans and Czechs as part of a greater vision of restoring

⁴³⁸ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

multiculturalism and national inclusion, in contrast the SL's continued nationalist rhetoric of "Czech" crimes inflicted upon "Germans." Together, the AG and their Czech partners helped established a host of partner organizations and cooperations that built bridges between Germans and Czechs, contributed to mutual understanding and friendly neighborhood and helped guide both governments toward official rapprochement. They also brought together young Sudeten Germans and Czechs in ways that helped build a new network of Germans and Czechs to take over the reins of cooperation and dialogue from the now-aging pre-1989 generation. While the SL attempted to influence Czech politics and society from the outside and failed, the AG slowly expanded its presence and influence on the inside, and in this way the AG became more relevant than ever before.

Although the AG and its growing network of Czech allies were dedicated to cooperation between the two peoples, narratives of the expulsion continued to be a stumbling block toward friendly German-Czech bilateral relations. For over four decades, the majority of the Czech public only heard the Socialist narrative that painted the expulsion as the last victorious step in defeating fascism and warned of a perpetual threat of reinvasion from the West. Unlike their new political leaders, most Czechs were never exposed to the revisionist narratives that emphasized the human rights aspect of mass suffering and the immorality of the collective guilt thesis and, thus, were surprised and confused by the sudden onslaught of calls by the new Czech elite to reappraise the previous expulsion narrative. The lack of alternate information of the expulsion that focused on these issues of morality as

well as the economic, social and political ramifications of the expulsion was a problem that persisted through the decade and hampered acceptance and understanding of the expulsion narrative that the former dissidents-turned new Czech elites propagated.⁴³⁹

After 1989 Czechs also began a process of defining and understanding themselves in the post-Communism context of wider European integration, and one of the historical constants in Czech national self-conceptions was defining the Czech nation in relation to Germans.⁴⁴⁰ Calls to morally condemn the expulsion presented a stark rewriting of the previous juxtaposition of an aggressive German threat versus morally justified Czechs in a way that challenged the foundation on which Czech national history and identity rested and provoked an impassioned backlash.⁴⁴¹

Further inhibiting an openness toward moral reevaluation for the Czech public was a perceived lack of reciprocity on the German side to Havel, Dienstbier,

⁴³⁹ Kolář, "Vertreibung zwischen nationaler Meisterzählung und Deutungspluralität," 929–932; Kořalka, "Czechoslovakia," 1036; David Čaněk, "Tschechische Schulbücher für Geschichte: Ist die Zeit reif für einen Wandel?" *Bohemia* 39 (1998), 52–70.

⁴⁴⁰ During the Czech National Revival the national history-writing of Czechs defined them in opposition to the Habsburg-Austrian monarchy. During the Cold War, socialist writing, while downplaying the national aspect, nevertheless continued to frame the Czech nation and identity against the threat of an impending fascist-German invasion; Wessel, "Die Mitte liegt Westwärts," 325–344.

⁴⁴¹ Ján Pauer, "Moral Political Dissent," 173–186. The "identity crisis" was further inflamed with the division of the Czechoslovak state in 1993, whose foundation in 1918 and restoration in 1945 meant the fulfillment of a centuries-old dream of statehood for the majority of the population in the Czech lands; Václav Houžvička, *The Sudeten German Question and the Transformation of Central Europe*, (Prague: Charles Karolinum Press, 2013), 408.

and other Czech representatives' early gestures of reconciliation toward Germans.⁴⁴² Kohl remained mute to these gestures, and the voices from across the border that did emerge in Czech media were primarily from the SL. In 1990 Czech press organs routinely published SL letters, articles and statements that rejected Havel's reconciliatory words and demanded property reclamation, monetary compensation for suffering and lost property, and a right to return with guaranteed national minority rights.⁴⁴³ In one such widely-circulated statement the spokesman of the SL, Fritz Wittman, insisted that Sudeten Germans would not be "bought off" with a mere apology and demanded that, "whoever condemns the expulsions as deeply immoral must also search for means to rectify the resulting injustice and losses" as a necessary step in the "return to Europe."⁴⁴⁴ With Kohl remaining silent on the issue to pander to Sudeten Germans, many Czechs feared that the West German (and later reunified German) government was playing dishonestly and coaxing the Czechoslovak (and later Czech) government into making apologies to

⁴⁴² Witte, *Entfremdung*, 83; Kučera, "Zwischen Geschichte und Politik," 174–175. Havel made multiple overtures to Bonn offering to grant Sudeten Germans citizenship and first purchasing rights for former property seized during the communist era, but he received no official response, and the German public remained almost completely unaware of Havel's gestures; Karl-Heinz Janßen, "Im Herzen Europas," *Die Zeit*, October 11, 1991; Gunter Hoffman, "Vom Kanzler kein offenes Wort," *Die Zeit*, March 6, 1992.

⁴⁴³ A comprehensive list of the demands for property restitution and compensation of Sudeten German organizations was published in a *Sudetendeutsche Zeitung* article widely circulated in Czech press: "Gesichtspunkte zur Entschädigung der Sudetendeutschen durch die ČSFR," *Sudetendeutsche Zeitung*, January 10, 1992. For further evaluations of the effect of SL demands, see: Kučera, "Zwischen Geschichte und Politik," 177–178; Witte, *Entfremdung*, 101–122; Pauer, "Moral Political Dissent," 173–174.

⁴⁴⁴ Fritz Wittmann, "Das Recht auf die Heimat ist Menschenrecht," *Sudetendeutsche Zeitung*, August 21, 1990.

serve as legal groundwork for levying financial and property restitution, which the overwhelming majority of Czechs were: A 1990 poll suggested that 70% of Czech citizens were against all forms of material compensation for Sudeten Germans, while 10% supported monetary compensation only, and a mere 3% were for the return of property, with many believing these steps might pave the way for a mass return of Sudeten Germans and possibly even border revisions.⁴⁴⁵

A fiery Czech public debate ensued where Czech citizens voiced deeply emotional opinions and overwhelmingly rejected Havel's perceived apologies and took the view that the expulsion was not revenge, but a justified action based on the war experience and legalized by the Allies at the Potsdam Conference. The 1992 treaty was meant to embody a fundamental turning point in bilateral relations. However, it failed to find common language to define the expulsion in a way that pleased both Czechs and Sudeten Germans, and it also failed to address important questions like property reclamation and restitution for expellees and victims of the Nazi occupation.⁴⁴⁶ It left both sides largely disappointed and necessitated a separate declaration in 1997 dedicated solely to addressing these unresolved

⁴⁴⁵ From a survey undertaken December 12, 1990, by the Institute for Opinion Research; cited from: Kučera, "Zwischen Geschichte und Politik," 178–179; Houžvička, *The Sudeten German Question*, 372–375; Alena Wagnerová, "Nevypočitatelnosti symbolické politiky," *Listy* 3 (1995): 11; Rudolf Augstein, "...und Kohl schweigt," *Der Spiegel*, July 29, 1991; Hoffman, "Vom Kanzler kein offenes Wort"; Janßen, "Im Herzen Europas."

⁴⁴⁶ In an official exchange of letters upon the signing of the treaty the Czech and German foreign ministers Jiří Dienstbier and Hans-Dietrich Genscher stated, "The two sides declare concurrently: this treaty does not address property questions." Letter, Jiří Dienstbier to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, February 27, 1992; and letter, Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Jiří Dienstbier, February 27, 1992; cited in: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 310–311.

issues. While the bulk of previous scholarship on German-Czech relations emphasizes missteps and conflicts in the 1990s, it is the goal of this chapter to illustrate how the extensive groundwork of grassroots relations forged by the AG over many decades helped lay out a path toward reconciliation and allowed the moderate voices to win out in bilateral relations even in a climate that did not seem to favor moderation.

The Ackermann Gemeinde in the ČSSR: Early Contacts and Early Troubles

In November 1989, Pithart had never heard the name of the AG, and this was not uncommon for many of the non-Catholic Czech dissidents and even some in the underground church.⁴⁴⁷ In the decades of secrecy under Socialism, names of foreign individuals or organizations engaged in illegal assistance and activities were kept secret for obvious reasons. If the AG had not previously worked directly with a certain individual then it was likely that that person's information about Sudeten German organizations only comprised of the behemoth bloc of aggressive "*Landsmannschaften*" (Sudeten German organizations) as part of the Socialist rhetoric of revanchist Sudeten Germans. This presented the AG with the monumental task of convincing partners and the Czech public that they as a Sudeten German organization came in the name of peace and reconciliation; however, it was precisely here that the AG's existing network was instrumental in

⁴⁴⁷ Both Rudolf Kučera and underground priest and activist Tomas Halík had never heard of the AG before 1989; Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014; Halík, *Alle meine Wege*, 282.

helping them make initial contacts and forge partnerships.

On January 2, 1989, the now-deputy chairman of the Senate and soon-to-be Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Pithart, received a telephone call from renowned émigré Pavel Tigrid—a frequent attendee of the Opus Bonum-AG summits and friend of Olbert—who informed Pithart that he should organize a meeting as soon as possible between the new Czech leadership and a group of Sudeten German Catholics called the Ackermann Gemeinde.⁴⁴⁸ Nine days later Pithart met Olbert and other representatives of the AG. He was very impressed by their previous work and public statements on German-Czech relations and based on this and the recommendation of Tigrid he immediately became a willing AG partner moving forward.

Pithart and the Forum were very concerned that the Czech Communist Party would use the Sudeten German issue against Havel and the Civic Forum candidates in the upcoming election, and he proposed a joint conference of AG representatives and Czechs to discuss the expulsion and enlisted the help of fellow former-dissident historian, Bohemus author and Pithart's future spokesman, Petr Příhoda, to organize a Czech delegation. On that same trip the AG met with another hero of the Velvet Revolution demonstrations, Václav Benda, and he expressed similar concern about the lack of accurate knowledge on the expulsion among Czechs and offered

⁴⁴⁸ Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015; Franz Olbert, Aktenvermerk, Anruf von Pavel Tigrid, January 9, 1990, AG 1129.

his support for future cooperation and conferences to address.⁴⁴⁹ Olbert also had the opportunity to meet with all these contacts and more on January 14 at an international conference in Prague hosted by Kučera's Paneuropean Union and the British Conservative Council on Eastern Europe. This meeting brought together many of the Czech dissidents and representatives of the SL, where Czechs like Příklad, Benda, and Dienstbier roundly condemned the violent excesses of the expulsion and the faulty assumption of collective guilt behind them and affirmed their desire to reflect these beliefs in official Czech policy and statements toward Germany.⁴⁵⁰ Kučera also first learned of the AG in 1990, but he quickly formed a partnership with them both as a private scholar soliciting funds for historical publications as well as official cooperation between his Paneuropean Union—Bohemia and Moravia and the AG.⁴⁵¹

Two months later AG representatives met with Czech Christians in March in Marktredwitz, West Germany for what would be the first of many annual meetings with the newly established Czech Christian Academy (*Česká křesťanská akademie*, hereafter, Christian Academy). The Christian Academy was founded in 1990 by

⁴⁴⁹ Trip Report, unsigned, Kurzbericht ČSSR Reise vom 11. bis 14. Januar 1990, AG 1129; Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015.

⁴⁵⁰ "Die an Deutschen begangenen Grausamkeiten nicht verschweigen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 16, 1990, 6.

⁴⁵¹ Interview, Rudolf Kučera, August 21, 2014; Gedächtnisprotokoll, Besprechung am 21.–22.07.1991 in Prag (Olbert und Otte), AG 1129; Letter, Franz Olbert to Rudolf Kučera, July 31, 1991, AG 1163; Letter, Rudolf Kučera to Franz Olbert, August 2, 1991, AG 1163; Letter, Rudolf Kučera to Franz Olbert, September 20, 1991, AG 1163; Letter, Rudolf Kučera to Franz Olbert, June 11, 1992, AG 1163; Gedächtnisprotokoll, Prag- und Brünn-Aufenthalt vom 09. bis 12. August, 1992, AG 1129.

long-time AG and Opus Bonum contact Josef Zvěřina, and through the AG's contacts and the help of Příhoda (who could not attend the meeting) German and Czech Catholic leaders met in March along with Kučera representing the Czech Paneuropean Union to discuss German-Czech relations and future cooperation in Europe. However, the meeting did not run smoothly despite the goodwill built between leaders on both sides in the preceding decades. They found common ground in their Bohemian perspective on German-Czech heritage and culture and agreed it was destroyed by the nationalisms of both sides. But they stumbled over language and phrasing of the expulsion during attempts to formulate a common declaration so much so that Pithart and Olbert both wondered if the meeting would simply be cancelled amid the contentious impasse.⁴⁵² The meeting continued to its scheduled end, and though they could not conclude a declaration, all sides agreed to meet continually in the future and to initiate formal correspondence between the Catholic Bishop Conferences of both countries.⁴⁵³

In April 1991 the AG and the Czech Christian Academy met again, this time just across the border in Mariánské Lázně, Czechoslovakia, but the meeting again

⁴⁵² Pithart recalled, "At times we had the feeling that we wouldn't resume the next day and that we should just go home because there was no point in continuing. We were only criticizing each other, because we were incapable of finding consensus on a formulation that we could build from."

Interview, Petr Pithart, July 16, 2015; Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014.

⁴⁵³ "Marktredwitzer Erklärung tscheschischer und deutscher Katholiken (1990)," *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann-Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 45. The two lengthy letters exchanged before the meeting the following year can be found in: Walter Rzepka, ed., *Zukunft trotz Vergangenheit: Texte zur deutsch-tschechischen Versöhnung* (Munich: Ackermann Gemeinde, 2005), 122–131. See also: Halík, *Alle meine Wege sind Dir vertraut*, 283–284.

ended without the desired lengthy declaration on German-Czech relations. This time, however, it was not for lack of constructive dialogue but rested in practical concerns. Both the AG and the Christian Academy had been preoccupied over the previous year with a range of expanded activities and were learning how to adapt to the new political and social changes since 1989, and the bishop conferences were only able to exchange one letter apiece since the meeting the previous year.⁴⁵⁴ Instead of prioritizing the writing of the declaration, the 1991 meeting focused on exchanges of perspective through presentations and discussion groups. The group published a small press release at its conclusion where both sides acknowledged victims and perpetrators in the long history of the Czech lands and expressed mutual dedication to overcoming this troubled past through open dialogue and understanding.⁴⁵⁵ The good will was present on both sides, and both had common ground in viewing the Czech lands as home to a shared cosmopolitan heritage, but even for them the act of agreeing on a joint declaration necessitated lengthy dialogue and showed the complicated and sensitive nature of dealing with this particular episode in German-Czech history.

⁴⁵⁴ The Czech and Slovak bishop conference cited an immense amount of work in apologizing to the German bishop conference for taking six months to respond to their first letter, see: "Brief der Bischöfe der Katholischen Kirche in der Tschechischen und Slowakischen Föderativen Republik an die deutsche Bischöfe vom 5. September 1990," in Rzepka, *Zukunft trotz Vergangenheit*, 126.

⁴⁵⁵ The text of the press release can be found in: "Abschlußerklärung der 2. Marienbader Gespräche (1991)," *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann-Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 46.

The 1992 German-Czech Bilateral Treaty

The meetings and progress toward the declaration of the AG and the group of Czech Christians were hampered by the growing unrest in Czech society, as official negotiations on a German-Czechoslovak bilateral treaty stumbled over how to deal with issues of reconciliation and restitution surround victims of the Nazi regime and the expulsion as well as how to narrate the expulsion. Negotiations began just days after German reunification on October 3, 1990, but complications stemming largely from issues related to the expulsion drew the talks out for an entire year. During this time Havel, Pithart, Dienstbier, and other representatives of the new Czech government made repeated statements calling Czechs to confront the immorality of the expulsion over the first two years after 1989, but they met a largely skeptical Czech public that did not readily accept the new moral evaluation that the dissidents had over a decade before. The actual progress of negotiations as well as the terms of the treaty were shielded from the public, although Czech and Slovak press organs reported on the scant statements from the foreign ministry and general speculations on their progress, or lack thereof.

However, as Czechs wondered what sort of deal their government was striking with the Germans, they received a steady stream of statements from SL and CDU/CSU political leaders that complicated Czech public sentiment on the negotiations. Czech media regularly published SL demands for direct inclusion in the state-level negotiations to push for material restitution for Sudeten Germans, a right to return with minority rights, and a repealing of the Beneš Decrees. Through

these demands and statements the Czech public began fearing that an outright apology for the expulsion and a repeal of the Beneš Decrees would render the expulsion illegal and pave the way for a flood of returning Sudeten Germans to the border region and could even result in Germany's annexing of the Sudetenland again, and this began to foster a growing anti-German sentiment among the Czech populace.⁴⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Olbert returned to Czechoslovakia in July 1991 in the midst of the public discussions on the expulsion to make the rounds among Czech Catholic leaders and political contacts to gauge support for a draft declaration he carried with him for the German and Czech Christians on bilateral relations. His contacts widely described the political situation as "heating up" and expressed disdain for inflammatory comments by expellee politicians and the Bavarian government against Czechs for not acceding to Sudeten German demands. The Czech Ambassador to Germany, Jiří Gruša, expressed his concern with the widespread fear of Germany and misunderstanding among Czechs at the time and suggested to Olbert to expedite the translation of German historical works to offer a different perspective on the expulsion and historical German-Czech relations for Czech consumption.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ These demands and their echo in Czechoslovak press have been treated at depth elsewhere and will not be re-hashed here. For good overviews in German and English, see: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 132–140; Kunštát, "German-Czech Relations," 149–172; Kunštát, "Deutsch-tschechische Beziehungen?" 20–29; Kučera, "Zwischen Geschichte und Politik," 174–187; Pauer, "Moral Political Dissent," 173–186.

⁴⁵⁷ Aktenvermerk, Gespräch mit Botschaftler Gruša am 16. Juli 1991 in München, AG 1129.

The German Ambassador in Prague expressed to Olbert that the negative Czech press on the SL and expellee politicians were making it very difficult to find dialogue partners, and that Pithart himself had recently cancelled a planned lunch with Bavarian Minister-President Max Streibl in protest of his recent inflammatory comments against Czechs. In July of the previous year Pithart reported having had a positive meeting with Neubauer and the SL where both underscored that contact between the Czech government and Sudeten Germans needed to expand, yet his public spurning of Streibl in the summer of 1991 showed just how much the situation had deteriorated in the course of one year.⁴⁵⁸ The situation even threatened domestic Czech attitudes towards the Catholic Church, as multiple priests reported to Olbert that the growing anti-German sentiment was turning Czechs against the Church for its positive stance toward Germany and Sudeten Germans. Nevertheless, Olbert's contacts remained firm in their commitment for positive relations and were optimistic about finding Czech signatories for the draft declaration.⁴⁵⁹

The official bilateral German-Czech treaty was concluded in October 1991 and ratified by both governments the following year. When its terms became public in 1991, it was a disappointment to many Czechs and Sudeten Germans in that it did not address the major issues relating to the expulsion like attributing blame or

⁴⁵⁸ See: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 103–104.

⁴⁵⁹ Gedächtnisprotokoll, Besprechung am 21.–22.07.1991 in Prag (Olbert und Otte), AG 1129.

providing for restitution for WWII victims on either side. The SL and the national expellee organization the Federation of Expellees were very vocal in their desires for restitution concessions and a formal apology in the treaty, whereas Havel and many Czechs were hoping the treaty would end those Sudeten German demands and provide compensation for Czech victims of the Nazi regime. During the treaty's signing ceremony Havel lauded the treaty as the dawn of "a new era [...] of understanding, mutual trust and fruitful cooperation [in the] thousand-year history of cohabitation in Central Europe," but in a later description of the treaty he echoed the widespread Czech disappointment on the property issue by describing it as simply "what we could agree on for the moment."⁴⁶⁰

The treaty did take the very symbolic step in its use of the word "expulsion" (*vyhnání*) instead of "transfer" (*odsun*), and this in itself was a monumental shift in previous official Czech descriptions of the expulsion, but in the compromise over formulation it was used in a non-descript phrasing that did not attribute specific blame to one side or the other.⁴⁶¹ Still, the inclusion of the word "expulsion" outraged many Czechs and stalled the ratification process in parliament due to accusations its usage implied an unlawful act that would pave the way for legally justifying Sudeten Germans to reclaim property and force Czechs out of the border

⁴⁶⁰ Rzepka, *Zukunft trotz Vergangenheit*, 45; Hoffmann, "Vom Kanzler kein offenes Wort."

⁴⁶¹ The specific passage read, "in remembrance of the many victims that tyranny, war and expulsion claimed." Full German text can be found in: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 297-309.

region.”⁴⁶²

There was also opposition to the treaty in Germany. The SL and the CSU rejected it outright as not enough, and it also became a political tool for demonstrators of Germany’s resurging right-wing nationalist movement that emerged in the wake of reunification, increased immigration, and political and economic uncertainty. Images of German demonstrators calling for Havel’s removal and chanting, “*Heim ins Reich!*” [Back to the homeland!] in Czech media only inflamed Czech anti-German sentiment further and gave the impression that the SL’s political position in Germany was much stronger than it actually was.⁴⁶³ Conversely, much of the mainstream West German media criticized Kohl for allowing relations with the Czechs to deteriorate by not reciprocating Havel’s multiple gestures of reconciliation and contributing to the drawn out negotiations by allowing the SL too much influence over terms in the process.⁴⁶⁴

Kohl’s closeness to the SL and their CSU allies reflected their continued political importance to his chancellorship. With the percentage of the CDU/CSU union’s vote in national elections slowly eroding from its high point of 48% in 1983

⁴⁶² Kučera, “Zwischen Geschichte und Politik,” 180–181; Kunštát, “German-Czech Relations,” 155–156; Pauer, “Moral Political Dissent,” 175. Czech parliamentarians delayed the ratification process until they received written reassurances from the Allied powers at the Potsdam Conference that the transfer of Germans was a legal act in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, which all sides provided; see: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 148.

⁴⁶³ “CSU/CSFR,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 28, 1992. For contemporary commentary of the rising German nationalist movement, see: Jürgen Habermas, “Die zweite Lebenslüge der Bundesrepublik: Wir sind wieder ‘normal’ geworden,” *Die Zeit*, December 11, 1992.

⁴⁶⁴ Witt, *Entfremdung*, 141–147.

and ceding ground to the SPD and Green parties through the 1980s and early 1990s, Kohl continued to court the expellee voting bloc in the negotiations to buffer his political position. This resulted, among other contentious points that slowed negotiations and raised Czech suspicions of the German side, to the Kohl government insisting that compensation for Sudeten Germans accompany any reparations for Czech and Slovak victims of National Socialism. Kohl also called for a repeal of the Beneš Decrees that stripped Sudeten Germans of Czechoslovak citizenship, nationalized their property and absolved non-ethnic Germans from any crimes committed in the removal of the German population in 1945.⁴⁶⁵

Working to alleviate tensions surrounding the announcement of the treaty, the AG and Seliger Gemeinde published a joint-statement in support of the treaty and pled to disgruntled Sudeten Germans to be understanding and patient. The statement called on Sudeten Germans to appreciate the weakness of the current political and economic situation in Czechoslovakia and Czechs' current inability to issue a formal apology or initiate large sums of monetary restitution, and they pointed out the positive steps included in the treaty such as acknowledgement of the suffering inflicted upon Sudeten Germans through the expulsion and a call for grassroots cooperation in preserving cultural relics like cemeteries and

⁴⁶⁵ Ann L. Phillips, "The Politics of Reconciliation Revisited: Germany and East-Central Europe," *World Affairs* 163 (2001): 180–181.

churches.⁴⁶⁶ The AG's Junge Aktion later published an open letter criticizing Bavaria's CSU-led government for voting against the treaty's ratification.⁴⁶⁷ The AG received positive echo in the German press for their positive role in German-Czech relations. One national article noted the AG's long history of helping Czechs and forging contacts that was now bearing fruit in terms of building grassroots good will, and they praised the AG's program in contrast to the SL: "They no longer consider themselves an expellee organization. Neighborliness is now the task."⁴⁶⁸

In December 1991, the AG and the Czech Christian Academy published their long-planned joint declaration on the "Shape of German-Czech Neighborship."⁴⁶⁹ This declaration showed an ability among German and Czech Catholics to find more consensus and common ground than the official treaty and to strike a much more reconciliatory tone. They noted that the future required Germans and Czechs to recognize their centuries-long history of peaceful cohabitation of the Czech lands, abandon common stereotypes of each other, and recognize that the past horrors of

⁴⁶⁶ Ackermann Gemeinde and Seliger Gemeinde, Erklärung zum deutsch-tschechoslowakischen Freundschaftsvertrag, October 11, 1991, AG 895.

⁴⁶⁷ Herman Lüffe (national speaker of the Junge Aktion from 1994–1997), "Die 90er Jahre: Wandel, Annäherung, Begegnung," in *Junge Aktion Festschrift*, 76.

⁴⁶⁸ Peter Schilder, "Manchmal staunen sie selbst über ihre Erfolge: Die Ackermann Gemeinde arbeitet an der deutsch-tschechischen Versöhnung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 3, 1992, 3.

⁴⁶⁹ The full title was the "Declaration of Sudeten German and Czech Christians on the Shape of German-Czech Neighborship"; "Erklärung sudetendeutscher und tschechischer Christen zur Gestaltung der deutsch-tschechischen Nachbarschaft," in *Weg und Ziel: Schriftenreihe der Ackermann Gemeinde* 24 (2004): 47–51. Sudeten German signatories included Olbert, Peter Becher of the Adalbert Stifter Verein, Richard Hackenberg, Ernst Nittner, Anton Otte, Josef Stingl, and others; and Czech signatories included Tomáš Halík, Petr Přihoda, Ladislav Hejdánek, Václav Malý, Anastáz Opasek, Radim Palouš, and Jan Sokol among others.

murder and expulsion could not stand in the way of future cooperation.

Its German signatories called on all Sudeten Germans to work as a unifying force between Germans and Czechs and warned that any return of confiscated property would only be disappointing, because the expulsion of people to achieve this end was simply out of the question. Instead, they pled to Sudeten Germans that, “in these circumstances we advocate voluntary personal sacrifice as a contribution to a peaceful new beginning.”⁴⁷⁰ Not all AG members and leaders held the same personal opinion on the topic of property restitution, thus the non-committal stance toward stating definitively that Sudeten Germans and their offspring should abandon all claims to property reclamation and compensation for their and their ancestors’ suffering. Moreover, as an institution the AG was concerned with reconciliation and building positive relations, and property issues were out of their purview and a topic belonging to the SL. Olbert recalled that such internal compromises were simply as part of the AG’s general modus operandi: “We always did what we could do at the moment in the specific circumstances. That was how we operated before 1989, and that was how we operated after. We took what was in front of us and used it to build upon for the future.”⁴⁷¹

The Czech signatories attempted to calm the anti-German sentiment by appealing to Czechs to understand that the radical voices coming from Germany

⁴⁷⁰ “Erklärung sudetendeutscher und tschechischer Christen,” 48.

⁴⁷¹ Interview, Franz Olbert, June 17, 2014; Interview, Anton Otte, June 10, 2014.

were a minority and should only be viewed as expressions of freedom of opinion in a healthy democratic society. They further stressed that Sudeten German tourists that come to visit the countryside are not revanchists scouting out their former property for reclamation but are reconnecting with their family history. Both sides advocated using every opportunity to build diplomacy from “person to person” through meetings and talks to overcome misconceptions and stereotypes.⁴⁷²

The Ackermann Gemeinde and Initiatives with Czech Elites

The joint declaration of Sudeten German and Christians on bilateral relations provided a breath of fresh air and encouraging steps toward reconciliation in an otherwise hostile public discourse, and the AG continued to expand its initiatives for further reconciliation. To facilitate the enhancement and expansion of cooperation with Czechs, the AG opened an office in Prague in 1992 headed by Anton Otte. Otte was a decades-long AG member who emigrated to West Germany from Czechoslovakia in 1960 and joined a seminary in Königstein established by priests of varying nationalities who immigrated from Eastern Europe after the war, and there he quickly came into contact with the AG and served on the board alongside his regular duties as a priest. After November 1989 he joined Olbert on trips to Czechoslovakia where many of their Czech contacts brought up a desire to see an AG office in Prague to expedite cooperation and

⁴⁷² “Erklärung sudetendeutscher und tschechischer Christen,” 48.

planning.⁴⁷³ Otte was unable to obtain a visa under the old Czechoslovak regime, and his first trip back came in 1990. Thus, he moved to Prague in 1992 to head the small office armed only with the AG's list of church and priest contacts as well as the handful of relationships he built during his trips over the previous two years. However, the reputation of the AG preceded him, and Otte had little trouble in establishing relationships once he arrived: "I always had an open door when I said I was from the Ackermann Gemeinde. No one was afraid that I wanted something from them."⁴⁷⁴

Otte always followed a general rule that the AG would not organize any events or gatherings without Czech partners, and he found willing collaborators through a number of organizations established after 1989 by Czechs friendly to the AG. The Czech Christian Academy mentioned above was a major partner with which the AG organized many events, including annual gatherings in Mariánské Lázně that continue to the present.⁴⁷⁵ The gatherings there in the 1990s were comprised of speeches, talks, and round-table discussions on social-political and historical topics of German-Czech history and relations and included leaders from the AG, Seliger Gemeinde, Adalbert Stifter Verein, and Collegium Carolinum as well as regular Czech speakers like Pithart, Petr Příhoda, and the vice-chairman of the

⁴⁷³ Trip Report, Kurzbericht ČSSR Reise vom 11. bis 14. Januar 1990, AG 1129; Gedächtnisprotokoll, Besprechung am 21.-22.07.1991 in Prag, AG 1129.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview, Anton Otte, June 10, 2014.

⁴⁷⁵ English scholarship often uses the German name for Mariánské Lázně, Marienbad, and calls these events the "Marienbad Discussions" or "*Marienbader Gespräche*."

Czech parliament Jan Sokol.⁴⁷⁶

Pithart also founded the Bernard Bolzano Society in 1991 to serve as a non-confessional partner organization to the AG for organizing events and increasing the reach and range of contacts between Sudeten Germans and Czechs through both organizations' networks. The most significant of their events were the so-called "Jihlava Discussions" held annually in the Czech town of Jihlava.⁴⁷⁷ The conferences attracted around 150 Sudeten Germans and Czechs per year from many of the same organizations as the Mariánské Lázně gatherings but also included many Czech academics and political leaders. Whereas the Mariánské Lázně gatherings had a strong religious component to them, the Jihlava Discussions were purely academic in nature.⁴⁷⁸

During a time where anti-German sentiment was rising among the Czech population, the Jihlava Discussions offered a forum for leading German and Czech historians of Central Europe to gather and discuss historical topics, current public perceptions and how and what to research to best educate the publics of both countries. Many of these participants were part of the joint German-Czechoslovak

⁴⁷⁶ For a list of annual conference topics and primary speakers, see: Benita Berning, "Begegnung und Dialog—die Arbeit seit 1989," in Paleczek, *Integration und Dialog*, 122–127. Conference programs as well as many texts of the presentations can be found in the archive of the Ackermann Gemeinde in folders 1410–1417.

⁴⁷⁷ This annual conference has since moved to Brno but still takes place annually. These talks are often referred to in English scholarship using the German name for Jihlava, Iglau, as the "Iglau Discussions" or "*Iglauer Gespräche*."

⁴⁷⁸ Conference programs as well as the texts of many of the presentations can be found in the archive of the Ackermann Gemeinde in folders 1361–1373.

Historian's Commission established in 1990, including Ferdinand Seibt, Jiří Pešek, Rudolf Kučera, Jan Křen, and Miroslav Kunštát.⁴⁷⁹ The Bernard Bolzano Society also helped bring Czechs to conferences across the border such as the 1992 conference in Reichenberg, "Germans and Czechs—Neighbors in Central Europe," which attracted mayors, deputy mayors, state political representatives, and citizens from across Bavaria to participate in mixed discussion panels of Sudeten German and Czech participants that included the directors of the AG and SL (Neubauer) and Czechs like historian Křen, Kučera, Sokol, and Jaroslav Šabata.⁴⁸⁰

Others in the AG émigré network like Prečan were also expanding the AG's network into Czech academic institutions and spearheading efforts for reconciliation. In January 1990 at a meeting of the historian's section of Civic Forum and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences Prečan was enlisted to found a new Institute for Contemporary History in Prague, where he was later joined by his friend and Bohemus co-author Milan Otáhal. For the next few years he split his efforts between building up that institute and his continued work collecting more writings at his documentation center for independent Czech and Slovak writing at Schwarzenberg Castle in Saxony, where he also organized annual conferences for

⁴⁷⁹ For a list of annual conference topics and speakers, see: Benita Berning, "Begegnung und Dialog," 127–133.

⁴⁸⁰ Adresse Liste und Programmvorschlagn, AG/H. Seidel Stiftung/Bolzano Stiftung, Reichenberg, 18.20. November 1992, AG 1229.

Czech and Slovak authors.⁴⁸¹

In light of the surge of public Czech debate about the expulsion and rising anti-German sentiment, Prečan planned the 1993 conference at Schwarzenberg Castle around the theme “Czech and Slovak Authors in Dialogue with their German Neighbors” and co-organized it with Olbert and the AG.⁴⁸² The attendees were a who’s who of prominent Czech former dissidents, émigrés and current political leaders, including Ludvík Vaculík, Pavel Tigrid, Milan Šimečka, Milan Uhde, Ambassador Gruša, and representatives from the Czech president and prime minister’s offices. German attendees included Olbert and other AG board members, the heads of the Adalbert Stifter Verein and Seliger Gemeinde as well as many of their board members, Collegium Carolinum researchers, journalists, newspaper editors, and Wolfgang Scheuer who was the former West German diplomat in Prague and one of Prečan’s primary previous contacts for smuggling literature.⁴⁸³ The gathering was positive and productive and received wide echo in German and Czech televised and printed press. It was much in the spirit of the 1992 declaration of German and Czech Christians, and this declaration was meant to be circulated at the conference and made part of the discussion program but delays in the printing

⁴⁸¹ Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015. Over the course of the 1990s Prečan developed plans to transfer his collection to Prague and establish a non-profit organization to run the center. The new Czechoslovak Documentation Center was established in 1998, and transportation of his immense collections from Schwarzenberg Castle to Prague began in 2000.

⁴⁸² Letter, Vilém Prečan to Franz Olbert, July 31, 1993, AG 128.

⁴⁸³ Teilnehmerliste, II Schwarzenberger Schriftsteller Treffen, 11.–13. Juni 1993, AG 128.

prevented the copies from arriving in time.⁴⁸⁴

Czech Politics and Anti-Politics

Such conferences and gatherings offered forums for dialogue and free exchanges of opinions and perspectives that ran parallel to a persistent contentious political situation between Germany and the Czech Republic, which formally split from Slovakia January 1, 1993. Preceding the “Velvet Divorce” of Czechoslovakia was another divorce of the short-lived alliance of dissidents and technocrats in the Civic Forum Party in 1991 and the rise of Václav Klaus’ Civic Democrat Party. Klaus did not come from a dissident background but was an economist formerly working in the “grey zone.” He was part of a larger generation of economists before 1989 that believed in neo-liberal free market principles known as the “young economists.” These young economists held posts at places like the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences in the 1970s and 1980s and promoted veiled critiques of the Czechoslovak economy and tenets of free market principles through conferences and domestic publications while not moving fully into the realm of openly denouncing Socialism.⁴⁸⁵ After 1989, the dissidents allied with many of these technocrats to occupy ministerial posts and use their expertise to help run the country.

⁴⁸⁴ Vilém Prečan, Dankesbrief an Teilnehmer des II Schwarzenberger Schriftsteller Treffens vom 11.–13. Juni 1993, AG 128; Interview, Vilém Prečan, July 17, 2015.

⁴⁸⁵ Seán Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe: Czech Transformation and Right-Wing Politics, 1989–2006* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 57–59.

Klaus orchestrated economic policy as the Minister of Finance, but in 1991 he helped lead a split of technocrats from the dissidents within the Civic Forum by forming the Civic Democrat Party, which included almost no dissidents. In the 1992 elections Klaus' Civic Democrats replaced the former dissidents like Havel, Dienstbier, and Pithart who had reorganized into the Civic Movement Party, and Klaus took over Pithart's position as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic in the Czechoslovak Federative Republic (ČSFR).⁴⁸⁶ The rise of Klaus marked a removal from power of the dissidents as well as a wide scale abandonment of their reconciliatory stance toward Germany in Prague. The dissidents in the Civic Movement Party fought to maintain their party's existence after managing less than 5% of the vote in 1992 and ultimately dissolved and merged into other parties by

⁴⁸⁶ Early 1990 disagreements between Czech and Slovak leaders on changing the formal name of the nation ended with the Federal Assembly adopting two names in March 1990. In the Czech lands the republic was known as the Czechoslovak Federative Republic, while it was named the Czecho-Slovak Federative Republic in Slovakia. This "hyphen war" emblemized the disagreement between Czechs and Slovaks over government structure going back to the federalization of Czechoslovakia in 1969. After 1989, most Slovak leaders pushed for a prompt restructuring into a confederation of two equal nation-states to overcome the voting imbalance between Czechs and Slovaks in the Federal Assembly, whereas Czech leaders wanted to focus on pursuing political and economic changes and felt little immediacy for changing the federal structure. In summary, Slovak leaders saw federalization as a means to democratization, whereas Czechs saw it as an adjunct and even an impediment to economic, social, and political democratization. It was primarily disagreements among the Czech and Slovak political leaders over these issues that ultimately led to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 despite the fact that numerous polls of Slovaks conducted in 1992 showed less than 30% favored full Slovak independence; Scott Brown, "Prelude to a Divorce? The Prague Spring as Dress Rehearsal for Czechoslovakia's 'Velvet Divorce,'" *Europe-Asia Studies* 60 (2008): 1783-1804, especially 1794-1803; Paal Sigurd Hilde, "Slovak Nationalism and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51 (1999): 647-665. See also Gil Eyal's study on the different evolutionary trajectories of the Czech and Slovak political elites from 1968 to the 1990s: Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*.

1996.⁴⁸⁷

The morality-driven dissidents like Havel and Pithart were hampered in their political competencies by a history of discussing only to each other in the “dissident ghetto” of small and enclosed circles kept hidden from those who were not dissidents and who did not read samizdat.⁴⁸⁸ When they assumed political positions after 1989 they found themselves unable to speak effectively to a vast majority of the population. The dissidents’ philosophy of “living in the truth” and placing human rights above all other political issues had made them the heroes during the late years of Socialism and earned them the trust of the Czech public to take control of the country after 1989. But after the democratic transition they faced a public that was more concerned with immediate problems of the present than abstract self-reflections and moral reappraisals of the past.⁴⁸⁹

Their moral calls to the Czech public to reevaluate the expulsion and the anti-German sentiment this helped engender was a prime example of this disconnect, as Pithart reflected: “Havel and the Civic Movement quickly lost popularity every time they mentioned the past and settlement with it. They

⁴⁸⁷ Lubomír Kopeček, *Éra nevinosti: Česká politika 1989–1997* (Brno: Barrister and Principal, 2010), 133–144, 223; Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe*, 83–101. Šrubar notes that the exodus of dissidents and Chartists from political offices was not absolute, with notable exceptions like Jiří Gruša, Jiří Dienstbier, and Havel; Ilja Šrubar, “Elitenwandel in der Tschechischen Republik,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, February 13, 1998, 21–33.

⁴⁸⁸ Chad Bryant, “Whose Nation? Czech Dissidents and History-Writing from a Post-1989 Perspective,” *History and Memory* 12 (2000): 42–44; Timothy Garton Ash, “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians,” *New York Review of Books*, January 12, 1995, 40.

⁴⁸⁹ Bryant, “Whose Nation?” 30–31.

themselves came to terms with this demand although it was rejected by most others. I do not know if the larger, more vociferous part of the public typically wants to hear that law and justice are not always identical.”⁴⁹⁰ The “anti-politics” of the dissidents that had formed the root and origins of dissident philosophy and activity against the prevailing political institutions in the 1970s and contributed to the fall of Socialism in that country thus proved a hindrance those same individuals’ successful political activity after 1989.⁴⁹¹ Havel’s critics and even sympathetic friends like Timothy Garton Ash noted the problems in balancing intellectual morality with politics, arguing that one could be a politician attempting to influence people, or an intellectual striving for truth, but not both.⁴⁹²

In addition to the disconnect between the anti-political Czech leaders and their general populace, calls to reappraise the past were taking place during a general crisis of Czech national identity and a time of great uncertainty which engendered rising nationalist sentiments. In 1992 in the wake of public discontent over the treaty, Pithart commented that Czech nationalism was still contained in a

⁴⁹⁰ Petr Pithart, “Intellectuals in Politics: Double Dissent in the Past, Double Disappointment Today,” *Social Research* 60 (1993): 755. A Czech journalist sympathetic to Pithart and Havel addressed the political reality of the dissident’s disconnect with the average Czech voter in 1992, saying, “You will not win a single vote by holding deep philosophical discussions in a small circle”; Martin Palouš and Petr Janyska, “Discussing the Elections: The Czech Point of View,” RFE/RL Research Report 1, June 26, 1992, 25.

⁴⁹¹ Havel penned the concept of anti-politics in his 1984 essay, “Politics and Conscience,” where he argued that politics should be opposed to human power and manipulation and should instead be morality in practice that enables the protection of human life and the search for meaning; see: Havel, “Politics and Conscience,” 136–157; Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*, 59–92.

⁴⁹² Timothy Garton Ash, “Prag, Intellektuelle und Politiker,” *Transit* 10 (1995): 136–155.

bottle but “the cap is open,” and in reflecting on his party’s disappointing defeat at the polls later that year he attributed it in part to a lack of historical perspective, saying that “wrong illusions [...] result in disappointment. And mass disappointment results in mass movements. Today’s new nationalism is one of those movements.”⁴⁹³

The rise of Czech nationalism paralleled, and was in part stoked by, a renewal of the old perception of a German threat facing the Czech nation sparked by German unification, increasing German economic expansion in the Czech Republic, and statements by the SL demanding a right to return and reclaim property.⁴⁹⁴ Adding to this reaction was a feeling of vulnerability after the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state that had marked their independence from German hegemony for the first time since the 17th century.⁴⁹⁵ This climate of uncertainty enabled a resurfacing of the trauma of Munich and self-conception of Czechs as a nation threatened by Germans and unable to rely on the help of foreign, making reevaluating their relationship to Germans and their narrative of the

⁴⁹³ Pithart, “Intellectuals in Politics,” 761.

⁴⁹⁴ Pauer, “Moral Political Dissent,” 175. In many ways, the persistent inflammatory articles of Czech socialist press organs during the Cold War that painted West Germany as a revanchist, aggressive nation of fascists plotting their return meant that these fears of Germans across the border never left Czech discourse; see: Wessel, “Die Mitte liegt Westwärts,” 325–333; Houžvička, *The Sudeten German Question*, 408. For more on Czech historic tendencies to define themselves in relation to Germans, see: Jiří Rak, “Das Stereotyp des Deutschen im tschechischen historischen Bewusstsein,” *Österreichische Osthefte* 31 (1989): 88–102; Wessel, “Die Mitte liegt Westwärts,” 325–344; Kořalka, “Czechoslovakia,” 1026–1040.

⁴⁹⁵ Houžvička, *The Sudeten German Question*, 408.

expulsion all the more emotional and complicated.⁴⁹⁶ Havel summarized Czech's problematic connection of their national identity to Germans in a 1995 speech at the Carolinum in Prague:

One can say that the Czechs define themselves both politically and philosophically through their attitude toward Germany and Germans, and that it is through the nature of this attitude that they determine not only their relationship to their history but also the actual form of their national and state self-image. (...) Germany is our inspiration and our pain, a source of intellectual traumas, various prejudices and false beliefs as well as the standards we reference ourselves to; some see Germany as our greatest hope, others as our greatest danger.⁴⁹⁷

Czech Politics of Europe

Returning to Europe was the banner of the Civic Forum and was carried by the Civic Democrats as well as almost every other Czech political party, but Klaus' Civic Democrats and the dissidents held two very distinct visions of that return. For the morality-driven dissidents the emphasis was on integrating with the values, morals, and culture of Europe, and viewing Europeanness as a cosmopolitan

⁴⁹⁶ Hildegard Schmoller, "Der Gedächtnisort 'Münchener Abkommen' als Manifestion tschechischer Selbstbild," in *Nationen und ihre Selbstbilder: Postdiktatorische Gesellschaften in Europa*, ed. Regina Fritz, Carola Sachse, and Edgar Wolfrum (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008), 90–107. On Czech national self-conceptions of a threatened, vulnerable nation, see: Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴⁹⁷ Václav Havel, "Tschechen und Deutsche auf dem Weg zu einer guten Nachbarschaft," speech held at the Carolinum in Prague, February 17, 1995. Full text of the speech can be found in: "Rede des Präsidenten der Tschechischen Republik, Václav Havel, zum tschechisch-deutschen Verhältnis, 'Tschechen und Deutsche auf dem Weg zu einer guten Nachbarschaft,'" *Berichte zu Staat und Gesellschaft in der Tschechischen und der Slowakischen Republik* (Munich: Collegium Carolinum, 1995), 29–39.

identity akin to, and encompassing, Central Europeanism. This differed strongly from Klaus' focus on practical integration into the political institutions and markets of Europe and the Atlantic realm.⁴⁹⁸ A clear example of this difference was the Klaus government's rejection of the "Visegrad Cooperation" that Havel established between Czechoslovakia (and later Slovakia), Hungary, and Poland.⁴⁹⁹ Klaus' stance was "Euro-sceptic" in comparison to the dissidents in that he stressed the importance of preserving Czech cultural diversity and national sovereignty on the road to joining the European Community. While he supported practical forms of integration, he also reinforced national ways of thinking and encouraged Czechs to hold onto a sense of national identity, arguing that Czechs had to "find their identity and not lose it on the path to Europe" and manage "how to be European without at the same time dissolving into Europeanism like a lump of sugar in a cup of coffee."⁵⁰⁰

The juxtaposition of the two forms of "returning to Europe" manifested in different approaches toward German-Czech relations. For the dissidents, critical moral self-reflection and reconciliation with Germany was an important and necessary step toward joining Europe deserving of the highest priority, as Havel

⁴⁹⁸ Maria Cornelia Raue, "Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte: Die Prager Deutschlandpolitik, 1990–1997" (PhD diss., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2000), 112–118.

⁴⁹⁹ Michal Kopeček, "Politics, Antipolitics, and Czechs in Central Europe: The Idea of 'Visegrád Cooperation' and its Reflection in Czech Politics in the 1990s," in *Questionable Returns*, ed. A. Bove (Vienna: IWM Junion Visiting Fellows Conferences Volume 12, 2002), 7–12.

⁵⁰⁰ Václav Klaus, "Die Tschechische Republik und die Integration Europas," *Europäische Rundschau* 22 (1994): 5; Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe*, 192.

demonstrated by taking his first official visit to West Germany in January 1990. Klaus, on the other hand, did not concern himself with German reconciliation and placed primary interest on economic and political alliances like NATO and joining the European Union. Klaus also did not shy away from drawing on the anti-German sentiment juxtaposing German and Czech values and interests in critiquing the European Union as a threat to Czech sovereignty for its supposed dominance by Germany, playing into popular fears of German dominance and Czech vulnerability.⁵⁰¹ The rise of the Civic Democrats in Czech politics did not remove all political allies of the AG and supporters of reconciliation with Sudeten Germans from public offices and Klaus was not openly hostile toward Germany, but there was a notable lack of enthusiasm for dialogue and a de-prioritizing of Sudeten German issues once he took office in 1992. While this would hamper the SL as an institution promoting Sudeten German political interests of restitution and compensation, the AG had institutional aims of German-Czech dialogue and reconciliation and thus were not as impeded by the less-than-friendly Klaus government in pursuing these ends.

German-Czech Encounters from Below

The Czech dissidents, though largely removed from prominent political offices under Klaus, continued their pursuit of the moral reevaluation of the

⁵⁰¹ Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe*, 190–191; 199–200; Schmoller, “Der Gedächtnisort ‘Münchener Abkommen,’” 99–101.

expulsion and German relations through the many non-governmental organizations they created to work together with the AG and other Sudeten German cultural groups.⁵⁰² Meanwhile, the AG was actively expanding its grassroots network and forging positive relations with Czechs on a local level to compliment the high-profile encounters.

Far from slowing down after 1989, the AG's support and sponsorship of local Czech Catholic communities ramped up with the new freedom of mobility of people, money, and goods. During his visits across the border after 1989, Olbert met with the same rounds of priests and nuns as his earlier trips, and their immediate needs had not fundamentally changed. They still requested literature above all, now adding Czech translations of German works to the requests, and they continued to need clothing, food, medicine, and technical equipment. To these requests also now came needs for money for church renovations, educational seminars, and intercultural events.⁵⁰³ With the restrictions of the former government now gone, the AG was free to move large amounts of capital for assistance. In 1991 the AG earmarked 50,450 DM for literature, 65,000 DM for educational events and German-Czech encounters, and over 1 million DM for

⁵⁰² Havel remained president, first as a Civic Movement candidate and then as an independent until 2003, although his influence waned over the course of the decade.

⁵⁰³ Trip Report, Kurzbericht ČSSR Reise vom 11. bis 14. Januar 1990, AG1129; Bemerkungen nach einer Reise in die CSFR 4.-10. April, 1990, AG 1129; Bericht über Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen anlässlich einer Fahrt nach Mähren in der Osterwoche 1990, AG 1129.

church renovations.⁵⁰⁴ To help pay for these ventures the AG capitalized on Kohl's closeness to expellees and garnered a personal meeting with him to request federal funding.⁵⁰⁵

Over the next few years, Olbert continued to travel regularly to the ČSFR in 1991 and 1992 to help coordinate the various projects along with Otte, who, before the opening of the official AG office in Prague in 1992, was staying at the Břevnov monastery on the outskirts of Prague on the invitation of their new head since 1989, Anastáz Opasek.⁵⁰⁶ The churches and religious buildings the AG helped renovate worked to establish positive attitudes toward Sudeten Germans in their local communities, and many also played larger roles in German-Czech encounters. Rebuilding the historical Teplá Abbey outside Mariánske Lázně was one of the AG's early priorities in 1990, and every year thereafter it served as symbol of the rebuilding of German-Czech relations with communal masses held there to open and close the annual gatherings of the AG and the Czech Christian Academy.⁵⁰⁷ The abbey observed its 800th anniversary in 1993 with a large celebration around the theme of German-Czech heritage and understanding. This occasion saw AG and Czech political and religious leaders offering mutual apologies for their role in

⁵⁰⁴ Aktivitäten Grenzübergreifende Kulturarbeit für das Jahr 1991, AG 1488.

⁵⁰⁵ Letter, Josef Stingl to Helmut Kohl, February 12, 1990, AG 1488; Aktenvermerk, Gespräch mit Bundeskanzler Dr. Helmut Kohl am Montag, 05.02.90, AG 1488.

⁵⁰⁶ Gedächtnisprotokoll, Besprechungen am 21.-22.07.1991 in Prag, AG 1129.

⁵⁰⁷ Aktivitäten Grenzübergreifende Kulturarbeit für das Jahr 1991, AG 1488; Halík, *Alle meine Wege*, 282.

violence during and after WWII, including the vice-chairman of the lower house of parliament Pavel Tollner, who was a member of the Christian Democratic Party in Klaus' coalition government, calling for all Czechs to confront the expulsion "as such," referring to calling it explicitly an expulsion and not "transfer."⁵⁰⁸

Local renovations also provided an opportunity for encounters and exchanges to build bridges between young Germans and Czechs, and the AG's Junge Aktion became increasingly active in the Czech Republic over the 1990s. Although the Junge Aktion had its roots with the AG, it followed a trend since the late 1960s of distancing itself from association as an "expellee organization," and by the 1990s it included members without Sudeten German heritage and considered itself a German-Czech youth organization rather than a Sudeten German organization.⁵⁰⁹ The first official Junge Aktion event in the Czech Republic took place in 1994 in the former hunting castle at Chudenice, under renovation at the time, and brought together over one hundred Junge Aktion members and Czech youths from the Pax Christi organization in Prague. There, they laid the cornerstone for a new youth center that would host annual gatherings between the Junge Aktion and the youth of the Pax Christi—Prague every year thereafter.⁵¹⁰ A similar encounter took place the following year in Skoky in northwestern Bohemia, where fifty German and

⁵⁰⁸ "Aus der Ansprache des Vizepräsidenten des Abgeordnetenhauses der Tschechischen Republik, Ing. Pavel Tollner," in Rzepka, *Zukunft trotz Vergangenheit*, 190.

⁵⁰⁹ Steffen Michalek, "Wie sudetendeutsch ist die JA? Oder: Aber sonst habt Ihr keine Probleme?" in *Junge Aktion Festschrift*, 83–86.

⁵¹⁰ Matthias Dörr, "Jung und Aktiv! Die Junge Aktion der Ackermann Gemeinde," in Paleczek, *Integration und Dialog*, 66; Lüffe, "Die 90er Jahren," 75.

Czech youths spent a weekend camping in tents and renovating the local church and cemetery.

The young Germans and Czechs that gathered to renovate Skoky were brought together by a grassroots cooperation between the Junge Aktion branch and local Catholic diocese in Würzburg and Catholic youth in the Czech city of Tanvald. This cooperation started organizing three annual gatherings beginning in 1995, and they are an example of the many German-Czech city and diocese partnerships and other grassroots cooperatives that sprang up from local initiatives after 1989. One of the Junge Aktion leaders from Würzburg, Matthias Dörr, was 19 at the time and remembers the “excitement” he felt about traveling to the Czech Republic for this first of many gatherings in Skoky and meeting young Czechs who were also interested in getting to know young Germans: “It was exciting to discover something new [...] an adventure. And the partnerships, it was a bit of euphoria meeting for the first time and discovering the feeling of togetherness [...] We camped together, renovated the church and cemetery together, and we also had many very candid and substantive discussions as part of our evening program. That was a very formative experience for me.”⁵¹¹ Dörr later went on to take a leadership position in the Junge Aktion, assumed Olbert’s position as the head of the AG’s Sozialwerk office, and eventually became the national secretary general of the AG.

These grassroots initiatives ran parallel to the political debates and conflicts

⁵¹¹ Interview, Matthias Dörr, June 16, 2014.

of the 1990s, but contrary to the latter were characterized by cooperation, community, and a desire for understanding, not conflict. Otte, whose AG office in Prague focused primarily on coordinating the larger, high-profile conferences and events, nevertheless praised the efficacy and meaningfulness of the lower-level encounters: “[In contrast to the political discord at the higher levels] the meetings on the lower level always worked smoothly. The local and regional chapters [of the AG and Junge Aktion] had contacts with their former communities and they renovated churches and cemeteries and so on. But the large meetings... there one started looking for a new model to bring people into dialogue.”⁵¹²

The youth encounters helped to forge a new network of German and Czech partnership to take over the reins from the older generation as they began to pass, as Dörr recalled:

Of course you make a lot of friends when you are over there so often. You grow together and grow up together. Many people from this friendship circle have come to take important positions in Czech society, and the circle is still growing. This is a new network, meaning not the one from before 1989, which isn't as large as it used to be. We notice this more and more each time we get together and look back. There's just not many of them left.⁵¹³

The contacts created in the nineties comprised many of the high-level AG contacts in later years and up to the present. Dörr was just one of many young Sudeten

⁵¹² Interview, Anton Otte, June 10, 2014.

⁵¹³ Interview, Matthias Dörr, June 16, 2014.

Germans to make friends and build networks with young Czechs, but alone the friendships he made that evolved into partnerships included future employees at the European Parliament, the Bernard Bolzano Society, a Schools Minister of the Czech Republic and chairman of the Czech Green Party, an associate director at the Prague Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, the director of the AG's Czech sister organization "Sdružení Ackermann-Gemeinde,"⁵¹⁴ and many others who work in Czech media or political foundations.⁵¹⁵

In this way, though difficult to quantify, the importance of the AG and Junge Aktion's many events and encounters in the 1990s for laying the groundwork for reconciliation, understanding, and partnership cannot be emphasized enough. Official treaties and carefully crafted public statements often provide the easiest sources for historians to locate and evaluate, but as the history of the AG forging individual contacts over the 1970s and 1980s that bore fruit in the 1990s showed, it is the small encounters and the personal relationships created through them that were the true catalysts of change and reconciliation behind the curtains of the official stages.

The 1997 German-Czech Declaration⁵¹⁶

Despite the many successful grassroots meetings, anti-German sentiment

⁵¹⁴ The Sdružení Ackermann-Gemeinde was founded in 1999 as a sister organization to the AG comprised of Czechs and ethnic Germans living in the Czech Republic.

⁵¹⁵ Matthias Dörr, personal correspondence with the author, June 22, 2016.

⁵¹⁶ Full title: "The German-Czech Declaration on Mutual Relations and their Future Development."

persisted into the mid-1990s and showed a propensity to flare up and dominate Czech headlines.⁵¹⁷ On a political level, Prime Minister Klaus took a cooler approach toward Sudeten German reconciliation than the previous Czech premier Pithart, opposing continued calls from Kohl and the SL for direct dialogue as well as any form of Czech apology for the expulsions.⁵¹⁸ While not hostile to Germany or expellees, the expulsion issue was simply not of particular concern for Klaus: “German-Czech relations are what they are. We can’t artificially improve them, but we shouldn’t artificially make them worse either.”⁵¹⁹ In opposing talks with the SL, Klaus also had the backing of the majority of the Czech population, with a 1993 survey suggesting that 61% were opposed to direct dialogue with Sudeten

⁵¹⁷ One such episode was a 1994 lawsuit raised by a Czech citizen of German nationality, Rudolf Dreithaler, to obtain the family house confiscated from his parents in 1951. Dreithaler’s lawsuit challenged the legality of the Beneš Decree 108 of 1945 that nationalized all German private property even though his parents still occupied the house for several years thereafter. A Brno court ruled in 1995 against Dreithaler that the decree was “not only a legal, but also a legitimate act,” but an appeal two months later granted the house to Dreithaler without overturning the legality of the entire Decree 108. This highly-publicized case raised Czech fears of a mass onslaught of legal cases to reclaim property and, though they praised the results of its final decision, Sudeten German press organs and politicians heavily criticized the courts for continuing to uphold the Decree; Witte, *Entfremdung*, 187–191; Raue, “Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte,” 129.

⁵¹⁸ On the recommendation of one of Klaus’ advisors, dissident historian Bohumil Doležal, who himself was a regular participant in AG-organized conferences and events, Klaus surprisingly decided in favor of creating a delegation comprised of representatives of several Czech parties to engage in dialogue with the Sudeten Germans. However, after several weeks of internal Czech disagreement and lack of progress on establishing a delegation, Prime Minister Klaus wrote to Bavarian Minister-President Stoiber that he was cancelling those plans, citing sharp statements against the Czech government made at the recent SL Whitsunday meeting and also the Bavarian government’s threat to cease the planned construction of an oil pipeline from Ingolstadt to central Bohemia if the Prague regime did not change its stance toward the SL. Raue, “Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte,” 125–126; Tampke, *Czech-German Relations*, 146.

⁵¹⁹ *Die Welt*, April 6, 1995.

Germans, with 39% being “strongly opposed.”⁵²⁰

The left parties of the Czech Republic, primarily the Communists and many of the Social Democrats, continued to warn that any steps or statements that might imply that the expulsion was unjust or illegal would open the flood gates for legal claims and a mass return of Sudeten Germans to the border region. For this reason, in the same 1993 survey 82% believed if Sudeten Germans were allowed to return they would threaten the property ownership of residents in the border region, and 62% even feared it would lead to a revision of the Czech border.⁵²¹ As one leading Social Democrat critic of revision of the expulsion narrative put it, “if an attempt is now made to interpret the transfer as an expulsion, then we cannot be surprised that the Sudeten Germans raise legal claims to property, because expulsion is an unlawful and illegal act. A return must logically come with every expulsion, because every illegal act substantiates a right of those affected to compensation.”⁵²²

Klaus’ disinterest in actively pursuing reconciliation was complimented in a negative sense by Kohl’s sharp tones toward Czechs concerning expellee issues, with Kohl even joining the chorus of SL leaders and expellee politicians in 1993 calling for the Czech Republic’s admission to the EU to be stalled if it failed to include the SL in direct talks.⁵²³ Kohl remained close to the SL and expellees

⁵²⁰ From surveys undertaken June 26, 1993, and May 7, 1993, respectively, by the Institute for Opinion Research, cited in: Kučera, “Zwischen Geschichte und Politik,” 182, 185.

⁵²¹ From surveys undertaken June 26, 1993, and May 7, 1993, respectively, by the Institute for Opinion Research, cited in: Kučera, “Zwischen Geschichte und Politik,” 182, 185.

⁵²² *Rudé právo*, January 9, 1992, cited in: Kučera, “Zwischen Geschichte und Politik,” 180

⁵²³ Tampke, *Czech-German Relations*, 146.

through the mid-1990s and allowed them to influence his policy stance toward the Czech Republic in such cases as calling for a repeal of the Benes Decrees and insisting on some form of compensation of expellees before giving Czech victims of the Nazi regime compensation. This closeness reflected his weakening national political base and the increasing importance of the expellee voting bloc for his political survival over the course of the decade. In the 1994 election the SPD surpassed Kohl's CDU in total votes for the first time since his initial election, garnering 38% of the vote to the CDU's 37%. It was the small but critical 7% of Bavarian CSU votes in the CDU/CSU union that allowed Kohl to continue his coalition government with the FPD's 6.9% of the vote and achieve a very narrow simple majority in the Bundestag to retain his office as chancellor.⁵²⁴ Thus, the years between the concluding of the 1992 German-Czech treaty and 1995 were characterized by bilateral tension and political impasse as the leaders of both countries played to their political bases and stalled the reconciliation process, although the vast AG network of Germans and Czechs were working outside political confines to promote reconciliation and a coming-together of politicians at the national level.

It was allies of the AG that helped set into motion the negotiation of a German-Czech declaration to finally address the major outstanding issues standing in the way of reconciliation. At the turn of the year 1994–1995, Bavarian Minister-

⁵²⁴ Phillips, "The Politics of Reconciliation," 180.

President Edmund Stoiber sent a letter to the German and Czech ambassadors outlining a set of points that would contribute to rapprochement. The letter included a number of points the Czechs saw as constructive and were willing to engage, but Czech Foreign Minister Zieleniec was initially skeptical. His advisors, particularly Ambassador Gruša, an AG ally, persuaded him to take advantage of the opportunity and respond constructively to Stoiber's proposal instead of simply rejecting the untenable points. Zieleniec met with Havel in early 1995 and together they came up with the idea for a joint declaration. Zieleniec planned to use Havel's international prestige and contacts to help set negotiations into motion and ensure they did not stumble over suspicion and animosity, and he also intended to raise as much public support as possible and bring all the major parties on board to prevent any single party from torpedoing the negotiation process.⁵²⁵

To begin rallying public and political support for the declaration they made use of a series of lectures at the Prague Carolinum titled "Speaking of Neighbors," in which prominent Czech and German politicians spoke on German-Czech relations and history, and offered potential solutions. Havel opened the lecture cycle with a widely praised speech that outlined the major Czech opinions and positions on the expulsion issues. He spoke of past and future German-Czech relations and laid out a nuanced perspective toward the expulsion that recalled the ongoing process of reconciling with the past while setting clear limits on the revisionist and restorative

⁵²⁵ Raue, "Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte," 129–130.

demands of Sudeten Germans. The Czech media reacted exceptionally positive toward Havel's speech, and it resonated with much of the Czech public and helped create space for political maneuvering to begin negotiations.⁵²⁶

With Havel having set the stage for sensible public Czech dialogue the AG and their Czech allies took another step in publishing a declaration of solidarity and call for dialogue that March titled "Reconciliation '95." This declaration echoed previous AG-Czech statements in recalling past peaceful cohabitation that was ended by mistakes and violence by both sides, but it called for immediate talks between the Prague government and Sudeten German political representatives to find a common position on the historical "problem of decisions in the past" and to allow Sudeten Germans to return to the Czech Republic "on the condition of the equal status of returnees as the rest of the [Czech] population."⁵²⁷ This was a carefully worded phrase to allow Sudeten Germans to obtain equal rights while precluding any special status from which to raise legal claims to property. The declaration had over one hundred signatories (thirty-eight Sudeten Germans and sixty-seven Czechs), including politicians, journalists, academics, and representatives of Sudeten German organizations including the AG, some from the

⁵²⁶ Raue, "Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte," 130–131; Kunštát, "German-Czech Relations," 162. Czech Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec also offered potential pathways to the future that spring, proposing that Czechs' morally condemn the Beneš Decrees and suggesting that Czech Parliament might one day reconsider holding to the Beneš Decrees. This prompted a harsh rebuttal by Klaus, who rejected these ideas as "absurd, nonsensical and completely wrong"; Witte, *Entfremdung*, 187; Jiří Pehe, "The Choice between Europe and Provincialism," *Transition*, July 14, 1995, 18.

⁵²⁷ Full text can be found in: Rzepka, *Zukunft trotz Vergangenheit*, 196–197.

SL, the Adalbert Stifter Verein and Seliger Gemeinde, as well as Czechs who worked together with these institutions, like Kubes, Opasek, Kučera, Malý, Příhoda, Pithart, Sokol, and Otáhal.⁵²⁸

The public reaction in the German press and Chancellor's office and Foreign Ministry was positive, but the official publications of the SL ignored it and the SL leadership actively blocked its approval in the Council, presumably because it threatened to undermine their demands for compensation and restitution. The immediate reaction to the proposal in the Czech press, however, was overwhelmingly negative, with much of the outcry directed at the Czech signatories whom the press accused of stabbing the Czech government in the back by openly calling for direct dialogue with Sudeten Germans.⁵²⁹ Pithart took to the pages of *Lidové noviny* to defend the declaration, saying, "Talks at government level with the political representatives of SGs would indeed be a non-standard step, but what happened was not standard either."⁵³⁰

With the Klaus government once again rejecting the idea of direct dialogue with Sudeten Germans, the proposal failed in its objective of opening talks with Sudeten Germans. (Klaus' response was, "if 105 people on both sides think that a

⁵²⁸ "Versöhnung 95," Sudetendeutscher Unterschriften; Stand 03.10.1995, AG 886; "Smíření 95," V České republice uvedení prohlášení podepsali, AG 886.

⁵²⁹ Die Bürgerinitiative "Versöhnung 95." Das Echo in der deutschen, tschechischen und sudetendeutschen Öffentlichkeit, AG 886.

⁵³⁰ Petr Pithart, "Smysl výzvy Smíření," *Lidové noviny*, April 18, 1995.

dialogue is necessary then let them lead this dialogue themselves.”).⁵³¹ However, it contributed to the public discussion in the Czech Republic that Havel began in his Carolinum speech on beginning negotiations for a joint German-Czech declaration. Although most Czechs were against direct talks with Sudeten Germans, public opinion swayed increasingly in favor of finally resolving issues with Germany, and Klaus was finally persuaded to allow negotiations for a joint declaration with Germany in May 1995.⁵³²

The hope was to agree on a declaration by the end of the year, but negotiations stumbled over many of the same obstacles as the 1992 treaty.⁵³³ To the SL’s annoyance, it was once again shut out of negotiations, as Klaus was insistent on making the declaration with the German government and not with Sudeten Germans. Among the political low-points during negotiations was Klaus requesting the former Allied powers for confirmation on the legality of the Potsdam Declaration to calm Czech public uproar following German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel’s ill-timed comments in an interview, affirming Germany’s longtime stance that the Potsdam Declaration was a political statement with no legal bearing on the

⁵³¹ Berthold Kohler, “Ein Appell tschechischer Intellektueller und Sudetendeutscher,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 3, 1995.

⁵³² Klaus’ decision came after lengthy discussions with Zieleniec, Havel, and Alexandr Vondra, the deputy foreign minister and a former advisor to Havel; Raue, “Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte,” 132.

⁵³³ For a detailed account of the negotiations, see: Raue, “Doppelpunkt hinter der Geschichte,” 135–141.

expulsion of Germans.⁵³⁴

Despite a year and a half of tensions surrounding the negotiations, the final treaty was inked in December 1996 and ratified that January and February by the Bundestag and both houses of the Czech parliament, respectively. The AG and its network had a hand in the official bilateral declaration and its aftermath.

Formulations from the correspondence between the German and Czech Bishop's conferences initiated by the AG and the Czech Christian Academy found their way into the text of the declaration itself, and many individuals played central roles in the Future Fund and Dialogue Forum created through the treaty to address the issues of compensation for Czech victims of the Nazi regime and dialogue between Czechs and Sudeten Germans.⁵³⁵ Pavel Tigrid was the first Czech representative for the coordinating council for the Discussion Forum and helped guide it into existence until 1999, when he was replaced by Otto Pick, an émigré who in the 1980s was the director of the Czechoslovak section of Radio Free Europe in Munich and a friend of the AG and frequent participant in their major events.⁵³⁶ Others who

⁵³⁴ Kunštát, "German-Czech Relations," 165. As with the 1992 treaty, the negotiations and related debates in German and Czech media have been covered in depth elsewhere. For good overviews, see: Wite, *Entfremdung*, 187–246; Kunštát, "German-Czech Relations," 163–166; Tampke, *Czech-German Relations*, 147–150.

⁵³⁵ Halík, *Alle meine Wege*, 284. The AG also received praise and recognition in the German press for their contribution to reconciliation and helping set the stage for achieving the declaration; "Die Kirchen sehen sich als 'Avantgarde' der Versöhnung zwischen Bonn und Prag," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 10, 1997.

⁵³⁶ "10 Jahre Deutsch-tschechischer Zukunftsfonds. Tätigkeitsbericht 1998-2007 und Jahresbericht 2007," 70; full text found at: <http://www.fondbudoucnosti.cz/getFile.aspx?itemID=2681> (accessed July 11, 2016).

held leadership roles in the Future Fund include Franz Olbert, Josef Stingl, Herbert Werner (AG chairman from 1991-1998), Walter Rzepka (AG), Ferdinand Seibt, Petr Příhoda, Miloš Rejchrt, and Pavel Smetana (partners of the AG in the Czech Christian Academy), Franz Neubauer,⁵³⁷ and Berndt Posselt.⁵³⁸

The Junge Aktion also used the new institutions created through the declaration to further expand its activity and reach. The Junge Aktion already became more active on a political level in 1996 by taking part in the first German-Czech youth gathering and the German-Czech Theater Festival in Prague, which included a discussion forum with the Czech and German presidents, Havel and Roman Herzog.⁵³⁹ The Junge Aktion was specifically invited by the organizing committee of the youth gathering, and the chairman of the Junge Aktion at the time saw the gathering of over 250 youths as the “high point” of the decade and viewed their invitation as an acknowledgement of their previous work.⁵⁴⁰ They sent a delegation of twelve participants and used the opportunity to promote the Junge Aktion’s work to others and seek out more partners.⁵⁴¹ Dörr recalled the excitement of meeting Havel and Herzog and gathering with so many Czechs at a

⁵³⁷ As chairman of the SL, Neubauer’s presence on the coordination council led to a political conflict with newly-elected Czech Social Democrat Prime Minister Miloš Zeman in 1998, when Zeman led a temporary boycott of the forum protesting that the head of the SL should not sit on the council because the SL rejected the 1997 declaration; see: Phillips, “The Politics of Reconciliation,” 182.

⁵³⁸ “10 Jahre Deutsch-tschechischer Zukunftsfonds,” 80–96.

⁵³⁹ Witte, *Entfremdung*, 208; Interview, Matthias Dörr, June 16, 2014.

⁵⁴⁰ Lüffe, “Die 90er Jahren,” 75.

⁵⁴¹ Postilion: Info-Blatt des deutsch-tschechischen Jugendtreffens, Issue No. 2, September 3, 1996; H. Burger, “Klassenziel Versöhnung: Deutschen und Tschechen proben die Annaeherung,” *Die Welt*, September 5, 1996.

time when German-Czech relations were a major political issue, and the feeling of being part of history and active in contemporary politics inspired the Junge Aktion to think bigger and more politically.⁵⁴² In 1998 they successfully petitioned to establish a formal youth German-Czech dialogue forum under the organizational umbrella of the forum created through the 1997 declaration and remained a primary organizational force behind the annual youth discussion forum meetings in the future.⁵⁴³

The treaty was meant to put to rest the ambiguity and differences between the two states' official narratives of the expulsion, and sections two and three of the treaty took significant steps toward this end. In recognition of their guilt, the German side, for the first time, officially acknowledged a causal link between the events of 1938/39 and those of 1945/46, declaring that "the violent policies of National Socialism against the Czech people contributed to laying the groundwork for the flight, expulsion, and forced evacuation that took place after the war's end."⁵⁴⁴

On their part, the Czechs "regretted that the dispossession, denaturalization, expelling, and forced evacuation of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia, (...) inflicted great suffering and injustice on innocent people given the collective

⁵⁴² Interview, Matthias Dörr, June 16, 2014.

⁵⁴³ Dörr, "Jung und Aktiv!" 66.

⁵⁴⁴ "Die deutsch-tschechische Versöhnungserklärung vom 21. Januar 1997," cited from: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 325.

character of attributing blame.”⁵⁴⁵ Taking direct blame for the expulsion and delegitimizing those acts by associating it with collective guilt was a monumental step from the Czech side, even if it only referred to the so-called “wild expulsions” that took place before the conclusion of the Potsdam Declaration.⁵⁴⁶ Still, it was the product of heavy negotiation that resulted in using a variation of the word “expulsion” that had a less accusatory connotation, and thus less legal implications, than the direct word “expulsion” used in the 1992 treaty.⁵⁴⁷ Although they stopped short of denouncing or repealing the Beneš Decrees relating to the expulsion, the Czech side provided the “distancing” from them the Kohl government insisted on by regretting “that the law No. 115 of May 8, 1946, made it possible that these excesses were not considered as illegal and that, as a consequence, the acts were

⁵⁴⁵ “Text Česko-Německé Deklarace,” cited from: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 329.

⁵⁴⁶ “Forced evacuation” was the declaration’s term for the expulsion after the Potsdam Declaration and was included to emphasize the legality of the decision to remove the German population made at Potsdam; Witte, *Entfremdung*, 266.

⁵⁴⁷ Although the Czech term for expulsion (*vyhnání*) was used in the 1992 treaty, it was used non-descriptly without attributing blame specifically to Czechs. Due to the Czech outcry at its usage in that treaty and the subsequent parliamentary statement that it only applied to the so-called “wild expulsions” of the initial months, its usage in the 1997 declaration was heavily debated. The compromise struck in the 1997 declaration rested in using the word “expelling” (*vyhánění*) instead. The meaning of “*vyhánění*” is closer to “driving out” in English and does not imply a wholesale illegal act that the direct translation of expulsion, “*vyhnání*,” does; Witte, *Entfremdung*, 149; Tampke, *Czech-German Relations*, 148.

not punished.”⁵⁴⁸ In return, the Czechs received their desired assurance that the German government would cease insisting that the Decrees be repealed with the declaration affirming that “each side remains bound by their legal system and respects that the other side has a different legal opinion. Both sides therefore declare that their relationship will not be burdened with political and legal questions of the past.”⁵⁴⁹

Conclusion

The 1997 joint declaration was a watershed document in that it allowed both the German and Czech governments to move past the expulsion issue in bilateral relations and largely calmed the polemical and inflammatory discussion in the Czech press for the rest of the decade.⁵⁵⁰ Both sides declared that previous injustices “belong to the past,” but this did not stop the SL from continuing to raise objections and levy demands on the Czech government.⁵⁵¹ Yet the SL was

⁵⁴⁸ “Die deutsch-tschechische Versöhnungserklärung vom 21. Januar 1997,” 325. Decree #115 retroactively made all acts committed against Germans during the expulsion legal by declaring, “Any act committed between September 30, 1938 and October 28, 1945, the object of which was to aid the struggle for liberty of the Czechs and Slovaks or which represented just reprisals for actions of the occupation forces and their accomplices, is not illegal, even when such acts may otherwise be punishable by law.” Pressure in the Bundestag from the Green and SPD parties ultimately pushed Kohl to drop his insistence for Czechs to repeal the Decrees and to compensate Sudeten Germans as a prerequisite for providing German compensation for Czech victims of the Nazi regime; Kunštát, “German-Czech Relations,” 162, 164–166. See, for example, the fierce responses to Foreign Minister Kinkel’s update to the Bundestag on the negotiations by SPD and Green party members in: Deutscher Bundestag: Plenarprotokoll 13/125 vom 26.09.1996: 11,260.

⁵⁴⁹ “Die deutsch-tschechische Versöhnungserklärung vom 21. Januar 1997,” 325.

⁵⁵⁰ Kolář, “Vertreibung,” 226.

⁵⁵¹ “Die deutsch-tschechische Versöhnungserklärung vom 21. Januar 1997,” cited from: Witte, *Entfremdung*, 325.

increasingly isolated, as even the CDU and CSU party chairmen declared their official support for the declaration, and by 1997 the SL found itself marginalized by its own political allies and by a German populace that was sharply critical of its rejection of the monumental declaration that had taken so long to achieve.⁵⁵²

Chancellor Kohl alluded to this during his address to the Bundestag in 1997 on the new declaration: “No one can be excluded [from German-Czech dialogue]. But the opposite is also true: no one should exclude themselves. [...] Today the Sudeten Germans are called to provide a new example. They can build bridges in the future, bridges between the German and Czech people. And it is true: Many among them have already been doing this for many years.”⁵⁵³

As a political institution, the inability of the SL to attain many of their aims in the 1990s constitutes a decided decline in influence and a growing weakness to achieve their goals. The AG, however, was an institution with aims of reconciliation, partnership, and establishing larger and deeper bonds with the Czech people, and in this regard the 1990s was a resoundingly successful decade that saw the AG’s status enhanced in the eyes of the German and Czech publics. This success was built upon decades of work, outreach, and the forging of an international network of Czech partners and friends. The AG continued to expand its reach and widen its network during the 1990s and occupied many of the leadership positions in new

⁵⁵² “Ja aus München zur Erklärung mit Prag,” *Die Welt*, December 16, 1996; “Wir lehnen diese Erklärung ab,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 11, 1996; Witte, *Entfremdung*, 294.

⁵⁵³ Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13/6787, January 22, 1997, 13811.

cooperatives created in the 1997 declaration, and they also created a new network of young Germans and Czechs to take over leadership of these efforts as the older AG members and allies retired and passed. Thus, the 1997 declaration that was meant to put an end to the political and moral struggles over the expulsion history was not an end for the AG in any way, but simply a new beginning of partnership in a long line of new beginnings going back to 1989, 1968, and even 1945.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE EUROPEANIZATION OF EXPULSION REMEMBRANCE

The 1997 treaty was a victory for moderate voices and the result of partnership and activism between Czechs and Sudeten Germans forged over three decades, and it marked a turning point away from allowing WWII history to hamper German-Czech political relations. However, it was not the last time this issue would challenge the political future of the Czech Republic in Europe, nor was it the end of debates about expulsion remembrance in Europe. The early 2000s saw expulsion history resurface during Czech accession to the European Union (EU), and it subsequently sparked a Europe-wide debate about how to write and tell histories of collective violence on the continent in a way that promoted European integration. EU expansion in 2004 marked a monumental geographical shift that transformed “Europe” from something that resembled Charlemagne’s empire to a new creation that stretched from Portugal to Estonia.⁵⁵⁴ With this restructuring came a need to recast old histories in a way that provided historical legitimation for the expanded geography of the new Europe. In many ways, the grassroots activism, cooperation, and cosmopolitan ways of thinking about identity and expulsion

⁵⁵⁴ The countries that joined the European Union in 2004 were the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Malta, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Bulgaria and Romania were part of the same round of negotiations but only joined in 2007 after instituting additional internal reforms required by the European Commission.

history told in the pages above serves as the origins of the history of the Europe-wide debates in the 21st century.

While tensions between Germans and Czechs surrounding the expulsion calmed significantly following the 1997 treaty, conflict resurfaced again in the early 2000s as the SL and their political allies brought the expulsion to a European level during the run-up to Eastern expansion of the European Union. Specifically, they sought to halt the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU until it formally repealed the Beneš Decrees (hereafter, Decrees) that concerned the expulsion and confiscation of property.⁵⁵⁵ Yet despite the SL's best efforts to muster political support, the reconciliation achieved in the 1990s had resulted in a changed political landscape, wherein support for Czech EU-entry was now unequivocal at the highest

⁵⁵⁵ For more on the campaigns against the Beneš Decrees and the ensuing debates, see: Christian Domnitz, *Die Beneš-Dekrete in parlamentarischer Debatte: Kontroversen im Europäischen Parlament und im tschechischen Abgeordnetenhaus vor dem EU-Beitritt der Tschechischen Republik* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007); Frank Spengler and Anneke Müller, "Debatte um die Beneš-Dekrete weitet sich aus," *Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Report*, August 24, 2002, <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.644/> (accessed January 7, 2017); Samuel Salzborn, "Die Beneš-Dekrete und die EU-Osterweiterung," *Zeitschrift für Bürgerrechte und Gesellschaftspolitik* 2 (2003): 45–52; Ina Gamp, "Die deutsch-tschechischen Beziehungen im Strudel der Vergangenheit: Ein Beitrag zur aktuellen Debatte um die sog. Beneš-Dekrete," in *Integration als Aufgabe—Polen, Tschechien und Deutschland vor der Osterweiterung der Europäischen Union*, eds. Dierk Hoffmann and Thomas Lämmer (Göttingen: GFPS, 2002), 27 Hanley 42; Arnold Suppan, "Austrians, Czechs and Sudeten Germans as a Community of Conflict in the Twentieth Century," Working Paper, Center for Austrian Studies (October 2006), 6; full text can be found at: <http://www.cas.umn.edu/assets/pdf/wp061.pdf> (accessed January 7, 2017); Seán Hanley, "A Nation of Skeptics? The Czech EU Accession Referendum of 13–14 June 2003," *West European Politics* 27 (2004): 691–715; Hans Henning Hahn, "Sudetendeutsche: Wo ist ihre Heimat?" *Der Spiegel*, June 1, 2002.

levels of the German government.⁵⁵⁶ Due to 2002 being an election year in the Czech Republic, it was an especially inviting time for politicians to attempt to drum up political support by taking a strong stance against Sudeten Germans who were threatening Czech entry into the EU. Seeing the potential for an escalation of bilateral tensions and seeking to maintain positive relations, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder delayed a bilateral meeting to discuss Czech EU-entry until after the Czech elections.⁵⁵⁷

The Czech Republic succeeded in joining the EU despite the SL's campaign demanding a repeal of the Decrees, but some reactions in the Czech Republic to the SL's campaign showed that national ways of thinking persisted and could be

⁵⁵⁶ Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer maintained their support for Czech entry into the EU despite several occasions of inflammatory comments against Sudeten Germans made by Czech politicians. On one occasion Czech Prime Minister Miloš Zeman referred to Sudeten Germans as Hitler's "fifth column" whose penalty should have been death, and another involved him saying of Sudeten Germans "they wanted 'back to the Reich' so we let them go." While Schröder was allegedly "livid" at these comments he did not criticize them publically or threaten any change in Germany's support for Czech entry into the EU; see: Hans-Joachim Noack, "Die Deutschen als Opfer," *Der Spiegel*, March 25, 2002; Salzborn, "Die Beneš-Dekrete," 46; "Benesch-Dekrete: Schily wirft Stoiber Scharfmacherei vor," *Die Welt*, May 21, 2002.

⁵⁵⁷ In addition to Zeman's controversial "fifth column" remarks, one Czech member of the Civic Democrat Party, Milošlav Bednár, spoke of an "axis of evil" during a roundtable discussion in Berlin, referring to calls for repealing the Beneš Decrees in Munich, Vienna, and Budapest; Frank Spengler and Anneke Müller, "Debatte um die Beneš-Dekrete weitete sich aus," *Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Report*, August 24, 2002, <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.644/> (accessed January 7, 2017). Even in debates about the economy images of a perennial German enemy resurfaced, and economic woes were frequently personified with discourses like, "what the Germans couldn't do with the Wehrmacht they're doing now with the economy," see: Christian Habbe and Hans-Ulrich Stoldt, "Sudetendeutsche: Tief in jedem Hinterkopf," *Der Spiegel*, June 1, 2002; Ulrike Ackermann, "Die gespaltene Erinnerung," *Die Welt*, November 8, 2002.

inflamed by perceived external threats to Czech sovereignty.⁵⁵⁸ A 2002 poll showed an increase in views of the expulsion as “just” to 60%, up from the 47% of 2001, and support for the Decrees had also threatened public support for joining the European Union if their repeal was made contingent upon accession.⁵⁵⁹ The political pushback against the Decrees had the result of engendering embrace of a positive legacy of the man Beneš himself as a show of nationalism and resistance to foreign pressure.⁵⁶⁰ This led to the passage of several resolutions in the Czech National Assembly aimed at defending the Decrees and Beneš’ legacy, including the 2004 single-sentence resolution stating “Edvard Beneš rendered outstanding

⁵⁵⁸ On the recommendation of a specially assigned investigative legal commission the European Commission declared that the Decrees were antiquated and no longer relevant, and after a lengthy debate the Czech EU-entry recommendation passed the European Parliament on April 9, 2003, with 489 votes in favor, 39 against and 37 abstentions—the lowest number of votes in favor out of the ten countries up for candidacy; Domnitz, *Die Beneš-Dekrete in parlamentarischer Debatte*, 13; “The Committee’s enlargement activities during the 5th Legislature (1999–2004),” European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defense Policy: Notice to Members, No. 08/2004, 7, full text at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/comparl/afet/enlargement_5leg_en.pdf (accessed January 7, 2017).

⁵⁵⁹ Survey conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research at the Czech Academy of Sciences; cited from: “Im Spiegel der tschechischen öffentlichen Meinung,” Publication of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, May 20, 2002, <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.647/> (accessed January 7, 2017). Two polls conducted in 2002 attributed recent declines in support for Czech entry to the EU to the politicization of the Decrees, and a separate poll even showed a clear majority of Czechs opposing EU entry if repealing the Decrees were made a requirement; Seán Hanley, “Europe and the Czech Parliamentary Elections of June 2002,” RIIA/OERN Election Briefing No. 5, 2002: 9–10, full text available at:

http://www.researchgate.net/publication/242681817_THE_POLITICAL_CONTEXT_OF_EU_ACCESSION_IN_THE_CZECH_REPUBLIC (accessed January 7, 2017).

⁵⁶⁰ For more on the political embrace of Beneš as a statement of patriotism and resistance to international pressure, see: Kolar, “Vertreibung,” 927; Frank Spengler and Petr Blazek, “Reaktionen der tschechischen Medien über die 53. Sudetendeutsche Tage,” Country Report of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, May 18, 2002, <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.707/> (accessed January 7, 2017); Bohumil Doležal, “Analyse: Ein neuer Nationalheiliger,” *Prager Zeitung*, March 3, 2004; “Parliament zeichnet Beneš aus,” *Der Spiegel*, February 25, 2004.

service to the state,” and it also manifested in later debates about erecting a statue in Beneš’ honor.⁵⁶¹

At the same time, many others rallied against these political moves and showed that cosmopolitan ways of thinking European and rejecting nationalist paradigms were stronger in the Czech Republic then than they had been in 1989. These reactions demonstrated the progress that the former dissidents and European-minded Czechs had achieved since 1989, particularly in the Czech press which had predominantly played an antagonistic role in the expulsion debates of the early 1990s. One author in the newspaper *Mladá Fronta Dnes* criticized that Czech politicians could not realize that supporting the Decrees made “ethnic cleansing a part of their legal system,” and others condemned those politicians for playing the “German card” to rally political support.⁵⁶² Tigrid wrote “I am ashamed!” of the current political discourse, and the German-Czech Historians’ Commission also declared that they were “against reducing German-Czech relations to the Beneš Decrees” and warned that “history is not a weapon.”⁵⁶³ A group of over

⁵⁶¹ Karl Peter-Schwartz, “Das Beneš-Gesetz als Schutzwall,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 13, 2004. An earlier resolution in April 2002 asserted the inviolability of the legal and property relationships that resulted from the Decrees; Suppan, “Austrians, Czechs and Sudeten Germans,” 6. For more on the statue debates, see: Zahorán Csaba, “Edvard Beneš: A Man of Contradictions,” *Central European Political Science Review* (Fall–Winter 2005): 68–72; Luboš Palata, “Analyse: Ein tschechischer Kriegsheld,” *Prager Zeitung*, May 18, 2005; Emanuel Mandler, “Kann Schröder einen Konflikt verhindern?” *Prager Zeitung*, May 20, 2005.

⁵⁶² Spengler and Müller, “Debatte um die Beneš-Dekrete; Hans-Jörg Schmidt, “Das Volk ist weiter als seine Politiker,” *Die Welt*, March 25, 2002.

⁵⁶³ Gamp, “Die deutsch-tschechischen Beziehungen,” 39; “Deutsch-Tschechische Historikerkommission gegen Verkürzung der deutsch-tschechischen Beziehungen auf ‘Beneš-Dekrete,’” Declaration of the German-Czech Historians’ Commission, March 16, 2002; full text at: <http://www.bohumildolezal.cz/texty/u074-07.htm> (accessed February 11, 2017).

250 Czech intellectuals, many of whom like Petr Pithart were veterans of the earlier reconciliation efforts, published the following statement in critique of the ongoing polemics:

The presidential decrees of the republic and the forced evacuation of the Germans out of the ČR present a painful problem which requires open debate in Czech society and on a political level. Instead, we are witnessing an attempt to exploit a storm of national emotions to demonstrate false national unity [...] Doing this threatens to restrict political freedom and the freedom of opinion of the Czech society, aggravate relations with our neighbors and possibly block our entry into the EU.⁵⁶⁴

The result of this episode showed progress of the revisionist moral narrative of the expulsion in the Czech Republic on the one hand, yet it also illustrated the persisting tension between national and European ways of thinking concerning expulsion history.

Expulsion memory also underwent a transformation of its own in Germany, as remembrance of the suffering of expellees gained traction in public and political discourse from the mid-1990s into the 2000s. A key factor in the reintroduction of expellee sympathy into German public consciousness were the wars and ethnic violence in the Balkans during the 1990s.⁵⁶⁵ The conflicts in the Balkans that

⁵⁶⁴ Ulrike Ackermann, "Vergessen zugunsten der Zukunft? Zur Debatte über Vertreibungen," *Merkur* 11 (2002): 7.

⁵⁶⁵ Goschler, "Versöhnung und Viktimisierung," 881; Dietmar Neutatz, "Vertreibung und Zwangsaussiedlung—eine historische notwendige Lösung der sudetendeutschen Frage?" in Dietmar Neutatz and Volker Zimmermann, eds., *Die Deutschen und das östliche Europa: Aspekte einer vielfältigen Beziehungsgeschichte* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2006); Haslinger, "Von der Erinnerung zur Identität und zurück," 483–485.

continued throughout the 1990s served as a rude awakening for Europe and indeed the world that horrors resembling WWII could happen again. Mass murder, violent expulsions, and concentration camps were once again European realities, and live images and reports of the humanitarian suffering of victims of expulsion were broadcasted daily into homes around Europe. A new term “ethnic cleansing” came into use during the Balkan conflicts to describe the forced removals of entire local populations there, and although the origins of the term have deservedly been criticized as a euphemism for genocide, it remained in use and by the end of the decade had come to evoke widespread condemnation of forced population transfer in all its forms and practices.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ Many observers noted the inaction of European countries to mount a unified response to the conflict in the Balkans despite televised broadcasts of forced population transfers, war, and suffering less than a days’ drive from Vienna. “Ethnic cleansing” served as a convenient way to reclassify atrocities on par with genocide there in a way that absolved European countries and international organizations like the United Nations from having to take action. Initial Western inaction in the Balkan wars served as a damning indictment of the professed ideals of modernity, Western humanism, and a post-1945 world order whose foundation rested in “never again” standing by while atrocities on par with genocide take place. For a pointed indictment of modernity over inaction in the Balkans, see: Akbar S. Ahmed, “Ethnic Cleansing: A Metaphor for Our Time,” in *The Conceit of Innocence*. For other critical perspectives on Western inaction there, see: Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion*; Meštrović, *The Conceit of Innocence*; and Meštrović and Cushman, *This Time We Knew*.

Scholars disagree over when exactly “ethnic cleansing” came to hold the moral weight that it did by the millennium’s end,⁵⁶⁷ but a clear step in this direction came at the 1998 Rome Conference for an International Criminal Court, when expulsion and ethnic cleansing were made war crimes and crimes against humanity on par with genocide.⁵⁶⁸ Two years later at the Intergovernmental Conference on the Holocaust in Stockholm, historians, politicians, and heads of state from forty-six countries signed a declaration asserting a global ethic that placed ethnic cleansing next to genocide as deserving of the highest moral opprobrium. This declaration argued that collective memory of the Holocaust constituted the basis for a common global value system, and this value system necessitated remembering the evils of ethnic cleansing in addition to genocide in order to prevent their future

⁵⁶⁷ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider assert that this shift came at the time of NATO intervention in 1995. From this perspective, the invocation of the Holocaust is what drove NATO to action by serving as a bond of universal morality across Western nations that inspired NATO’s response, including German’s first combat deployments since WWII. In contrast, others like Stjepan Meštrović point out that European nations like Britain, France, and Germany remained bogged down in bickering and inaction and that the real catalyst for NATO’s involvement came despite Europe, not because of it, from the increased involvement of the United States. From this perspective, the story of Western intervention constitutes a failure of European morality, not an example of European moral unity. For Levy and Sznaider’s position, see: Levy and Sznaider, “Memory Unbound,” 97–100; Levy and Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 92–94. For Meštrović’s and other more critical analyses, see: Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion*; Meštrović, *The Conceit of Innocence*; and Meštrović and Cushman, *This Time We Knew*.

⁵⁶⁸ For a full summary of the Rome Conference, see: Michael P. Scharf, “Results of the Rome Conference for an International Criminal Court,” *ASIL Insights* 3, August 11, 1998, <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/3/issue/10/results-rome-conference-international-criminal-court> (accessed February 10, 2017).

occurrence.⁵⁶⁹ From this point onward, ethnic cleansing joined genocide as evils that Europe was morally bound to universally condemn in all forms and practices.

At the same time, the moral universalization of ethnic cleansing engendered critical historical investigations of expulsions in modern history, and several major works sought to trace histories of ethnic cleansing in the 19th and 20th centuries, including the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe in these histories.⁵⁷⁰ While the methodology of these studies was received with some criticism by German and Czech scholars of the expulsions in German-Czech relations for their one-sided portrayal of victimhood without causation or pretext, they paralleled a trend of growing sympathy for expellees in Germany and the reintroduction of expulsion memory into public discourse.⁵⁷¹ German politicians from parties without a recent history of public support for expellees like the SPD

⁵⁶⁹ Dubiel, "The Remembrance of the Holocaust" 68–69; Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, January 28, 2000; full text can be found online at: hmd.org.uk/page/stockholm-declaration (accessed January 15, 2017).

⁵⁷⁰ Bell-Fialkoff, "A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing," 110–121; Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*. For later publications in the same vein, see: Bernd Faulenbach and Andres Helle, eds., *Zwangsmigration in Europa: Zur wissenschaftlichen und politischen Auseinandersetzungen um die Vertreibung der deutschen aus dem Osten* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2005); Anje Kruke, ed., *Zwangsmigration und Vertreibung—Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 2006).

⁵⁷¹ Many scholars of the ethnic German expulsions and German-Czech and German-Polish relations objected to the blanket portrayals of all ethnic cleansings as being similar, which neglected the context of Nazi occupation and WWII atrocities as a catalyst. Seeing the whole picture of wartime violence and occupation from both sides of the debates had long been a central focus of German-Czech dialogue on the expulsion, and for many calling them an act of "ethnic cleansing" threatened to cloud mutual understanding and reconciliation with a one-sided moral narrative of victimhood without inclusion of the pretext of Nazi occupation. For example, see the critical review of Hans Henning Hahn in: Hans Henning Hahn, "Zu Neuerscheinungen über ein europäisches Erinnern an Zwangsmigration und ethnische Säuberung," *Bohemistik*, <http://www.bohemistik.de/erinnern.html> (accessed January 11, 2017).

and Green parties began speaking out about the need to remember German victims of the expulsion from 1995 onward, and Gerhard Schröder became the first SPD chancellor to speak at the Federation of Expellees' (*Bund der Vertriebenen*, BdV) annual *Tag der Heimat* gathering in 1999.⁵⁷² However, this newly discovered sympathy for expellee suffering within the Green and SPD parties took place in the same political context as the ongoing reconciliation with Czechs, and there were limitations to the extent of that sympathy. These new voices of support were clear in distinguishing between expellee sympathy and the political aims of expellee organizations, which they saw as divisive and bad for European unity, and they remained adamantly opposed to SL and BdV calls to tie Czech EU accession to repealing the Decrees and their continued demands for establishing legal frameworks to sue for property restitution.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Green Party representative Antje Vollmer gave a much-publicized speech in 1995 in which she apologized for her party had historically met expellees with "unsympathetic disinterest and an incapability to listen, sympathize and mourn collectively"; "Frau Vollmer ruft Tschechen und Deutsche zu einem mutigen Neuanfang auf," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 6, 1995. For more on the rise of sympathy for expellees, see: Karoline von Oppen and Stefan Wolf, "From the Margins to the Centre? The Discourse on Expellees and Victimhood in Germany," in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. Bill Niven (New York: Palgrave 2006), 194–209. Gerhard Schröder, Address at the "*Tag der Heimat*" of the Federation of Expellees in Heilbronn, September 5, 1999, cited from: Moeller, "Sinking Ships," 172.

⁵⁷³ Green Party representative Antje Vollmer and SPD representative Peter Glotz, two newly vocal proponents for remembering expellee suffering, both publically opposed property restitution and demanding a repeal of the Beneš Decrees despite their increased calls for remembering expellee suffering; Sonja Zekri, "Tiefe Resignation: Bundestagsvizepräsident Antje Vollmer zur Vertriebenen-Frage," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 9, 2002; Peter Glotz, Address at the "*Tag der Heimat*" gathering of the Federation of Expellees, Berlin, September 1, 2001; full text can be found at: <http://www.mittleeuropa.de/zgv04.htm> (accessed January 7, 2017).

In the early 2000s, articles began appearing in German print media recalling the suffering of expellees, including a special 2001 issue of *Der Spiegel* on the Holocaust that placed the Nazi Jewish deportations and German expulsions next to each other as part of a larger statement on the evil of ethnic cleansing.⁵⁷⁴ The doors to public discussion blew wide open in 2002 with the publication of Günter Grass' novel *Crabwalk* which unleashed a flood of new public discussion about remembering expellee victims and suffering.⁵⁷⁵ The story dealt with the history of the deaths of some 9,000 ethnic German refugees during the sinking of the ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* in 1945 in the Baltic Sea, and the novel traced one man's journey toward understanding the importance of retelling that history out of moral necessity and to prevent it from being politically hijacked by right-wing nationalists. Grass' long tradition of emphasizing German perpetrators and culpability in the Holocaust gave legitimacy to the idea that the time had come to remember German victims, and many observers credited him with "breaking taboos" and allowing Germans to remember their own suffering in WWII. Subsequently, German print and television media were saturated in 2002 and 2003

⁵⁷⁴ Götz Aly, "Das Prinzip Vertreibung," *Der Spiegel*, May 28, 2001.

⁵⁷⁵ Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang: Eine Novelle* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2002).

with tales of flight, expulsion and tragedy of ethnic German civilians during and after WWII.⁵⁷⁶

Yet these discourses of a resurgent German remembrance of the expulsions in 2002 were not a throwback to the nationally divisive forms of expulsion forms of remembrance of the 1950s. Instead, they showed a strong tendency for cosmopolitan ways of thinking about German history rooted in the later rejection of those discourses in the 1960s and the push for peaceful relations with Eastern Europe. The 21st century discussions over expulsion remembrance soon turned to discussing ways in which Germans could remember victims of expulsion in a way that Europeanized victims and perpetrators and fostered integration and a common European identity.

The impulse for wider European discussions about a site of remembrance of expulsion had already arisen in 1999, when the head of the BdV Erika Steinbach announced plans to erect a Center Against Expulsions (*Zentrum gegen Vertreibung*, hereafter, ZgV) in Berlin to document the history of forced population transfer in modern history. The proposed vision of the ZgV was to include documentation of

⁵⁷⁶ For a comprehensive overview of the discussions Grass' novel unleashed, see: Moeller, "Sinking Ships," 147–181. Grass' book also garnered international responses, with reports in Great Britain and the United States noting the new shift toward remembering Germany's WWII victims; see: "Grass breaks German taboos," *BBC News*, February 8, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1808768.stm>, (accessed January 15, 2017); Carol J. Williams, "We, the Victims too," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March 2002; Alan Riding, "Günter Grass, Still Intrigued by Shadows," *International Herald Tribune*, April 11, 2003; Peter Schneider, "In Their Side of World War Two, the Germans also Suffered," *New York Times*, January 18, 2003; Daphne Merkin, "Cordoning Off the Past," *New York Times Book Reviews*, April 6, 2003.

expulsions worldwide, but the focus would be primarily on portraying the history of the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and their postwar integration.⁵⁷⁷ Although the proposal did not immediately spark widespread controversy, this changed in 2003 after the BdV launched a public relations campaign through a series of highly publicized podium discussions following the failure of a bill to provide federal funds for the ZgV in the Bundestag.⁵⁷⁸

The debates over the ZgV proposal represented a continuation of the struggle between national or cosmopolitan approaches to remembering expulsion history. They took place at the same time as the renewal of expulsion remembrance in Germany and EU expansion, and, with European integration being a paramount contemporary issue, public discussions shifted toward how best to remember and tell expulsion history in the context of breaking down national barriers and promoting European integration. In the coming years various initiatives emerged in

⁵⁷⁷ Salzborn, *Geteilte Erinnerung*, 92–93.

⁵⁷⁸ “Es geht um Heilung,” *Die Zeit*, July 23, 2003; “Steinbach: Schröder hat Angst vor Nachbarn,” *Die Welt*, August 17, 2003. For summaries of the Center debates and positions see: Salzborn, *Geteilte Erinnerung*, 91–104; Jürgen Danyel, “Deutscher Opferdiskurs und europäische Erinnerung: Die Debatte um das ‘Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen,’” *Zeitgeschichte-Online*, Januar 2004: 2, full text at: <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/thema/deutscher-opferdiskurs-und-europaeische-erinnerung> (accessed January 13, 2017); Jakub Jedras et al., “Old Foes Face Off over Expulsion Memorial,” *Transitions Online*, August 6, 2003, full text at: <http://www.tol.org/client/article/10378-old-foes-face-off-over-expulsion-memorial.html> (accessed January 13, 2017). For the rise of Polish concerns about German expulsion remembrance stemming from the ZgV debate, see: Pawel Lutomski, “The Debate about a Center Against Expulsions: An Unexpected Crisis in German-Polish Relations?,” *German Studies Review* 27 (2004):449–468; and: Claudia Kraft, “Die aktuelle Diskussion über Flucht und Vertreibung in der polnischen Historiographie und Öffentlichkeit,” *Zeitgeschichte Online* (January 2004), full text at: <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/thema/die-aktuelle-diskussion-ueber-flucht-und-vertreibung-der-polnischen-historiographie-und> (accessed January 13, 2017).

Germany and in organs of the European Union about finding a way to present expulsion history that moved beyond victim-perpetrator dichotomies and allowed Europeans of all nationalities to remember flight and expulsion as a European tragedy and not simply a way to levy blame and guilt on one nationality or another.⁵⁷⁹ Opponents of the BdV-proposed ZgV in the Bundestag argued that a German-focused center for expulsion remembrance would damage relations between Germany and Central Europe and promote the very kinds of nationalist thinking that caused the expulsion of the past, and they argued instead that any center should be European-oriented and emphasize human suffering over any particular nationality.⁵⁸⁰

These debates illustrated new discourses of remembrance that argued for a cosmopolitan approach to expulsion remembrance in a way that universalized guilt and suffering similar to the universal moral narratives of the Holocaust.⁵⁸¹ The expulsion remembrance debates illustrated many of the problems of creating forms of remembrance for traumatic violence evident in the concurrent debate surrounding the design and conception of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

⁵⁷⁹ One such initiative was a 2003 proposal in the Council of Europe sponsored by Great Britain, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Slovakia, and Lichtenstein for the establishment of a European remembrance center for victims of forced migration and ethnic cleansing as a consequence of totalitarianism in the 20th century. This resolution failed in multiple votes in the European Parliament, but it illustrated early interest in forging a common European memory of expulsion. Brandes, Sundhaussen, and Troebst, *Lexikon der Vertreibung*, 734.

⁵⁸⁰ See the arguments of Markus Meckel (SPD) and Antje Vollmer (Green) during the Bundestag debates: Deutscher Bundestag, 14. Wahlperiode, Plenarprotokoll 14/236, May 16, 2002.

⁵⁸¹ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memories of Universal Victimhood: The Case of Ethnic German Expellees," *German Politics and Society* 23 (2005): 1–27.

Disagreement over the Holocaust memorial abounded over whether it should mourn the victims, address the perpetrators (and if so, the perpetrators of the past or their descendants [*Nachfolger der Tätergesellschaft*]) or some combination of both; whether Jews should be the center of the victim group or if all other groups of victims should be included, and what purpose exactly should the memorial serve: should it create a site of remembrance of a tragedy of the past, or should it enshrine a legacy of the Holocaust to serve as a reminder to warn future generations?⁵⁸² These questions of the forms and aims of remembrance entered the ZgV debate with similar diversity of opinion and emotion and illustrated the very complicated nature of remembering violence in the context of an expanding and integrating Europe.

Some objected to the ZgV's emphasis on victims over historical context, and international opposition to the ZgV proposal was loudest in Poland, where some observers claimed tensions between Poland and Germany reached their lowest levels since WWII.⁵⁸³ The outcry there was also due in part because the ZgV proposal came on the eve of their accession to the EU and at the same time as the founding in Germany of the private organization the Prussian Claims Society, whose

⁵⁸² For more on the debates, see: Michael S. Cullen, ed., *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal: Dokumentationen einer Debatte* (Zurich: Pendo, 1999); Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler, "Remembering in the Berlin Republic: The Debate about the Central Holocaust Memorial in Berlin," *Debatte* 13 (2005): 25–43; James Young, "Berlin's Holocaust Memorial," *German Politics and Society* 17 (1999): 54–70.

⁵⁸³ Lutomski, "The Debate about a Center Against Expulsions," 449.

sole purpose was to sponsor legal claims for expellees against Poland.⁵⁸⁴ In contrast to Poland, Czech politicians were largely mute on the proposal despite the ongoing controversy over the Beneš Decrees in the European Parliament. Chancellor Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's unwavering support for Czech EU entry and their desires to keep tensions of the past from harming bilateral relations went a long way toward keeping relations stable, and both foreign ministers declared that relations were better than they had ever been before.⁵⁸⁵ The timing of the SL and BdV's campaigns against the Decrees was perhaps a positive coincidence here, as it seemed that Czech politicians were not eager to instigate more conflict by picking a fight over the ZgV proposal.⁵⁸⁶

Others objected to the ZgV's proposal to emphasize German victims of expulsion more than other nationalities who were also victims of ethnic cleansing in Europe. As a counteraction to the ZgV proposal, SPD representative Markus

⁵⁸⁴ Lutomski, "The Debate about a Center Against Expulsions," 460–462. Making matters worse, the ZgV proposal came from Erika Steinbach who was also its loudest proponent, and Steinbach had voted against the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border to Poland in 1991 citing unaddressed property issues; Sebastian Fischer, "Streit über Vertriebenen-Stiftung: Merkel wird den Fall Steinbach nicht los," *Der Spiegel Online*, November 17, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,661738,00.html> (accessed January 13, 2017).

⁵⁸⁵ Jitka Mládková, "Soll es ein Zentrum gegen Vertreibung geben?" *Radio Prague*, August 28, 2003, www.radio.cz/de/artikel/44631 (accessed January 13, 2017); Aureliusz M. Pedziwol, "Vertreibung: Eine unendliche Debatte," *Prager Zeitung*, September 17, 2003; Jakub Jedras et al., "Old Foes Face Off over Expulsion Memorial," *Transitions Online*, August 6, 2003, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/10378-old-foes-face-off-over-expulsion-memorial.html> (accessed January 13, 2017).

⁵⁸⁶ Muted comments on the proposal by Czech Prime Minister Spidla stood in stark contrast to his more inflammatory remark that the expulsion was a "source of peace" in discussing the calls to repeal the Beneš Decrees, see: "Vertreibung ist nur eine Teilfrage der Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges," *Die Zeit*, 37/2003, http://www.zeit.de/2003/37/Tacheles_030905 (accessed February 10, 2017).

Meckel pleaded for an alternative center for researching and portraying expulsion history collectively in the spirit of European integration, arguing, “It would be a great step toward our shared future if we can manage to write and remember this history collectively within the course of our advancing integration.”⁵⁸⁷ Meckel’s proposal did not contain any plans or concepts for how this should be achieved—these were specifics that would be planned out cooperatively in a European working group. What his proposal did have was a long list of support from prominent politicians, intellectuals, and academics from Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, including Günter Grass, Petr Pithart, Czech Ambassador to Germany František Černý, Karel Schwarzenberg, and many historians with the German-Czech Historians’ Commission.⁵⁸⁸

The ZgV debate over forms of expulsion remembrance is best summarized as a debate between two distinct ways of thinking: national or European. It was a conflict over the method of constructing the historical narrative and the lessons that narrative should convey: should those lessons serve to enhance understanding

⁵⁸⁷ A similar proposal was actually put forward at a 2002 colloquium of Eastern European historians in Darmstadt, although it received minimal publicity at the time. Many of those historians went on to support Meckel’s initiative. “Plea for a European Centre Against Expulsions, Forced Resettlements and Deportations,” July 2003; full text at: markus-meckel.de/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Aufruf-Europ%C3%A4isches-Zentrum-gegen-Vertreibungen_mit-Unterschrift.pdf (accessed January 13, 2017).

⁵⁸⁸ Pithart argued that a European center would allow for very beneficial and necessary remembrance of the expulsions in a way that would prevent any one nation from dominating it or instrumentalizing it; see his interview in: Daniel Brössler, “*Zentrum gegen Vertreibung in Tschechien denkbar*,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 18, 2003. Ambassador Černý supported it as a way to present Czechs with an alternative historical viewpoint on their history broader than a simple justification of the expulsion based on collective guilt; see: “Besuch Außenminister Fischers in Prag,” *Die Zeit*, August 26, 2003.

and awareness of the history of a particular nationality or ethnic group? Or should they be lessons for Europe that would enhance understanding and awareness of a common European past, shared traumas, and a need for collective remembrance to frame present and future values?

Supporters of the ZgV proposal saw expulsion history in a national framework and asserted that Germans alone should be the ones to remember and retell their own suffering. SPD parliamentarian and vocal spokesman in favor of the ZgV proposal Peter Glotz summarized this argument in saying, “even to neighbors that suffered greatly at the hands of the Germans, at some point Germans have to find the courage to say: ‘Only we can write our history.’”⁵⁸⁹ Glotz argued that nations “only have self-awareness and dignity when they know and understand their own history; when they can mourn their dead, be proud of their accomplishments and appalled by their atrocities (...) We must present our traumas so that the other side can present theirs. Only then is understanding possible.”⁵⁹⁰ He cautioned that this history had to be written and presented in a European context that “kept the proportions of various wrongdoings in view” and take care not “to instrumentalize history against its neighbors,” but ultimately for Glotz and many other ZgV supporters, expulsion history was first and foremost a national

⁵⁸⁹ Peter Glotz, “Der Kampf gegen das Verbrechen der Vertreibung,” *Die politische Meinung* 417 (August 2004), 17, <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.5148/> (accessed February 23, 2017).

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

memory whose primary function was to serve the national narrative, not a European one.⁵⁹¹

The alternative viewpoint embodied in Meckel's proposal was grounded in a cosmopolitan way of thinking about Europe and asserted that a center of remembrance should be internationally organized and run collectively as Europeans to tell a European story. This viewpoint was grounded in new notions of a "Europe" post-EU expansion, which required a shift in memory paradigms away from the national frameworks that defined the Cold War era and moved toward the creation of new paradigms to incorporate countries east and west into the new "Europe" of the 21st century. For Meckel and his supporters, the history of expulsion on the continent was part of the history of Europe as a whole, and the aim of telling it should be to reinforce European values and identity, not national ones. They believed that a European center could be the site of creating a transnational collective memory of expulsion as Europeans: "In light of the terrible history in the first half of the 20th century that binds us Europeans with one another it would be a great step in our collective future if we can manage in the course of the continuing process of European integration to write and remember this history collectively to overcome the danger of using it against each other again and again."⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁹² "Plea for a European Centre Against Expulsions, Forced Resettlements and Deportations."

European ways of thinking appeared to gain the upper hand with a 2003 joint statement by German and Polish presidents Johannes Rau and Aleksander Kwaśniewski that called for finding a transnational solution to expulsion remembrance.⁵⁹³ At a follow-up meeting in 2004 the cultural ministers of Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria advocated for the establishment of a European network for documenting and researching forced migration and expulsion in the twentieth century. This resulted in the founding of the “European Network for Memory and Solidarity” in 2005, and after subsequent debates in the Bundestag and the German chancellor’s cabinet, this network was bestowed a primary organizational role in developing the conception of a federally funded center on expulsion history.⁵⁹⁴

The final form of the original ZgV proposal was renamed from “Center Against Expulsion” to simply the “Documentation Center” of the newly-founded federal Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation established in 2008 to oversee the project. This foundation was placed under the auspices of the German Historical Museum overseen by the Ministry of Culture, transforming it from a BdV institution into a center with an international advisory board and a board of trustees which

⁵⁹³ Levy and Sznajder, “Memories of Universal Victimhood,” 17.

⁵⁹⁴ Brandes, Sundhaussen, Troebst, *Lexikon der Vertreibung*, 734. In Germany the Center was placed under the administration of the ministry of culture, though the cultural ministers from the cooperating countries in the European Network for Memory and Solidarity were invited to cooperate and assured that their input and approval would be taken seriously. See the comments of German Minister of Culture Bernd Neumann in: Deutscher Bundestag, 16 Wahlperiode, 50. Sitzung, Plenarprotokoll 16/50, September 20, 2006, 4896.

includes representatives from the Protestant and Catholic Church and the Central Council of Jews in Germany.⁵⁹⁵ Moreover, the guidelines for the permanent exhibition planned to frame expulsion as “universal experiences” under the motto “the suffering of others is the suffering of all,” and the exhibit was also to dedicate permanent space to European cultures of remembrance after 1989 as part of its central mandate.⁵⁹⁶

The transformation by external pressure of the original ZgV proposal to a European form of remembrance, reflected the strength of cosmopolitan ways of thinking in the early 21st century which held that narrating a shared European experience of expulsion and suffering was vital for promoting European integration and ensuring a peaceful and cooperative European community.⁵⁹⁷ The German-Czech conflicts and debates of the 1990s offered the lesson that narratives of expulsion grounded in national frameworks were damaging to European integration and unity in the post-1989 era, and the cosmopolitan approach of the Czech revisionists and Sudeten Germans with the AG offered a model for moving

⁵⁹⁵ Due to the tensions with Poland during the early ZgV debates and the starkly negative impression Steinbach made during this period she is not allowed to serve as a trustee or advisor to the Foundation in any official capacity; see: Jeffre Luppés, “Mission Accomplished? Erika Steinbach and the Center Against Expulsions in Berlin,” *German Politics and Society* 115 (2015): 81.

⁵⁹⁶ Conceptual Framework for the Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation and Guidelines for the Planned Permanent Exhibition, Stiftung Flucht Vertreibung, Versöhnung, 18 and 41, full text at: http://www.sfvv.de/sites/default/files/downloads/conceptual_framework_sfvv_2012.pdf (accessed January 19, 2017).

⁵⁹⁷ Kraft, “Locating German Refugees,” 285–286; Frei, “Gefühlte Geschichte”; Frevert, “Geschichtsvergessenheit und Geschichtsversessenheit,” 6–13; Goschler, “‘Versöhnung’ und ‘Viktimisierung’”; see also the volume of collected essays in: Dieter Bingen, Włodzimierz Borodziej, and Stefan Troebst, eds., *Vertreibung europäisch erinnern? Historische Erfahrungen: Vergangenheitspolitik—Zukunftskonzeptionen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003).

past the old, divisive paradigms of expulsion memory. Although at the time many in Europe relegated the German-Czech expulsion debates to a narrow issue for Czechs and Sudeten Germans, the new moral narrative of ethnic cleansing and the expanded Europe of the 21st century created a larger imperative to reevaluate expulsion history as a European narrative. By the 1990s, Holocaust narratives across Europe had begun to universalize its victims and perpetrators, and when the expulsions joined that same moral category, it prompted more people across Europe to seek a similar progression of universal morality in expulsion narratives. The debates sparked through the ZgV proposal provided an opportunity for scholars, politicians, and activists to project this new desire for Universalist morals and cosmopolitan European identity in concrete form on the issue of expulsion history.

And yet, as the story told in the previous chapters illustrates, currents of cosmopolitan European identities were already manifested in the 1970s and 1980s in debates about the expulsion and nationalities in Central Europe among Czech dissidents, émigrés, and Sudeten Germans with the AG. During the final two decades of the Cold War, Germans and Czechs on a grassroots level began the process of working through the troubled history of the expulsion through dialogue and cooperation. Individually, many Czechs confronted the immorality of the expulsion and grounded this revision in the belief of the sanctity of universal human rights. Paramount to this discourse was also a rehabilitation of German heritage in discussing notions of a Central European identity, which can be viewed

as one form of a transnational European identity. The AG, in turn, pleaded their case for promoting Sudeten German identity as belonging to an inclusivist, Bohemian identity that downplayed national distinction and emphasized shared heritage and values with Czechs, and they sought dialogue, cooperation, and partnership with Czechs to work through the troubled history of the expulsion collectively. These pre-1989 discourses foreshadowed the later discussions in the 2000s about Europeanizing expulsion remembrance in the context of promoting a cosmopolitan European identity grounded in human rights and condemnation of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The ZgV proposal and the rise of public discussions of German suffering in the early 2000s elevated the debates about narrating the expulsions out of the bilateral conferences and cooperations between Germans and Czechs and brought them into the highest levels of governance within the European Union. It transformed expulsion history and remembrance from a national or bilateral concern to a European problem requiring a European solution. A center of expulsion history proposed to be a *lieux de mémoire*, to borrow Pierre Nora's term: a location to enshrine the memory of the expulsions that would serve as a cultural reference point to retell the story and promote a moral narrative to educate and guide present and future generations.⁵⁹⁸ And with the joining of ethnic cleansing

⁵⁹⁸ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.

with genocide as a primary moral concern and unifying force for Europe, such a site of expulsion memory was vested with much more importance than simply providing a forum for allowing expellees to tell their own history: it had to become a site for Europe to tell a European history.⁵⁹⁹

Writing “European” histories of violence on the continent was an international concern, and the expulsion sat squarely in the middle.⁶⁰⁰ Yet for many Czechs and Sudeten German activists, the expulsion had long sat in the middle of discussions about European integration, whether it was in the form of seeking reconciliation, forging a common community of Germans and Czechs, assisting a suppressed Catholic Church in the East, or rejecting the Socialist narrative and “returning to Europe.” When viewed in this light, the story of grassroots activism and cooperation told here offers a prehistory for the Europe-wide discussions of the 2000s. Transnationalism and cosmopolitanism were the buzz words of the 1990s and new millennium, and scholars sought their roots in the end of the Cold

⁵⁹⁹ On the pursuits of European Commission officials and federalist-oriented historians and politicians to promote and produce histories of Europe to foster integration and that would counteract the hegemony of national histories, see: Chris Shore, *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 2000), especially 40–65.

⁶⁰⁰ On recent efforts to conceptualize and write transnational European histories, see: Jan Werner Müller, “On ‘European Memory’: Some Conceptual and Normative Remarks,” in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 25–37; Konrad Jarausch and H. Lindenberger, eds., *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Wulf Kansteiner and Richard N. Lebow, eds., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Aleida Assman, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2006); Aleida Assman, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gedächtniskultur?* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2012); Claus Leggewie and Anne Lang, *Der Kampf um eine europäische Erinnerung: Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt* (Munich: C.H. Verlag, 2011).

War and increasing interaction and integration in Europe.⁶⁰¹ For many Sudeten Germans and Czechs, however, these currents had been well underway since the 1970s. Whether caused by governmental repression, exile, or a sense of moral, religious, intellectual or ethnic duty, the pursuit of cosmopolitan identities, transnational expulsion memories and European integration were pressing issues in Central Europe years before the end of the Cold War made such discourses possible on a wider public scale.

To be sure, the end of the Cold War marked a watershed in European history; yet these tales of pre-1989 grassroots activism and their very real effect on German-Czech bilateral relations after 1989 further weaken old presumptions of a monolithic Iron Curtain dividing the social and cultural histories of East and West. The task of pursuing the integration of East and West Europe hit the agendas of national governments and European governmental organization after 1989, but these pursuits guided the activities of scores of non-governmental German and Czech actors before 1989. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, it was the contentious and divisive issue of the post-WWII expulsion and the quest for reconciliation and understanding that drove much of those pursuits toward integration and shared identities and memories. The expulsion that many previously believed had forever distinguished Czechs from Germans as distinct

⁶⁰¹ Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Perspective," 87; Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 21; Levy and Sznajder, "Memory Unbound," 93; Pichler, "How Real is Cosmopolitanism in Europe?" 1107–1126.

nationalities circled back to serve as a unifying force bringing them together once again. Though the road toward reconciliation has been rocky and continues to confront new stumbling blocks and setbacks, the story of Czechs and the AG can perhaps offer a testament to the power of individual initiative, cooperation, and seeking to understand and to be understood as a path toward unifying Europeans to come to terms with a troubled past as a foundation for confronting an uncertain future.

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