MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF FORCED MIGRATIONS: THE EXPULSION OF THE SUDETENLAND GERMANS.

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I investigate the moral implications of the expulsion of more than three million Sudeten Germans from the territories known as Bohemia and Moravia in what is now considered the Czech Republic. Following World War II, the Sudeten Germans were forced from their homes in two phases. The first, in 1945, was considered the "wild" expulsions and was marked by the forcible removal of hundreds of thousands from their homes. Many Sudeten Germans were beaten, raped and murdered. In 1946, with the Potsdam Protocol in place, the expulsions were handled in a more orderly fashion and carried out by the Allied forces. Still, I demonstrate through personal case studies and press accounts that these expulsions were inhumane and carried out in much the same way as the first round. The expulsion, coupled with the forced migration of more than three million Sudeten Germans from their homes into unfamiliar territory in war-savaged Germany, with little or no support from Allied forces, constituted a crime against humanity as described in the Nuremberg Principles. Yet despite this violation of international law, no charges were ever brought forward in an international court. Through my research I conclude there seems to be no one clear reason as to why charges were never brought forward. I believe a number of circumstances could have played a role in why charges never came to light. Among
them, the close of World War II with the eyes of the world focused rightly so on
punishing the defendants responsible for the Holocaust and other war crimes. Another
reason is that another war of our time was slowly beginning to take shape, the Cold
War. Finally, the Sudeten Germans were on the losing side. While what happened to
them represented a tragic and ignored part of history, there was very little sympathy for
the Sudeten Germans due to the perception that they were sympathetic to Nazi
Germany. I conclude that we have learned many lessons from this tragic place in
history. The events that happened during World War II and in the years following
provided the foundation for future international institutions and tribunals. The eyes of
the world were opened to the fact that crimes against humanity could indeed happen.
International laws were developed, strengthened and broadened in the years to come to
punish those responsible for committing heinous acts against people. While those who
committed the crimes against the Sudeten Germans were never prosecuted or punished,
the international community learned a valuable and tragic lesson from this period of
time. Ultimately the international community must speak out and take actions against
future human-rights violations.
For my mother who lived through the expulsions. Her voice and her stories inspired me to share this tragic history.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the moral implications surrounding the expulsion and resettlement of approximately three million Sudeten Germans from the Czech borderlands of Moravia and Bohemia into Germany. I examine the impact these violent expulsions had on families and their ability to successfully resettle into the German Federal Republic. I argue that the forced expulsion and migration of Sudeten Germans constituted crimes against humanity despite their eventually successful integration into neighboring countries.

I investigated the problem through a combination of personal interviews and review of relevant works on the subject. I conducted five interviews with my family members who lived through the forced migrations and subsequent relocation. These primary interviews detail their own personal struggles with the transition. They describe the uncertainty leading up to the forced expulsion, how their own removal was carried out, and the nature of the journey and the challenges of adjusting to a new life in an unfamiliar village.

In addition, I gained access to available German government documents detailing the manner in which the Germans were notified, the details of their often distressing and inhumane journey and forced expulsion from one country to the next. One such document, The Expulsion of the German Population from Czechoslovakia 1939-45, offers details on where, when, and how many Sudeten Germans were shifted
throughout the region during World War II.¹ I also researched international press clippings and media accounts of the migration, which provide a personal and factual account of the events. Thus, I established first a factual record of what was documented at the time of the forced expulsions. What proved difficult was the sheer lack of primary sources and historical records on the history of the Sudeten Germans, the circumstances leading up to their expulsion and detailed accounts of the expulsions themselves. Primary sources offered varied and often slanted views of this history. Depending on the source, the bias was either pro-German or pro-Czech. Many relevant works conveyed a historical and factual representation of the actual expulsion. The first hand accounts of my family members constitute moving case studies. The names of those involved have been changed to protect their identities. Media and personal accounts present a picture of history that is difficult to put into words. The level of brutality was extraordinary, shameless and haunting. The first round of the expulsions in the spring and summer of 1945 was described as “wild.” In this transition, many Sudeten Germans were rounded up, kept in camps then relocated to Germany, both American and Soviet sectors. Others were forced out of their homes, their property confiscated, moved to their village square and executed on the spot.

Others were tortured then killed. This transition was barbaric and marked by beatings, rape and death.  

In 1946, a second round of expulsions was carried out in a more organized fashion. In these instances, involving the personal accounts I documented, Sudeten Germans were also forced to leave their homes, their property, and their personal effects behind. They were loaded onto to trains, some so overcrowded that many died in transit, then deposited in either the American or Soviet zones. Once Sudeten Germans arrived at their destination they found themselves treated as second class citizens, despite in many instances being native Germans relocated to Germany. They faced difficulties finding housing, jobs, and schools. Bottom line, they were often not welcomed with open arms by the native villagers. The forced migrations that I focused on in my personal interviews were difficult, yet ultimately successful. By successful, one means that most Sudeten Germans were able to find work, housing, integrate into their new homeland and in some cases prosper. More than 3 million Sudeten German expellees were integrated into The Federal Republic of Germany where they have contributed to the European reconstruction and to the so-called Wirtschaftswunder, which was facilitated through the Marshall Plan.

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3 Ibid., 4.
4 Ibid.
My contention is that this was a clear violation of the Nuremberg Principles. And if the Nuremberg Judgment was applied to the Sudeten expulsion one concludes it constituted a crime against humanity.\(^5\) A crime against humanity is described as an atrocity, such as extermination or enslavement that is directed against an entire or part of a population on specious grounds and without regard to individual guilt or responsibility.\(^6\) I present evidence to support my contention in Chapter 4 where I examine how under the Nuremberg Principles the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans would have been considered a crime against humanity.

Sadly, as is often the case with history, the story of the Sudeten Germans has been ignored, overlooked and even hidden for years. Their story is one that is often misrepresented from their early origins in the regions of Bohemia and Moravia to an exaggerated allegiance to the Third Reich. It is my hope through comparing various historical sources combined with personal accounts, that this history can be set right. Many descendents of the Sudeten Germans have lived their lives never understanding or truly knowing the history of their people.


Their history is a hidden tragedy that is finally coming to light thanks to the
dvoice of future generations no longer willing to be victims of politics or politicians.\footnote{Dr. Wilhelm K. Turnwald, \textit{Renascence or Decline of Central Europe. The Sudeten German – Czech Problem}, trans. Gerda Johansen (Munich: Dr. C. Wolf & Son and University Press, 1954), 16.}
CHAPTER 1 - ORIGINS

It is important to understand the deep and often complicated history of the Sudeten Germans especially following World War II. The history and the relationship between Sudeten Germans and Czechoslovaks are especially relevant to the explanation of why there was retaliation against the Sudetens by the Czechoslovaks following World War II. The two have had a love-hate relationship for hundreds of years. The Sudeten Germans lived in Czechoslovakia, remained autonomous, contributed to the economy but always wanted to be a part of Austria. This resulted in deep seated animosity and jealousy by the Czechoslovaks against the Germans. It was a difficult relationship that endured through the decades and contributed to the attitude and treatment of the Sudeten Germans during the Expulsions in 1945.¹

The Sudetenland was a strip of land, roughly 180 miles long and parallel to Germany. In 1918, it came about as a result of the break up of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Czechoslovaks, numbering about 6.7 million people, demanded a state of their own. They claimed the natural and traditional boundaries of the Kingdom of Bohemia and Moravia. This meant that the new Czechoslovak state would have a mountain boundary as a defense against Germany, but also that the highly industrialized settlement areas of 3 million Sudeten ethnic Germans would be separated from Austria and put under Czechoslovak control. It is roughly 11,000 square miles or the equivalent of the state of Maryland. Sudetenland was

¹ App, The Sudeten-German Tragedy, 6.
officially given its borders following World War I.²

At that time, Czechoslovakia had a German speaking population of about 3 million. The Sudeten Germans were the second largest ethnic group. The term Sudetendeutsche or Sudeten Germans became clearly defined and used in the early 20th century. It was part of a larger classification within the Austro Hungarian Empire. The Germans were split among three main regions. The Alpine Germans lived in the Austrian region. The Balkan Germans lived in the Balkans. The name Sudeten Germans was the only term to survive ethnic and cultural conflicts with Bohemia. The Sudeten Germans are best described as skilled in the arts and sciences but mostly involved in agriculture. They lived in an area contiguous to Germany and Austria. They requested unification with these countries in 1918 based on the principle of self determination.³

There is great debate among historians as to when the Sudeten Germans began to settle in the region of Bohemia and Moravia. Some say the Sudetenland origins can be traced back to B.C. when Germanic tribes established their settlements in south and central Germany.⁴ During that time, the Celtic Bojers lived in Bohemia and were driven out by the Germanic Marcomanni. During that same time, the Germanic Quadii settled in Moravia. During the reign of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, both tribes

² App, 4.
³ Ibid., 6.
⁴ Ibid., 4.
played a key role in the frontier wars from 160 to 1180 ad.\(^5\) A time line is explained by Dr. Kurt F. Reinhardt: \(^6\)

"As early as in Caesar’s time the Germanic Tribes had advanced far into central and Southern Germany. Germanic Settlements had been established on both banks of the Rhine, in Bohemia, and along the Danube." \(^7\)

By 791 Charlemagne incorporated Bohemia into the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. In the course of securing the eastern boundaries of the empire, Charlemagne brought the Bohemian-Moravian territories back into his sphere of power. \(^8\) In the centuries that followed, the Czechoslovaks and the Germans co-existed with each other. In fact, in 955 they fought together as allies against the Magyars at Lechfield. \(^9\) In 1273, Otakar II of Bohemia, considered one of the most powerful monarchs in central Europe at the time, competed against Rudolf of Hapsburg for the title of Holy Roman Emperor. They fought for more than five years, until Hapsburg defeated Otakar near Vienna; establishing the rise of the House of Hapsburg. Other historians argue that the Germans began to settle in the Bohemian Kingdom by the middle of the 12\(^{th}\) century, but clearly the evidence supports the earlier

\(^{5}\) App, 4.  
\(^{6}\) Turnwald, 5.  
\(^{7}\) Ibid.  
\(^{8}\) Ibid., 16.  
\(^{9}\) App, 4.
accounts. The peak in colonization for the first wave came in the 13th century. The Hussite Wars led to a brief retreat of Germans. The Hussite Wars, also called the Bohemian Wars involved the military actions against and amongst the followers of Jan Huss in Bohemia. The thirteenth century also represented a time of large-scale German immigration that was encouraged by Premyslid kings with the hope of weakening the influence of their own Czech nobility. The Germans predominantly populated towns and mining districts on the outer strip of land in Bohemia and in some cases formed German colonies in the interior of the Czechoslovak lands. Stříbro, Kutna Hora, Německý Brod and Jihlava were important German settlements. The Germans came with their own laws – and those laws later formed the foundation for the commercial law of Bohemia and Moravia. Marriages between Germans and Czechoslovak nobles soon became accepted even commonplace. A second Bohemian ruler of the Luxembourg line was Charles IV. In 1348, King Charles IV established Charles University the first European University and truly a cooperative work between the Czechoslovaks and the Germans. It was open to the ethnic groups of Czechoslovaks, Germans and Poles.


12 Seton-Watson, 24.

13 Ibid., 23.

14 App. 4.
Charles was German but considered himself a Slavic Prince.\footnote{Seton-Watson, 23.} For centuries to follow, the Czechoslovak rulers encouraged Germans to settle in the territories of Moravia and Bohemia.\footnote{App. 4.} According to Dr Kurt Glaser:\footnote{Dr. Kurt Glaser, Czechoslovakia. A Critical Study (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton, 1961), 8.}

"The influx of Germans reached its peak in the 13th century, when Czech nobles competed to obtain settlers to populate their domains."\footnote{Ibid.}

By the 15th century, the Hussite wars brought a new test of Czechoslovak German relations. 1526 brought another wave of German settlers who replaced the original settlers in Bohemia who had been there since before the Christian era. It was also in 1627 Bohemia was officially made a Hapsburg crown land throughout much of the 17th century and up until its dismemberment after World War I.\footnote{App. 9.} From 1627 to 1848, the Czechoslovaks and the Germans in Bohemia and Moravia maintained a level of cooperation with little ethnic tension. Conflicts started again between Czechoslovaks and German Nationalists during the 19th century. These conflicts were more about personal freedom than national or ethnic independence.\footnote{Turnwald, 26.}
The revolution of 1848 was a turning point for relations between Sudeten Germans and Czechoslovaks, as the German speaking population wanted to be a part of the building of a German nation state, while the Czechoslovak speaking population was determined to keep Bohemia out of these plans.  

Following the end of World War I, four defeated empires, the German, the Hapsburg, the Ottoman and Russian were broken apart. A number of nation states were created, new borders established, and an independent Czechoslovakia was established. Czechoslovakia consisted of the lands of the Bohemian kingdom and areas formerly belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary. 22 German Deputies in Bohemia and Moravia refused to be considered part of the new independent state. The deputies cited as their reasoning U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points which allowed for national self determination.23

Point number 10 stated on January 8, 1918:24

“The peoples of Austria Hungary, whose place among nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.” 25

21 App. 6.


23 App. 6.

24 Ibid., 7.

25 Ibid., 6.
Four clear government regions within Czechoslovakia were created. They included German Bohemia, Sudetenland province, Bohemian Forest Region and German South Moravia. Still, German minorities wanted to proclaim their union with German Austria. The Czech government faced its first test of its new state. The German leaders pushing this issue claimed they were not even linked territorially with the state of which they were supposed to be members and furthermore were separate geographically. The debate continued for months without bloodshed. The Germans seeking a union with German Austria limited their discord mostly to vocal, non violent protest. 26 Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, wanted to negotiate with the Germans for the creation of Czechoslovakia as “a modern progressive and democratic state.” 27 However, the Czechoslovak government insisted on maintaining the historic boundaries of the Bohemian frontier.

At the peace conference for The Committee of Czechoslovak Questions in 1919, the request to be annexed by Germany was denied, for geographical and historical reasons. 28

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26 Luza, 32.
27 Ibid.
28 App, 2.
Bohemia forms a natural region, clearly defined by its fringe of mountains. The clear fact that a German population has established itself in the outlying districts at a relatively recent date did not appear to the committee a sufficient reason to for depriving Bohemia of its natural frontier.29

The Czechoslovaks misrepresented the Sudeten Germans as recent immigrants and settlers to the region. They also misrepresented the true number of Germans living in this region by one million. In fact, if the history of the Sudeten Germans were truly used as basis of argument then the territory would have never been taken by the Czechs following World Wars I and II.30

Ultimately, the Czechoslovaks rejected the desires of the Sudeten. The Treaty of St. Germain in 1919 was signed, providing for inclusion of German speaking territories within the new state of Czechoslovakia. Following the decision, Czechoslovak military forces were sent to the regions of Bohemia and Moravia to calm any the tensions and unrest by the Sudeten Germans unhappy with the results of the talks and the signing of the treaty. 31

However, the Germans were given certain promises by the Czechoslovak government under the terms of the minority treaties. The League of Nations was the main authority for enforcement of these terms. It stated, in part, that Germans would be granted all rights to which they are entitled. 32

29 Luza, 32.
30 App, 3.
31 Seton-Watson, 279.
32 Turnwald, 44.
The right to their own schools, judges, and courts of justice will never be denied to any minority. It must add that while the Germans enjoyed many privileges under the old regime, the Czechs have no intention whatsoever of suppressing the German Schools, universities or institutes of technology.\textsuperscript{33}

In other words, Germans would be given the same rights as other groups within Czechoslovakia. They would not be discriminated against. German would be the second language in the country. The form of government essentially would be like that of Switzerland.\textsuperscript{34}

But the reality did not match what was promised in writing. First there was general unrest with the rejection to form a union with German Austria. In March 1919, Germans staged big protests in several Bohemian towns. Czechoslovak forces fired upon the groups and fifty Germans were killed.\textsuperscript{35} In politics, the Germans were also becoming marginalized. When the constitution of the republic was drafted, it was not drawn up by a democratic body but by a commission represented solely by Czech parties. The Germans were placed at disadvantage both in the constitution and in the laws governing the use of language. Czech was the national language. Minorities were only allowed to use their language in official matters when they made up 20 percent of the population.

\textsuperscript{33} Turnwald, 44.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 45.

\textsuperscript{35} Seton-Watson, 278.
German land was compromised by the Land Reform Law of April 1919. Under this law, the German surplus holdings, or roughly two million acres of German property was pirated and reallocated to Czech political parties.\textsuperscript{36}

With regards to jobs, the Germans continued to be oppressed as second class citizens. Germans were replaced by Czechs in many administrative and managerial posts.\textsuperscript{37} Radomir Luza, a Czechoslovak author, notes in his book, \textit{The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans}, there was “an eventual reduction in the number of German schools.” And Luza continues, “German criticism was justified in the matter of its share in state service. The government itself admitted that German representation in public service was inadequate.” Luza adds, “Some were ousted, some retired and thousands, unable to pass the Czech language tests expressly too difficult for them, were dismissed and their places taken by Czechs who moved to the German areas.”\textsuperscript{38}

In 1921, it is estimated the German population in Czechoslovakia was numbered more than 3 million or roughly 23 percent of the total population. Despite the strong numbers of Germans in the state itself, relations between Czech and Germans would be strained throughout the 1920's. By the 1930's tensions escalated with the advent of the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{39} The economic turbulence especially hit the regions populated by the German minority. Most of the textile, glass and paper

\textsuperscript{36} Turnwald, 50.

\textsuperscript{37} App, 12.

\textsuperscript{38} Luza, 42.

\textsuperscript{39} Turnwald, 49.
making industries were located in the Sudeten region. These exports were the first to fall victim to the depression resulting in high unemployment. The highest figure reached by unemployment was 800,000 approximately and of that number, 500,000 were Sudeten Germans.\footnote{Turnwald, 51.}

The economic hardships coupled with internal struggles of personal expression gave rise to social and national radicalism in the years to follow among Germans living in Czechoslovakia. By 1933, the Sudeten German Party (SdP) led by party leader Konrad Henlein was gaining popularity. Henlein was a very pro-Hitler leader and his party represented many of same views. As Hitler’s ideals began to take shape and his popularity begin to grow in Germany, so did Henlein’s. In the 1935 election, Henlein’s party received 64% of the Sudeten vote, by 1938 90% of Sudeten Germans supported Henlein.\footnote{Timothy Ryback, “Dateline Sudetenland: Hostages to History,” \textit{Foreign Policy} 105 (Winter 96): 162-79.} Other political movements gaining momentum included communism. At the same time that these parties were growing in the German regions of Czechoslovakia, Adolf Hitler secured the office as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. This event was met with great support by the majority of Germans who were suffering economically and felt beaten down by the failures of Versailles and St Germain.
Hitler recognized the mood of a younger generation seeking respect. But this call for change also reignited the older generation's desires for autonomy among those living abroad, namely in Czechoslovakia.  

By the fall of 1938, the epic making Munich agreement was signed, paving the way for the Sudeten—crisis. The Czech government gave into calls to give up the Sudetenland to the Third Reich and Hitler. The agreement was negotiated at a conference held in Munich, Germany, among the major powers of Europe without the presence of Czechoslovakia. It was essentially an act of appeasement. For several years, Hitler had been pursuing the goal of a greater Germany and Sudetenland was a part of that goal. The portion of Czechoslovakia bordering Germany, the Sudetenland had a substantial German population, constituting a majority in many districts. Geography combined with demographics easily made Czechoslovakia Hitler’s next target. That spring and summer, certain Sudeten Germans agitated for autonomy or union with Germany, and German officials and Hitler demanded this additional territory. Czechoslovakia did not have the military power to fight off Hitler and needed the aid of its Western allies, France and the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Chamberlain thought if Sudetenland was conceded, Hitler would give up his demand for all of Czechoslovakia. France followed suit with the British and acquiesced.

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On September 29th and 30th of 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Adolf Hitler, French Prime Minister Edouard Daladier, and Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini signed the Munich agreement. It outlined the means by which the territory of the predominantly German populations would be evacuated by the Czechoslovaks and transferred to Germany. 43

"On the basis of the Munich agreement the Reich Occupied an area of 28,996 sq. km. containing 2, 822, 899 Germans and 738,502 Czechs and Slovaks." 44

In essence these were forced migrations of the Czechoslovaks from a land they had come to call home. During this time of forced migration of the Czechoslovaks, there was a great deal of anger and resentment over being forced to leave. Certainly this anger remained over the next several years and fueled some of the resentment the Czechoslovaks felt toward the Sudeten Germans when they were expelled after World War II. Sudetenland became, by decree, a new protectorate of the greater German Reich. Its citizens now were considered citizens of the Reich and were subject to its jurisdiction. According to Hitler's decree, this protectorate was self governing and autonomous and essentially reestablishing its historic boundaries and original purpose. 45 Sudetenland would be divided into three political districts: Eger (with Karlsbad as the capital), Aussig and Troppau. The remaining parts of Czechoslovakia

43 App. 13.
44 Luzia, 148.
45 Ibid., 159.
were invaded and annexed by Germany in March 1939. But Munich would not be the answer the Sudeten Germans were looking for. It was in effect a ploy by Hitler to take advantage of Czechoslovak-German tensions and further his quest to move eastward. Hitler was not concerned with a united central Europe under the singular passions of its people, but in power. At the time, Clement Atlee, the future British prime Minister said:

"I say, the question of the Sudeten Germans has been used as a counter in the game of politics, and in other conditions, Herr Hitler might just as well have used the people of South Denmark, the people of Trentino or the Germans of South Tyrol." Following the Munich agreement, Sudeten Germans who did not feel politically aligned with the National Socialist Regime, left by the tens of thousands for the Czechoslovak rump state. They were also accompanied by many Jews who rejected these policies as well. Many of the Sudeten Germans formed part of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties.

With the outbreak of the war, the populations began shifting again. The highly industrialized Sudetenland became a busy and key area for the Reich. It was centrally located and industry there helped fuel the Reich’s war machine. One example is Brux,
where a large hydrogenation plant was located. In all, as allied bombings increased, the Reich’s factory and industrial mechanism shifted inward into Sudetenland. Not only was work shifted inward, but often entire factories and their workers were moved farther in the Sudeten territory as well. Overall, the Sudetenland did not play a large role in contributing to the rolls of enlisted soldiers. However the workers and civilians were used in the factories that fueled the Reich. By 1944, the airstrikes began to reach Sudetenland, and the region began look more and more like a battlefield. Many Germans continued to flee eastward and those left struggled in the factories that remained or survived the bombings.  

At the end of World War II, the Potsdam conference in 1945 realigned borders once again and created “new” nations. Under this treaty, it is estimated that more than 3 million Sudeten Germans were expelled or forced to immigrate to other countries. These expulsions were of an especially crude and brutal nature. According to J.F. Brown:

“Nothing, however, has ever come near to equaling the wholesale slaughters.”

Chapter Three will discuss in detail the nature of the forced migrations through personal interviews of those who lived through the expulsions as well as press reports at the time of the expulsion.

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51 Schieder, 17.


53 Ibid., 425
The expulsions were carried out by Czechoslovak and Russian forces seeking revenge for Nazi behavior during the war and occupation. Millions were herded to camps, others killed, women raped and families separated. These expulsions were largely ignored and censored until after 1946.  

CHAPTER 2 – THE EXPULSION

The end of World War II in 1945 unleashed a reign of terror against Germans, especially the Sudeten Germans in Bohemia and Moravia. I argue that these expulsions and the manner in which they were carried out constituted crimes against humanity. While the world’s leaders gathered to discuss territorial realignments, mass atrocities against the Sudeten Germans were well underway. On May 5, 1945, over Radio Prague, a Czech propagandist vehicle, General Sergej Ingr, commander of the Czech-Slovak forces abroad issued a call to violence not so much against the retreating Wehrmacht but rather against the Sudeten Germans, mostly women and children.¹

“Kill the Germans, wherever you find them! Every German is our mortal enemy. Have no mercy on women, children, or the aged! Kill every German – wipe them out!”²

Following this call to action, the “wild” expulsions of the Sudeten Germans began. Documents reveal that the Russians and Czechs were largely in charge of this territory and both were culpable in carrying out the mass atrocities that followed. Women were raped, children killed and families rounded up in camps only to be slaughtered.

¹ App. The Sudeten-German Tragedy, 34.
² Ibid.
On May 19, 1945 Edward Beneš, the self-appointed president of the reconstituted Czechoslovakia, signed a degree calling for the confiscation of all German property. Reports put the totals of stolen property at 20 billion dollars.  

In June 1945, the Czechoslovak government ordered all German schools in the occupied land to be closed. That same month, government officials called for all land belonging to or occupied by the Sudeten Germans to be divided up and the Sudeten Germans to be evicted. The goal of the government was to expel 3 million Sudeten Germans from the country as quickly as possible. But reports of the atrocities against the Sudeten Germans were largely censored by the American Government. The crimes of robbery, rape, murder of hundreds of thousands at the hands of the “Allied forces” were blacked out. In June 1945, Elmer Davis, Chief of War Information in Washington ordered a blackout in America of all reports pertaining to the expulsions of Germans in Czechoslovakia to be censored or “killed.”

In some cases, US officials witnessed what was happening and protested the barbarity of the actions. October 13, 1945, Robert Murphy a political advisor to the military government sent a memorandum to the Chairman of the Foreign Branch of the State Department, describing the expulsions as not mainly of leaders of the Socialist Party but against “women and children, the poor and the weak.”

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3 App. 35.
4 Ibid.
5 App. 36.
Some of the tactics used during the “wild” expulsions included ordering whole villages to leave their homes on a minute’s notice and gather in the town square only to be massacred. Many were forced to walk to the German border on foot without food. Those who fell from exhaustion were killed on the spot. Others were rounded up in concentration camps set up across Czechoslovakia. In these camps individuals were starved, forced to live on 750 calories a day, and at night women were raped by the Red Army. The killings were especially atrocious. A common practice was to throw women and children over bridges holding them down with poles until they drowned. Men and women were stripped naked, tied together upside down, and then burned alive. One especially gruesome death was to snatch a child from its mother, hold the child by the legs and rip them apart, throwing one half against a tree and the other against the mother.  

By the time Potsdam Peace Treaty was signed in 1946, more than 750,000 Sudeten Germans had been robbed, killed or forced to leave their homeland. After 1946 these expulsions continued with the oversight of the Allied occupiers and carried out by Czechoslovak officials in a more organized fashion, but were brutal nonetheless. In these expulsions, hundreds of thousands were forced out their homes and stuffed onto trains. Some of the trains were so crowded many died in transit.  

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6 App, 35

7 Ibid., 34.
The following are personal accounts from family and friends who lived through the expulsions and the following placements in Germany. Each of the interviews was conducted on the phone and adds a more detailed account of it was like to witness it first hand. It is these case studies and the stories of those interviewed that I provide as further argument as to why this expulsion constituted a crime against humanity.

Adi was 18 in 1945. She is my great Aunt and the sister of my grandfather Helmut who was married to my grandmother Dolfie. She lived in Meedle. Many of Adi’s memories are of what happened to her during the war and in the years 1945 and 1946. During the war her father and mother worked for Czech farmers in the village. They did the basic work on the farm, with the animals, and in the fields. They mainly worked for food because they were very poor. Adie worked for another Czech farmer in the village who had six kids. She says she was often so tired from working, that rather than walking home, she slept in the barn occasionally. She explains she had a good relationship with the family and felt treated fairly. He lived in the same village where my grandmother Dolfie and grandfather Helmut lived. She says before he was called to war, Josef, who is my great uncle, along with his wife worked at another farm in town. This one was owned by a Jewish family, a man his wife and two children. There was another Jewish woman in town who owned a nearby shop. Adi says that these two Jewish families were left alone during the war. It wasn’t until 1945 that the entire town came under siege and there was no safe place if you were Jewish or German.
In 1945, Adi says the soldiers came to town and grabbed the shop owner in the middle of the day, took her away, and she was never seen again. At a farm where my grandmother Dolfie worked, the Jewish owner’s wife was raped by a soldier. She says her employer knew he would end up like the rest of the Jews if he didn’t take action. The man poisoned himself and his wife and two kids to save them from what might happen. Villagers, including Adi and my grandmother Dolfie, found them, but one girl had survived. Adi recalls that my grandmother hid her in her house for weeks. Later, she says, she was discovered and raped and taken away, never to be seen again.

Also in 1945 at the end of the war, Adi recalls the Russian soldiers moving in to secure the town and their brutal treatment of the women there. Adi was staying at the farm where she worked. She says she was standing in the doorway of the house when a Russian soldier came by and gave her some advice.

“I looked down when he approached me. He put his hand on my shoulder and whispered in my ear, ‘Hide yourself very well.’ The Russian soldiers are coming and some are very bad.”

She remembers when they arrived they were everywhere in town. They would just let themselves into homes where they knew the women were alone with their children. She says they would eat all the food, drink the beer, and then rape the women.

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8 Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.
She was scared to go outside and often hid in the house or braided her hair in a fashion that made her look older, hoping it would deter the soldiers from attacking her. It was her understanding that the Russian soldiers were paying back the German soldiers by entering their towns and raping their wives and children. She says it was a very fearful time.

Once instance she recalls in particular. She was at a girlfriend’s house with another girl when a Russian solider knocked down the door. He was carrying a weapon and appeared very drunk because he could barely standup. He gestured for the three girls to come with him and motioned for them to walk up the hillside near the town’s graveyard. She says the soldier marched in front of them leading the walking and gestured for them to march too.

We knew something very bad would happen when we reached the top of the hill. So we whispered to each other that when we saw the next house we would run. So we did. The soldier was so drunk he didn’t realize that we ran and kept marching up the hill by himself.9

They ran into a nearby house only to find three Russian soldiers at the kitchen table drinking and eating. They told them that their comrade was outside then they kept on running and running all the way home. She says she still can’t believe they escaped. That year, it was everyone for himself. She says even fellow Germans would turn against you.

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9 Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009
The Czech government ordered everyone to work on the Czech farms. Her mother became very sick at the time and she stayed home to take care of her. A German neighbor found out and turned her in to Czech authorities. She doesn’t remember much about the expulsion and her travels to Germany. She was sent to a northern city of Hof. It was right along the border to East Germany.

She recalls that many Germans in the village treated her badly and it was difficult to find work and food. She says the only person that showed her kindness and helped her was a Jewish family that lived next door. She said she had had a baby, and the family constantly brought her flour, bread and milk. When she had her child, she says the family brought her a big bowl of noodle soup that she ate on for days. Adi still lives in Hof.\(^{10}\)

Eighty-six year old Rhea was born in 1923 and was 22 years old at the time of the expulsions.\(^{11}\) She was born in Meedle, Sternberg which was considered the territory of Sudetenland. She and her only sibling, a brother, lived and worked on the farm that had been in their family since 1653. She describes Meedle mainly as a farming community with no factories. So the produce, animals, and milk and cheese from her farm were the primary components of the economy of the small village. The family farm was so large, she says, it employed a number of Czech workers to help, who lived in or near the predominantly German village.

\(^{10}\) Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
Prior to the war, Rhea does not remember much of importance other than the busy work and steady income from their farm. She recalls going to school in the third grade and a requirement in school at the time was that all the children learn Czech. The Czech influence she recalls was also reflected in the village where she says more and more Czechs were settling and taking jobs. The influx of Czechs affected certain laws. If you married a Czech and you were German and had more than one child, one child had to go to the all-Czech school. When the war began, her father was too old to enlist. So he stayed at home and managed the business of farming. Her brother did have to go. She says he was captured in Russia at the end of the war in 1945 and after spending two years in a camp in Russia, he was reunited with the family. He died in 2008.

At the close of the war in 1945, Rhea says the Czech government seized their family farm. They were allowed to continue living there, but they, had to work for the new owners. She says they did knecht which means farm work related to cleaning the stalls and feeding the animals.

“This is the lowest of the lows. We went from being the owners to cleaning the stalls.”

In 1946, the family was told by the new Czech government territory to report to the Kasenhaus for their orders. The family was given papers and ordered to leave. They had a few hours to pack and vacate their home.

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12 Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.
They were told they could take only 50 kilos or 100 lbs with them. She recalls the anger and fear she felt when the government handed them their orders. She recalls that an official who she called evil said with a smile,

"You cannot take anything with you, not even a handkerchief to wipe the tears."\textsuperscript{13}

Their papers instructed them to go to a nearby village called Steffenhauer. They walked to Steffenhauer with the belongings they could carry and stayed in a Lager or a camp with other German expellees from July 12\textsuperscript{th} through July 17\textsuperscript{th} of 1946. Before dawn on July 17, 1946, officials at the camp awakened the family and told them to load into a train. She described the conditions of the train as deplorable:

It was an animal transport train. It was a train used for the carrying animals to the slaughter. You could not breathe. You could not move. There were so many people stuffed into each car. We could barely breathe. There were no windows, just cracks in the wood on the sides of the train. We had no clue where we were going, we just had to go.\textsuperscript{14}

The train, she recalls, first went to the village of Lechtenfield. Then they were sent to another nearby village of Staffelstein. She had been on the train without food for days and could not recall the exact passage of time. She remembers clearly the mood when they arrived in Staffelstein.

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
That day it was a holiday because she remembers a procession passing by them in the town center.

"The burgermeister at the time was nearby. He just shook his head and said he couldn’t cope with them. He didn’t want to be bothered and said it was a holiday and to send the expellees back to the village they came from." ¹⁵

Rhea says the image is as clear to here as the day it happened,

When the train doors opened, we were so relieved to have air and see light. The sound of hungry children screaming and crying was overwhelming. We were so angry to see the burgermeister, just stand there, ignore the children’s cries and wave us away. ¹⁶

The train then headed back to Lechtenfeld. In the village, they were unloaded and stayed in a camp maintained by the Red Cross. She recalls that it could have been nearing the month of August by this point. At the camp, she remembers seeing my grandmother Dolfie who lived across the street from her farm in Meedle. She remembers seeing Dolfie with her three boys ages 1, 5 and 7 and my mother, Inge, who was just six months old and in a carriage. She says she was told my mother was sick with diphtheria. There were so many hungry children in the camp she remembers the screams and how my grandmother stepped in to help.

"Dolfie was called the milk cow. She was still nursing her own baby. But with so many others babies screaming from hunger, she breastfed as many as she could. She

¹⁵ Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.

¹⁶ Ibid.
just kept holding the babies, feeding them till they stopped crying."\textsuperscript{17}

She's unsure how long they stayed at this camp. At some point one morning they were told to board a train again. That train took them to their final stop, a village called Rattelsdorf. From there they were moved into government owned homes. There she describes the conditions as tough, with food and work in short supply.

After war, nobody could get work. A farmer could not even find a place to work. You begged the people in the dorf for food. It was all you could do. You would ask the farmers if you could pick up the rotten fruit and they wouldn't let you because they needed to survive too.\textsuperscript{18}

Her family was placed in a Gasthaus and lived upstairs. Once they were more settled, the family found steady work downstairs in the Gasthaus. They cleaned the dishes, washed the floors, and helped with the cooking. Years later, Rhea found work in a sewing factory in Bamberg. She saved enough money to buy a little farm house. She left for work to catch the train at 6 in the morning and didn't return until eight at night. She doesn't recall people treating her differently or especially cruelly because of where she came from. In the last 10 years, she has made regular trips back to the place of her birth. She organizes bus trips for those in Rattelsdorf who are originally from that region. She says she has a longing for her home but so much has changed.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 31 August 2009.
“My land was sold. It’s gone. There’s nothing there. But it’s still my heimat”\textsuperscript{20}

My uncle Bernd, one of four children, was born September 24, 1939 and was seven at the time of the expulsion. He currently lives in Bamberg, Germany. He remembers leaving Meedle on July 12\textsuperscript{th} of 1946. His mother, Dolfie, left him at home to watch his siblings, including my mother who was approximately 5 months old. My grandmother had been given orders to report to the main courthouse for notice to vacate.

Mom was gone for a while and when she came home, was rushing around the house and she started throwing stuff in box, a few clothes and bread and a cake and put it all in the box. She didn’t say a word. She didn’t explain. She just kept putting clothes and coats in this small box, whatever would fit in\textsuperscript{21}.

A small detail he remembers was when she baked the cake and placed it in a small box, she wrote her name in a flour paste on the side. The cake would become their main meal during their journey. When they left their home, Dolfie placed the box on a small wagon and they left behind their home in Meedle. He recalls all the people in the street. It was as if everyone from town was leaving.

“The parents knew where they were leaving but to the kids it was fun. It was like a picnic. Everybody was going. We didn’t ask and we didn’t know.”\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 31 August 2009.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
As a child he says he didn’t know anything and thought it was like a great parade and everybody was going together. They walked a long time he said but he’s unsure how long and where they walked to. He also remembers some people taking their cows and horses with them.

“A farmer had a wagon and when he passed he asked if we wanted to get on and we did.”  

He says after that long walk and wagon ride they arrived in a tent city or camp. He thinks it was in the village of Stefonauer. They stayed in that camp for four weeks. At the camp, he remembers, there was straw everywhere and they just slept on it. For awhile they had enough food but since he was a child he didn’t understand that they would soon be running out.

“Mom had the bread and cake. One day, while in the camp, I ate the cherries off the cake and she was so mad at me.”

The camp also provided them with rations in addition to the food they brought. Almost every day a train would arrive and load up people. But he remembers day after day and week after week, they stayed and they were not allowed to go. Soon they were one of only a few families left. So each day, they tried to leave, they were told no. He remembers that they were told they couldn’t leave because of my mother, Inge.

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23 Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 31 August 2009.

24 Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.
When one of the transports was getting ready to leave, we tried to board again and the officials said no. They told mom everybody could go but the baby (my mother) had to stay. Das machten muss hier bleiben. This baby must stay here. She was angry. Mom kept saying no, no. I heard a person saying it was because Inge was a Russian baby. The train left and we all stayed behind.  

A day or so later another train arrived.

“A nurse from the camp came over to us. She took Inge’s birth certificate from mom’s hands and said this does not exist. The nurse said to the officials to let my mom have her and to go.”  

It was the first time as a child, Helmut heard talk that my mother was Russian or half Russian. My grandfather, Helmut left for the war in 1944. Bernd said he remembered at the end of the war in 1945, a Russian soldier started appearing at the house.

“He came over a lot and had a Russian uniform on. Sometimes he brought us food and supplies. Sometimes he would even eat with us and play with us.”  

He said at some point that fall, the soldier stopped coming over. My mother was born in February 1946. But as a child he says he never understood it and because he was a child didn’t even realize that his mother was pregnant or what that meant. He remembers the train they boarded was an animal transport train. And it was packed with people and they could barely move.

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25 Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.
"We drove in the train days and nights. There were no windows and only straw on the floor. Sometimes I would peek out through the slits on train."²⁸

The train stopped in Staffelstein. There they got off the train and stayed in big hall with other families for two weeks. It was there that he saw many people that he remembered from their home in Meedle.

After two weeks, they boarded another train that took them to Rattlesdorf. When the train stopped in the middle of the city, they were told to get out in the town square. Officials from the train took families to government homes where they could live. Life in Rattlesdorf for years following the war was tough. He says the boys got into a lot of trouble. There was no food, so the boys would steal bread from neighbors and fruits and vegetables from farmers. He says my grandmother found work cleaning stalls at a nearby farm. She would take my mother with her. The boys would spend the day searching for food, stealing chickens or rabbits and firewood. Other than that they received some items from the Red Cross, like flour, lard, butter, and milk.

In 1947 the Red Cross came to town looking for my grandmother. My grandfather was alive and they had found him in a camp in Russia. They brought him to Rattlesdorf. Bernd remembers that his father was wounded in the arm and in the face. Since he was wounded he couldn’t work for many months.

²⁸ Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.
When he did school for the first time, he enjoyed it. There were so many children there from their old village in Meedle. He recalled never feeling different or out of place. Life at home was another story. He says his father, Helmut, was always very angry and yelling and screaming at the kids. He says many time they were hit. And his mother was always quiet and seemed scared. A lot of that anger was directed at my mother, who he called a little Russian. Years later, Bernd asked his mother about his sister. She simply responded, “it’s too long gone” and she never talked about life in Meedle and the journey from there ever again.²⁹

Gernot was born in 1937. He was eight years old at the time of the expulsion. He had two brothers and three sisters. He is the younger brother of my grandfather, Helmut. He lived in Meedle. Towards the end of the war, Hitler called for children and the elderly to serve. German boys 14 and older who were originally considered too young at the start of the war had to leave and go into the war. He says his father and brother left. They had no choice. His oldest brother Josef had left in 1944. In 1945, his remaining brother Johann left but never returned. His father returned but was missing his leg. The family business was farming.

After the war they were told they no longer had rights. A Czech family took over their farm and they were now the employees.

²⁹ Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 1 September 2009.
"We did the knecht or the farm help. Sometimes if the Czechs took over your farm and they were once employees and you were good to them they would allow you to stay and work for them. We were lucky and were allowed to stay."

In 1946, he says his mother received a letter that she had to report to the main government house in Staffenhauer. There she was given orders to leave the home. They were told each person was allowed to carry 50 kg of clothes and food. So they loaded up and left the house and started walking. He’s not sure where they ended up but he does recall the train with clarity.

"It was an animal transport train. It was repelling and I was scared to go in there."

The train took them to Prague. There they were allowed to get out for an hour or two for air. The train left again. He says it took a long time to get where they were going. Finally the train arrived in a village along the East German border called Hoff. They were placed in government housing. Gernot still lives in Hoff.

Inge, my mother, was three months at the time of the expulsions. She doesn’t remember anything about the move from Meedle. Her earliest memories are when she was three or four and living in Rattlesdorf.

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30 Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 1 September 2009.

31 Ibid.
She says there was never food, so she and her older brothers had to leave each morning at dawn and walk from village to village begging for food. They would return at night with sometimes a wagon full of whatever they could get.

I was so small; my brothers would put me in the wagon. When we would get to a farmers house, they would have me ask for food. I would say 'excuse me, do you have any food please,' they usually said no. So I would always ask again. Then they would give us some corner bread that was hard and some potatoes. On the way back to the village, we often started eating the food. We were so hungry.  

Other times, she says they would steal food from the neighbors' gardens.

It was a meal for us. The farmers would come running out and chase us out. We would steal wood in the forest and run it home. Or we would steal chickens and geese. And run home. Every time something in the village was missing they would come to our house. But we had to survive.

Sometimes they would ask for clothes, otherwise they would wear things as long as they could. She says the soles on her shoes would come off from too much wear. So she would take clothespins to hold them together. Other times she would make a flour paste and glue the soles on again. But by the end of the day, the moisture would loosen them again. Around the village she recalls always being teased for two reasons. They were not originally from the village. They were called the refugees and made fun of by other children. Others would call her the little Russian. As a child, she says she didn’t understand why they called her that. When she asked her mother she never explained.

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32 Interview by author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 1 September 2009.

33 Ibid.
“You never talked about it (your heritage), back then you just didn’t know what would happen. The least said the better.”

As she became older, she came to suspect but could never prove that her father Helmut was not her father. She says he always took his anger and aggression out on her. He called her the “Little Russian.”

It wasn’t until we began conducting research on this thesis that her family and friends shared with her the story of the Russian soldier. She met my father, Ernie, an American soldier in 1960 while he was stationed in Bamberg, Germany. She moved to Louisville, Kentucky in 1964. My father died in 1998. She still lives in Kentucky.  

In addition to these case studies there were a handful of reports from the region documenting and shedding light on the atrocities. Nonetheless, the events of 1945 and 1946 were being reported on by some journalists who painted a dark and sinister picture of what they witnessed on the ground. Here’s a sample of those accounts.

From The Times, August 8, 1945, Berlin,

Between 12,000,000 and 14,000,000 Germans already on the move or who will have to move from the eastern parts of Germany, now under Polish or Czech control, are causing a gigantic refugee problem in Germany. They are mostly old people, women and children.

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34 Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 September 2009.

35 Ibid.

From the *News Chronicle*, correspondent Norman Clark wrote from Berlin, August 24th,

It is almost already out of hand. As a conservative estimate, given to me by Dr Karl Biaer, anti-Nazi, now installed as the head of Berlin’s Special Welfare committee, there are 8,000,000 homeless nomads milling about the areas and provinces around Berlin. If you take in those Sudeten Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia and those on the move from elsewhere the figure of those for whom no food can be provided rises to 13,000,000 at least.37

On the expulsions themselves, he writes,

A woman I met at the Steeinger Station had left Danzig on August 13th – eleven days after the standstill order was made. Other things I saw when the Danzig train came in I am bound to record. Apart from the women rocking in tears and anguish, and the famished children asleep in their arms or crying for food.38

From the *Daily Herald* August 24th, 1945, correspondent Charles Bray writes,

One woman (at the Stettinger Station) emaciated, with dark rings under her eyes and sores breaking out all over her face, could only mutter self determination because she was unable to feed her two whimpering babies. I watched her trying desperately to force milk from her milkless breasts – a pitiful effort that only left her crying at her failure.39

Also from the same correspondent writing in the Daily Herald September 8, 1945,

“A typhoid epidemic is reaching such dimensions in Berlin that the medical authorities are gravely concerned. This is yet another result of the mass expulsions of Germans.”40

37 Gollancz, *Our Threatened Values*, 99
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
In the *Manchester Guardian* dated September 8, 1945, what's described as a high ranking dignitary of the German church and Jewish survivor of a concentration camp gives his account.

I know the pains of the non-Ayrans. I did bear the tortures of the concentration camps, but what now happens before our eyes, that is beyond everything that ever happened in form or extent. I am thinking of those that are taking their lives out of despair. Thousands and tens of thousands dying in the country roads from hunger and exhaustion. Thousands do not know since weeks and months where they will find an abode. Thousands are separated from their relations; children wander along; the parents shot and died are lost.\(^{41}\)

From Norman Clark, a Berlin reporter for the *News Chronicle* writing on September 10, 1945,

Faced with this prospect of a disaster overwhelming a whole nation, the Allied public health authorities are ordering burgomasters to take measures ensuring the easy burial of the dead in the winter. Graves are to be dug now which men debilitated by weeks of under-nourishment will not have the strength to dig in a few months time. Coffins will have to be dispensed with, what wood is available being needed for fuel.\(^{42}\)

The following account is from Rev. Henry Carter writing for *The New Leader*, September 5, 1945. This is described as his first hand account as a tour of the region.

In the woods around Berlin corpses are hanging from the trees. Other men, women and children throw themselves in the rivers. Hundreds of corpses are continually drifting down the rivers Elbe and Odor. All the roads lading to Berlin are crowded with exiles. Thousands fall exhausted on roadsides. Children may be seen trudging along pathetically without their parents. Hundreds of people are dying daily beside the roads from hunger and disease.\(^{43}\)

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\(^{41}\) Gollancz, *Our Threatened Values*, 100.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 101.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 103.
Those reports are from the summer and fall of 1945 when the “wild” expulsions were being conducted. Following the agreement at Potsdam, conditions are reported as still dire and inhumane. From the *Manchester Guardian*’s correspondent at Lubeck, writing on March 10, 1946:

In spite of the Potsdam agreement that the transfer of the German population from the east should be orderly and humane, the authorities are evicting Germans from the newly acquired territories with as little as 10 minutes notice and sending them on trains into the British zone without food in overcrowded trains. A man 73 and a child of 18 months were found dead in the first transport which arrived in Lubeck. The second transport had three dead. On average 1,500 people are packed in trains of 26 coaches, which are unheated and for the most part damaged. Generally their physical condition is worse than that of previous refugees from the Russian zone, and many still bear visible traces of maltreatment. Most of the women, it was established by the examining British medical officers, had been violated, among them a girl of 10 and another 16.  

These documented accounts along with my case studies, further support the argument that the expulsion was a crime against humanity. In Chapter 3, I will further develop the foundation for this argument by detailing the impact of the expulsion and forced migration on the Sudeten Germans.

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44 Gollancz, *Our Threatened Values*, 104.
CHAPTER 3 --IMPACT OF THE EXPULSION

Three and a half million Sudeten Germans were expelled from their homelands in the most forcible and cruel manners. It was anything but an orderly and humane transfer spelled out by the Potsdam protocol. The fact that it was an expulsion and forcible removal with little or no warning, by definition would make it a crime against humanity under the Nuremberg principles. The Nuremberg Principles laid out the foundation for what would constitute a crime punishable under international law. The principles established that a crime against humanity included the following,

murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts done against any civilian population, or persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds, when such acts are done or such persecutions are carried on in execution of or in connection with any crime against peace or any war crime.¹

Furthermore, I argue that the conditions in which they were deposited with little or no food, clothing, or suitable housing also gives support to the argument supporting a war crime. Most expulsions took place between May 8, 1945 and September 6, 1946. It’s estimated that 241 thousand were murdered or died during this period.² On August 2, 1945, Harry Truman, Clement Atlee and Joseph Stalin signed the Potsdam Protocol, which spelled out the terms for what would be the future handling of the transfer of the expellees from Czechoslovakia to Germany.

² App, The Sudeten-German Tragedy, 70.
The protocol declared;

The transfer to Germany of the German populations, or elements thereof, reigning in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary will have to be undertaken.” However they insisted that any transfer “should be affected in an orderly and human manner.”

Following the Potsdam Pact, the transfers were carried out in a bit more humane fashion. During these authorized expulsions approximately 1,183,000 were moved into the US Zone, 750, 00 discharged into the Soviet Zone, 400, 000 unaccounted for, and more than 240, 000 massacred. 4Vladimir Stedry, a Czech writer, summed up the conditions in an article in the Sudeten Bulletin published in June, 1965:

“In May 1945 there were 3,295,000 Sudeten Germans; afterwards some 3,054,000 were reported as survivors, thus we found that 241,000 Germans from Bohemia Moravia and Silesia lost their lives during the expulsions.”5

For those Sudeten Germans who found themselves assigned to a new life in Germany, it was anything but easy.

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3 Arthur Settle. This is Germany (New York: William Sloane Associates INC., 1950), 199.

4 App, 37.

The vast majority of Sudeten Germans were assigned to West Germany. They faced an assortment of challenges: adjusting to their new homes and difficulties finding jobs, food and housing. Those living in the villages were often rejected by the inhabitants. The Bavarian region accepted the most expellees. Their arrival created hardships for the villages already feeling the pinch at the end of the War. A reporter for the Overseas News agency reported:

Nor was the welcome which met the refugees on their arrival in the ‘homeland’ much warmer than the farewells of the governments which had expelled them. In every community where they sought refuge there was inadequate food even for the natives; people were already crowded together in the ruins left by allied bombs and shells; there weren’t enough clothes or jobs to share.  

Once the refugees arrived via train to a village accepting a particular quota, they were forced to lived in camps until the local authorities could find them government housing. The theory was that they would stay in these camps for some days but for many Sudeten Germans, that turned into months until they could be placed into a community. The camps themselves had deplorable living conditions. Many resembled refugee camps. Families were crammed into tiny quarters, denied bathing areas, and given small rations of food.  

6 Settle, This is Germany, 199.

7 Ibid.
The influx of refugees posed an enormous challenge for the state governments and local authorities. They had the responsibility to accept, process, and relocate more than a million people. Virtually every state had a ministry for expellees. Their job was to move the expellees into new homes as quickly as possible, placing them where they could cause the least of social and economic dislocation.\(^8\)

Finding enough space proved to be the most challenging, especially in Bavaria which was considered the hardest hit by the war. Authorities there were faced with having to send many to other communities simply because there was no more room. 1949 revealed that there were at least four refugees per room and that did not include those in camps where the numbers were far higher. \(^9\)

The next big challenge for German officials was finding work for those recently relocated. The goal was to make the work reallocation as equal as possible with the current population already living within communities. Their goal of no discrimination was easier said than done. There was a great deal of hostility between those already living in Germany, especially Bavaria, and those now forced to live in their “homeland.” Officials in Bavaria would require their people to care for their peers in defeat and stand as one people.

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\(^8\) Settle, *This is Germany*, 204.

\(^9\) Ibid.
But officials could not eliminate the prejudice felt by Bavarians against the “squatters” as they were called. There were numerous reports of fights and disputes between the native Germans and expellees especially over jobs, including efforts to squeeze the Sudeten Germans out of jobs the natives felt they were entitled to.  

The emotional strain of living in a new country coupled with difficult living and working conditions was reflected in a study done in 1949 by the Overseas News Agency. When asked in the spring of 1949, if they were satisfied or unsatisfied with the treatment given to them by the indigenous Germans, 40 percent answered no. And despite the growing communist movement in their country of origin, 85 percent of expellees told the United States Military Government opinion analysts that they would go back to their land of origin if they could. Despite the influx of aid and currency reform, Germany was at its highest number of unemployed since the war, about a million workers. The refugees made up about two thirds of that number. Hundreds of thousands who did find work, found part time jobs and had to get their support from the German state government.

Those lucky enough to find work, were paid far less than indigenous Germans. At the end of 1948, 47 percent of the refugees quizzed by the Military Government survey reported incomes ranging downward from 100 deutschmarks a month.

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10 Settle, This is Germany, 205.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 206
13 Ibid.
Many of the expellees found it difficult to maintain family life, given housing and work difficulties. While many arrived in the same community together they found they had to split up when opportunities arose in other nearby towns. Since finding and keeping work became a priority, it led to a reality that made it difficult for families to remain together given the locations where work was available and where the family had to live. While three fourths of the married Germans lived together, only slightly more than half of married expellees were living with their families. There was even more trouble for older generations of expellees. After living a lifetime in their homeland it became nearly impossible for them to relocate and regain a sense of stability in a new living environment and even more difficulty to find work and income sufficient for maintenance. This reality put a strain on the existing homes for the elderly that were already overfilled with people.\textsuperscript{14}

Even with these serious problems, there were a number of success stories among the expellees. Millions of the refugees contributed their knowledge of craftsmanship, labor, and other skills to the workplace. Industries within areas settled by the Sudeten Germans benefitted greatly from the presence of the new refugees. Also feeling the impact of the new settlers were, the universities which gained a number of scholars from the East following World War II.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Settle, \textit{This is Germany}, 206.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
Much credit has to be given to the Sudeten Germans, who under strained and difficult circumstances set about to make a better life for themselves and their families. The economic boom in the Federal Republic played a large role in helping refugees finally find work, utilize their skills in new industries and create better living conditions for themselves. By 1948, conditions began to improve somewhat but Sudeten Germans still faced challenges adjusting to a new working and living environment and whole new way of life removed from what for so long was considered their homeland and culture.  

It is these circumstances which further support my argument that the Sudeten Germans were not only forced from their homeland but forced to adapt to an environment that was incredibly strained and weakened following World War II. In the midst of dire economic times the Sudeten Germans had to find work and survive with little or no help from the new country in which they were living.

The environment was not much better than a refugee camp. This was a refugee camp with walls and no food or a way to earn a living. The Sudeten Germans had to find ways to feed their families, wherever those jobs were located and in whatever circumstances they had to face. This often led to a complete breakdown of basic family life and in some cases families were forced apart never to be reunited again. It is this secondary effect of the expulsion which further supports my argument of a crime against humanity or war crime. Not only were these families forcibly removed but they

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were dumped into an unfamiliar place and given little to no means survive other than their own will and determination.

While refugees struggled to find their place, there was another force talking hold that of a powerful and emerging politically active group of Germans. The first Sudeten German organization organized and came to the forefront as early as 1945. The group’s main focus was to address atrocities committed during the expulsions as well as the concerns of those who settled into a new land. In 1946, when the remainder of the Sudeten Germans arrived in Germany, many groups already existing in Sudetenland during the war began to reemerge in Germany. There were three main groups who formed organizations. The Catholic Ackermann-Gemeinde organized in 1946 united the Christian Democrats. This was a relatively small group as far as members, but segments had more extreme tendencies and focused a great deal of attention on grievances toward the Czechoslovakian government for their post war revenge. In 1951, the Social Democratic Seliger-Gemeinde was but one of the various elements of the Sudeten German social democrats. The Witiko Bund was made up of a number of organizations, including members of the Kameradschaftsbund, an organization founded in Czechoslovakia in 1920s which served as a meeting ground for Sudeten German intellectuals who met primarily to prepare to take up leadership roles in a possible future independent Sudetenland. The Witiko Bund was also made up of the Aufbruch Circle, which was an openly Nazi group that wished for Sudetenland to be annexed by Germany. The final prominent group was the social organization
known as the Bereitschaft Group. Most of the former members of the Heinlein party became members of the Witiko Bund.  

Sudeten Germans organized quickly in an effort to get their voices heard. They knew if their concerns were to be taken seriously, a committed organization with a single focus and message would have to emerge. This was the Association for the protection of Sudeten German Interests. The group was organized under the direction of several leaders, Walter Becher, Hans Schutz and Richard Reitzner. The organization claimed to be the main voice of the Sudeten interests. It was comprised of political parties and common citizens. It worked to release propaganda and information for displaced Sudeten Germans. It was an advocate for those hoping to either return to their homeland or seek reparations.  

With the addition of Dr Rudolf Lodgeman von Auen, there emerged internal disagreements among leaders as to who should be the main spokesperson for the group and about the direction the group should take. These struggles within led to the group disbanding in 1952 and reorganizing.  

While the expulsions primarily affected the Sudeten Germans in their new homeland, the influx of millions of refugees had an enormous impact on Germany, which had to absorb another population in war torn country. 

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18 Ibid. 
19 Ibid. 

52
First, following the war, Germany was split geographically into three Allied zones and a Soviet zone. In the former, the Allied forces were given the task of reducing the industries in the region with the goal of purging all things Nazi. The European Advisory Commission was given the task of laying out a plan for post war Germany and how these zones would operate. In 1943 in Moscow, the foreign ministers conferences drew up the boundaries for the occupation of each zone. Then in February 1945, Churchill himself spelled out the true reason for stripping Germany of its economic power.\textsuperscript{20}

"It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany," but setting out their determination "that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace."\textsuperscript{21}

The economic engine that made Germany run was reduced drastically. It was estimated in the Chicago Daily News that industries were operating at only 10 percent of their maximum production. Under the terms of the Potsdam declaration, Germany was to be completely stripped of military and arsenal making industries. During his period of allied occupation, the country was to be treated as a single economic unit. Its resources and industrial capability were to be pooled and used throughout the war torn and economically stricken region. It was essentially left up to the Germans to decide how to deal with the millions of refugees now living in their country.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Settle, \textit{This is Germany}, 230.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Luza,\textit{The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans}, 232.
Also under the terms of the Potsdam protocol, Germany had to turn over a substantial portion of land east of the Oder-Neisse line. This area was comprised of major industrial centers like Silesia and Breslau. This territory was made up of a third of Germany’s pre-war farm land and with it being annexed, one of Germany’s richest industrial centers was now gone, forcing the Germans to export industrial products just to live.  

On March 28, 1946, a four point document was drafted to cover the details of a postwar Germany and it economic recovery. Under the agreement, by 1948 German industry would operate at about half of its 1938 figures. Certain industries were forbidden altogether and severe limitations were place on others. When it came to the distribution of food, Germans were to live on 2,700 calories a day. Germans would receive about 18 pounds of textile products for every German every year; this made basic necessities like winter coats a complete luxury. While there were no limits placed on coal for heating, there was a shortage forcing many to burn wood found in forests, as well as benches and wood stolen from buildings in disrepair.  

The Potsdam protocol was followed to the very letter in its dismantling the German war machine and its ability to become a prosperous country. There were also limits on how many automobiles could be manufactured per year.

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24 Settle, *This is Germany*, 235.
Germans would be left with enough equipment to produce 20,000 automobiles a year. The British were the first to recognize that these living standards were simply unreasonable especially given the large influx of refugees now living in the country. General Sir Brian Robertson, who was to later become the British Military Governor, told officials upon his return from Berlin that Britain would not allow the Germans to be condemned to deprived economic conditions for this extended period of time. 25

By 1947, the ineffectiveness of the post-war plan of economic depletion in Germany became apparent. By July 1947, Washington sent a directive to General Lucius D. Clay, who was the deputy military governor in Germany following the war under General Dwight Eisenhower. General Clay was assigned to Germany to assist the Germans in efforts to develop a new peaceful county. The directive noted that lasting peace could be sustained “only if conditions of public order and prosperity are crested in Europe as a whole.” 26

By August of 1947, the industries of West Germany could again operate at their 1938 levels. The emphasis was primarily on goods for export. Germany would have to buy and import about 1 billion dollars worth of food a year.

25 Settle, This is Germany, 235.
26 Ibid., 238.
In addition, about a billion in supplies would have to be imported to help industries operate and thrive. Currency reform in 1948 stimulated the stagnant German economy but the country took years to recover.  

The loss of the Sudeten Germans affected Czechoslovakia’s economy greatly. Professor Vaclav E. Mares noted their contributions in a “Current History” article in 1952. While Czechoslovakia was firmly under the hand of Communism the author reflects back to time when the Sudeten Germans lived in the country and contributed to its prosperity.

“And yet I firmly believe that the transfer of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia was the most fateful mistake of the country’s policy in the post war years.”

He noted that not one political party ever raised its voice against the expulsions or the disturbing way they were carried out. Czechoslovakia was focused on developing its future as laid out by President in exile Edvard Beneš. President Beneš outlined a plan for a post war Czechoslovakia in a series of laws that became known as the Beneš decrees. The decrees were divided into three parts. The first dealt with the creation of Czechoslovak exile government (including its army) and its organization.

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27 Settle, This is Germany, 239.

28 Turnwald, Renascence or Decline of Central Europes, The Sudeten German-Czech Problem, 70.
Secondly, it established the transition of control of the liberated area of Czechoslovakia from the Allied forces and the organization of a post-war Czechoslovak government. And finally, it opened the door to the creation of political parties which included a strong Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Since a new parliament had not yet been organized, the framework of the government was implemented by these Beneš decrees. Beneš signed decrees created by the executive government. It also included controversial laws connected with the expulsion and confiscation of property of ethnic Germans and Hungarians. Beneš also agreed to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin’s demands for unconditional agreement with Soviet foreign policy. This paved the way for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1948 and the country firmly becoming part of the Soviet bloc.  

As I have documented in this chapter, the Sudeten Germans were forced into Germany under very difficult circumstances. They arrived in a new place, with no jobs or means of support and had to adapt to a largely unfamiliar place. This level of survival would be difficult for anyone but the Sudeten Germans were forced to survive in a new home that was already left devastated after World War II. The German countryside and towns were left in ruins, the economy was devastated and the morale was at an all time low. Under the terms of the Potsdam Protocol, the German economy was reduced dramatically.

29 Turnwald, Renascence or Decline of Central Europe, 71.
This left many Germans without jobs and forced to find whatever form of income they could. The Sudeten Germans, who were unfamiliar with their new environment, had no ties to the region and were viewed as refugees taking away the precious forms of income that were available in the region. Sudeten Germans had to take whatever jobs were offered, in towns often far from loved ones and for wages well below what native Germans were making. The bottom line is that the transition was not a smooth one. It was a forced migration of a large group of people into an area left devastated by World War II. The larger picture that has been laid out of the difficult transition following this migration, further lends itself to my argument that this was a crime against humanity. Three million Sudeten Germans were forced to live in a new land without any support from Allied forces.  

The plight of the Sudeten Germans was overlooked by other countries mainly due to the broader conditions at the time. The world was focused on reducing German strength both economically and militarily so the country would not pose the threat it did during World War II. On another level, communism was beginning to take hold in Czechoslovakia. Leaders there were concerned with establishing their own government and forming new alliances with Stalin in what soon would become a fateful relationship and led to the build up of another war, the Cold War.

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30 Turnwald, Renascence or Decline of Central Europe, 70.
The new struggle for the displaced Sudeten Germans was simply a cry for help that was not heard due to the larger historical events taking shape following a major war.

The next chapter explores the question of why these expulsions and forced migration of Sudeten Germans were not prosecuted as a crime against humanity. The manner in which the expulsions were carried out as explained in historical documents and my case studies was undeniably barbaric. The later placement into a new homeland of the Germans was by far more humane but nonetheless tragic as the Sudeten Germans had to survive with no help from Allied forces. It is this period of time, both the expulsions and later placement, that will shape the argument for such a case in the next chapter. Both the expulsions and the later placement could have been considered crimes against humanity and punished as such, however they were not.
CHAPTER 4 -- CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

As I have shown in the previous chapters, these expulsions were carried out with malicious intent and disregard for human life in order to ethnically cleanse the German speaking population of about three million from Czechoslovakia. Both the “wild” transfers and “orderly” transfers fit the definition of ethnic cleansing which is the forced removal of an ethnic group from a territory with the goal of creating a homogenous national state.

With regard to the legal aspects of the expulsion, if it were to happen today it would no doubt violate various international laws. The problem is, that many of these international laws and bodies simply did not exist at the time the expulsions occurred. The only way to hold those who committed these crimes accountable would have been by applying the Nuremberg Principles. At the time the Nuremberg trials were taking place, all eyes were on the prosecution of those responsible for what happened to the Jews during the war. Certainly no one would have considered accusing the Allied forces of committing war crimes against the Germans, namely the Sudeten Germans. And if those allegations were made, I believe they certainly would have not been taken seriously and at the time may have been inappropriate. Such an allegation would have undermined the legitimacy of Nuremberg trials themselves.

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Why were war crimes charges not brought forward following the Nuremberg trials? The reasons for this are many. Among them, the Sudeten Germans were on the losing side; they were viewed as Nazi sympathizers and there was great anti-German sentiment throughout the world. The Sudeten Germans were not the only ones suffering following World War II. There was widespread destruction, famine, displacement and loss of life across Europe. The theatre of war left behind a worldwide mess to clean up. Finally, the Germans at this time did not wish to call attention to themselves as victims or to shed light once again on a dark time in German history. Later, the German government became focused on its policy of Ostpolitik, its effort to improve relations with Eastern Europe. The German government sought cooperation and normalization of diplomatic ties with the East. To bring up charges at this time would undermine their policy. All these arguments and scenarios will be explained in detail throughout this chapter, but first I want to examine the legal argument for why the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans could have been and should have been prosecuted as a crime against humanity.

The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans clearly constituted a crime against humanity as defined by the Nuremberg Principles of 1945 and was punishable by International Law. Specifically Principle VI defines a crime against humanity as;
Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts done against any civilian population, or persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds, when such acts are done or such persecutions are carried on in execution of or in connection with any crime against peace or any war crime.²

The Nuremberg Convention which was established during 1945 would be applicable to the crimes committed against the Sudeten Germans during the expulsion. If it were applicable to the German crimes against the Poles with regard to deportation of Poles, and deportation of French, then it certainly was applicable to the expulsions of Germans by the Czechs, Poles, and Germans. So, if you apply the Nuremberg principles, one would have to conclude that expulsion of the Germans clearly constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity.³

The issue of human rights and the manner in which these expulsions were to be carried out was never really established at Potsdam. The only reference to the manner into which the expulsions were to be carried out was in Article 13 of the Potsdam Protocol, where it says that these transfers were to be carried out in an "orderly and humane fashion." ⁴ Yet what occurred in 1945 and even 1946 was not an orderly transfer, it was an expulsion. Sudeten Germans were ordered out forcibly, with little or no notice, rounded up into camps, and those who did not comply were tortured and or killed.

⁴ App, *The Sudeten-German Tragedy*, 70.
Once those Germans were moved, all elements of anything related to Germans were removed. All traces of German identity were stripped from the landscape. Streets, villages and landmarks were replaced with Czech names. Those forced out were stripped of their citizenship, forced to wear swastika arm bands and considered in many respects refugees and casualties of war.  

During the time of the expulsions in 1945 and 1946, a few critical voices began to sound the alarm about this atrocity. U.S. President Truman sanctioned the transfers along with other world leaders at Potsdam. It is the events prior to Potsdam that drew some attention and outrage from world leaders, other government officials, and religious leaders. Those critical voices began emerging in 1945. A few key American officials and British officials voiced their concerns early on as the expulsions showed no signs of being carried out in a humane and orderly fashion. 

British publisher and humanitarian Sir Victor Gollancz, turned his attention to the plight of the German refugees in 1945. In his book, Our Threatened Values, he says:

"The abominable cruelty with which these expulsions were, and are being, carried out..." He goes on to describe the “the whole expulsion of all but an insignificant minority of the Sudeten German population.”

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6 Ibid., 9.

7 Gollancz, Our Threatened Values, 33.
George Kennan offered his perspective as an American official living in the American Embassy in Moscow. He made mention of the expulsions in his Memoirs.

The disaster that befell this area, (speaking of East Prussia) with the entry of the Soviet forces has no parallel in modern European experience. There were considerable sections of it where, to judge by all existing evidence, scarcely a man, woman, or child of the indigenous population was left alive after the initial passage of Soviet forces; and one cannot believe that they all succeeded in fleeing to the West.⁸

One of the first official voices in the American government to oppose the expulsion and speak out publicly on it was Robert Murphy, the political advisor of General Eisenhower, and later the political advisor of General Clay during the occupation in Germany. He openly criticized the manner in which the Expulsion was being carried out in a memorandum to the State Department October 12, 1945.⁹

Knowledge that they are the victims of a harsh political decision carried out with the utmost ruthlessness and disregard for the humanities does not cushion the effect. The mind reverts to other mass deportations which horrified the world and brought upon the Nazis the odium which they so deserved. Those mass deportations engineered by the Nazis provided part of the moral basis on which we waged war and which gave strength to our cause. Now the situation is reversed. We find ourselves in the invidious position of being partners in this German enterprise and as partners inevitably sharing the responsibility.¹⁰

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⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.
As a result of what was noted by Murphy, the American government then stepped in at Prague to express concern and seek an end to actions that were currently taking place. The United States government worked with the Czechoslovakian government to bring about an end to the “wild” expulsions. The result was the Prague protocol which described the details of orderly and humane transfers. ¹¹

The accounts of British and American officials, newspaper accounts from reporters on the ground and religious and medical leaders detailing the expulsion, the treatment of the Germans and the conditions in which they lived, make this clear. There are many documented eyewitness accounts beyond the case studies I have provided. Still, those reports were never compiled into a formal complaint. That leads to the question of why. Many would argue that it was taboo at the time. Given the annihilation of 6 million Jews, did the German women and children left in occupied territories following the war deserve such treatment as payback for the atrocities suffered at the hands of German political leaders? Once American officials were made aware of the reports of cruelty toward refugees on the ground, changes were implemented and noted in the Potsdam protocol. But as we have read in many reports, conditions remained unacceptable and inhumane.¹²


¹² Ibid.
If the expulsion had been prosecuted in 1945, there were very few laws and institutions in place at the time that would have provided the legal framework for such a case. Many of the war crimes laws and international bodies that enforce these laws came about much later. So if we examine some basic definitions, we see that the expulsion was clearly punishable under some laws. Whether this would be labeled as genocide is debatable, but clearly there was intent to eliminate the population as defined in Article II of the United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It defines genocide as intent "to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such."\textsuperscript{13}

A number of legal arguments could be made that the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans qualifies as genocide based upon the United Nations charter; however, until now no one has made them.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Hayden, \textit{Schindler's Fate}, 730.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
For example if one compares a case in Yugoslavia, a United Nations committee concluded in 1944 that,

"Considered in the context of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, 'ethnic cleansing' means rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given groups from the area."\(^{15}\)

The report goes on to describe the specific means by which the cleansing was carried out by Serbs against Croats including murder, torture, random arrest and detention, executions, rape and sexual assaults, confinement of civilians, forcible removal, displacement and deportation of civilian population. The committee stated in this particular case that these specific methods used in Yugoslavia are crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing; a clear violation of international law. All the means described above also apply to what happened to the Germans at the hands of the Russians and Czechs from May to August of 1945.\(^{16}\)

When we explore further legal aspects of expulsions, it is clear they would constitute war crimes based on various provisions of international law; as it exists today. Article 49 of the Geneva Convention of 1949 states that expulsion is specifically prohibited when it comes to the protection of civilians.


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
The 1949 convention for civilians provided for special safeguards for the wounded, children, pregnant women, and the elderly. It forbids the discrimination on racial, religious, national, or political grounds. Torture, destruction of property, and forcing civilians to be a part of an occupier's armed forces were also prohibited. In addition it includes a pledge to treat prisoners humanely, feed them adequately, and deliver relief supplies to them.\(^\text{17}\)

Articles 3 and 4 of the Fourth Protocol of the European Human Rights Convention signed in 1950 also prohibit such expulsions. The European Convention is an international treaty under which states accept certain legal obligations. The treaty recognizes that individuals have certain rights. The provisions of the treaty also allow those that consider that there has been a violation of their rights, to take legal action in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg against the government they hold responsible.\(^\text{18}\)

In 1945, none of these legal instruments was in place. The crimes that occurred during the expulsion could not have been prosecuted under them.\(^\text{19}\)

In addition to the laws protecting human rights, there are also international bodies and courts since established to protect civilians from such atrocities.


The International Criminal Court was created in 1998 to create a legal framework to prosecute the international community’s most serious offenders of international law. This independent body reviews cases brought forth by individuals and groups of civilians seeking action against governments or heads of state. The Court was formed following the crimes committed in Rwanda and Yugoslavia. However no cases have been brought before this court pertaining to the crimes committed against the Sudeten Germans as this court was created well after the crimes occurred.

To date, no charges of war crimes have been leveled by Sudeten Germans against any of the Allied forces for that time period, according to the database of the International Criminal Court. It does not have records of things that happened prior to its creation in 2002 so it cannot deal with events prior to that. ²⁰

However, they were not, and to this day have not been prosecuted. The question is why the expulsions were not prosecuted as crimes against humanity, despite evidence to support allegations. There are several factors that could have contributed to this.

²⁰ www.ice-cpi.int
The eyes of the world following World War II were on the prosecution of those responsible for the genocide of six million Jews during the war, and for the imprisonment, killing or forced migration of Slavs, Romanians, communists, socialists and homosexuals among others. The Nuremberg Trials were underway and the crimes committed by Germans were in the spotlight. Nuremberg focused on bringing justice to the Jews who were persecuted during World War II. This was simply not a time any Sudeten German or the German government for that matter would have brought crimes forward that allegedly happened against Germans when the eyes of the world were on the Germans for crimes committed by them during the war. 21

Another reason these crimes were not prosecuted at the time, could be due to the perception of the Sudeten Germans as Nazi Sympathizers. Leading up to the war, there was large support among Sudeten Germans for Nazi leaning parties and leaders in the German territories of Czechoslovakia. When Hitler sought the annexation of the Sudetenland, there was overwhelming support for the move among Sudeten Germans. Who would have thought to bring about allegations of war crimes against the Russians and Czechs by the very people that are being prosecuted for crimes committed during the war? 22

21 Fine, Crimes against Humanity and the Nuremberg Debates, 294.
22 Ibid.
Another reason allegations of war crimes were not brought forward is due to the widespread anti-German sentiment that was felt by the International community and especially the Czechoslovaks. It’s this widespread and deeply felt anger and animosity between these two countries that certainly fueled and contributed to the excesses which marked the first round of expulsions in 1945. Those feelings of hatred and revenge arguably lead rational people to do irrational things. Wartime hatred for Germany was so intense that officials in Czechoslovakia and Russian and even Poland, reacted with vengeance against the peoples left behind in the occupied territories. Tensions ran so high over the crimes of Hitler, that Allied powers in place given the task, authority and responsibility to secure the lands and protect the people, turned their backs to the atrocities that were happening.

The actions from 1945 to 1946 constituted nothing less than ethnic cleansing but it has never been recognized as such, instead it was documented as an orderly and humane transfer, sanctioned by the Allied powers, a wartime casualty and result of the chaos that ensued following the realignment of territories.23

This anti German feeling was intensified between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans leading up to and during the time of the Munich annexation. In the years prior to Munich there were so many irritations that Sudeten Germans felt treated as second class citizens. It’s an argument I laid out in a previous chapter.

23 Glassheim, National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing, 467.
Czech officials and citizens rarely if ever spoke German, but were assigned to largely German districts. Czechs were encouraged to settle on German property in the middle of larger German populations. The mood was even transferred into the school system where more and more Czech schools were being built. On the economic side, Czech firms were often awarded contracts over Sudeten German firms and work became more difficult to find for ethnic Germans. These tensions led to a general desire for Sudeten Germans to either become sovereign or be annexed by Germany under the Munich Agreement. Munich in many ways gave Sudeten Germans a feeling that their grievances had finally been heard and the Sudeten German people could become part of Germany. 24

With Munich, there was pressure by both the US and Britain for Czechoslovakia to concede the Sudeten territory to the Nazis in order to limit Hitler’s eastward expansion. While Czechoslovak officials complied, their dissatisfaction with the decision was only made worse during the war as the once prosperous Sudeten countryside and factories were used as tools by the Nazi machine as it moved eastward into Czechoslovakia.

24 App, 45.
So tensions were heightened during this time and that fueled not only animosity toward the Sudeten Germans after the war but spurred plans during the war to regain what was lost under the leadership of President in exile Edvard Beneš.  

Plans for revenge against the Sudeten Germans following the war were already being worked out between Allied forces, the Czech underground and Czechoslovak President in exile Edvard Beneš. By 1945, all parties were already in agreement that expulsions were inevitable. As early as 1942, Beneš received a commitment from the British war cabinet that at the close of the war the government would not oppose the population’s transfer. By 1943, Winston Churchill’s government would not assist with the actual expulsions, but supported them. The French National Committee also expressed that they were in support of this plan. The following year, 1943, Beneš went to Washington to gain the support of President Roosevelt. Roosevelt agreed that the number of Germans in Czechoslovakia needed to be reduced following the war as a part of plan to rebuild post war Europe. 

At the end of the war, the plan worked out behind the scenes was articulated in the Potsdam Protocol. Here the allied powers elaborated on their vision for the population transfer of the Sudeten Germans into Germany and Poland.


27 Ibid., 618.
Article 13 in the Potsdam Protocol of August 2, 1945 explains that the allies agreed that it was necessary to transfer the German speaking population from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The reason given for these expulsions from East Prussia, Rumania, and Silesia, was so Poland would be compensated territorially for Soviet frontier demands on the East, which was agreed upon in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939. The Soviets and the Poles had forced out most of the surviving Germans east of the Oder and Western Neisse rivers, since this territory was now considered the new Polish-German boundary. These specific territorial demands were considered harsh, unilateral actions which were of great concern for both the United States and British Governments. However, the basic principle of removing the Germans from all Polish territories was allowed. 28

Following World War II, the Sudeten Germans were not the only ones suffering. Not to diminish what happened to them in anyway, but there needs to be some discussion as to what was happening across Europe following the war. While the atrocities that happened to the Sudeten Germans were unacceptable, another reason these crimes may have been overlooked is due to the bigger picture problems happening all across Europe at the close of the war. Europe suffered enormously during and after World War II. Casualty statistics reveal that World War II was the deadliest war ever and estimates of total dead range from 50 million to over 70 million. Forty to Fifty-two million civilians are estimated to have been killed, including 13 to 20 million from war-related disease and famine. Total military deaths were 22 to 25

28 Brown, The Diplomacy of Bitterness, 624.
million, including deaths in captivity of about 5 million prisoners of war.29
Throughout Europe there was widespread physical destruction and suffering, with
millions of refugees and displaced persons living in camps and moving from country to
country. Economies were virtually destroyed across Europe, agriculture disrupted, and
governments hard pressed to get their countries reconstructed. Again, this does not
excuse what happened in Czechoslovakia, but may help explain other countries’
seeming indifference to the Sudeten Germans’ plight.

The plight of the Sudeten Germans may have also been overshadowed by
another war beginning to take hold, the Cold War. Shortly after World War II,
communism was slowly gaining ground in Europe and the Cold War was on the
horizon. At this time, in 1945 the Soviets were still considered our allies but tensions
began to grow in Eastern Europe. This drew attention away from the plight of the
Sudeten Germans and focused the world’s attention on an emerging global threat. The
crisis of the Sudeten Germans fell between the cracks of two great wars of our time. It
somehow became lost in history.30

Recently the wounds of this time period, namely the tensions between the
Czechoslovaks and the Germans were reopened with a move by the European Union
members to consolidate their efforts in foreign policy and security in the Lisbon
Treaty. President Vaclav Klaus of Czechoslovakia has signed the treaty, but was

29 K.O. Kurth, *Documents of Humanity during the Mass Expulsions*, trans. by Helen Taubert and
Margaret Brooke (Goettingen: The Goettingen Research Committee, 1952), 131.

30 Fine, 294.
originally strongly opposed to it arguing it would strip countries of sovereignty. Klaus demanded and received an opt-out clause to shield the Czech Republic from property claims from ethnic Germans expelled from the country after World War II. A Constitutional Court ruled against a challenge to the treaty filed by a group of Czech senators. The court ruled that the treaty was consonant with Czech constitution. This development, decades after the expulsion, reveals that there is a great deal of sensitivity and concern that property complaints or even much more would be brought forward against the Czech government. This will be strongly discouraged given the opt out. 31

Clearly if the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans had occurred today, there are a number of international laws and bodies that would not only stop the action from happening but hold those accountable for these actions. But the legal framework in place today was not in existence following World War II. The only legal means of punishment would have been through the Nuremberg Principles. And given the focus of Nuremberg on the German war crimes, bringing a case against the Allied forces for crimes suffered by the Sudeten Germans would not have been looked upon with much sympathy. As I have explained in this chapter, while the crime is clearly punishable it was not pursued due to a number of circumstances and perceptions at the time.

Among them, the animosity against the Germans was so strong one could not think of bringing a case of a crime against humanity with Germans as the victims. In addition, following World War II, the attention of the world was on punishing those responsible for the crimes against the Jews, recovering from war throughout Europe and in the case of Germany, moving forward and not looking back. Then later in the 1960’s, the policy of Ostpolitik defined Germany’s new goals of establishing a spirit of cooperation with Eastern Europe. Revisiting the crimes of the past would simply reopen wounds of a time both Germany and the rest of the world would prefer to forget.
CHAPTER 5 --AFTERWARD

In the months to follow the expulsion and subsequent relocation to Germany, the Sudeten Germans faced even more boundaries and difficulties assimilating into a new life in a new homeland. During the difficult years following World War II, a bombed out and war torn Germany managed to resettle the millions of Sudeten refugees. They lived in crowded homes and had a higher unemployment rate than the natives. They were discriminated against and largely unassimilated and always wished to return to their homeland. In their new homeland they had to share with the Germans the little food supplies available as well as homes, jobs and opportunities to restart their lives in a place that some would call home for the rest of their lives.¹

As of 1950, the Sudeten Germans numbered 925,000 and formed almost a fifth of all Germans of the West German Federal Republic. From 1945 to 1946 the majority lived near the eastern European border where the largest numbers were assembled. There was an attempt to distribute them in the least bombed out parts of Germany where more housing was available, so the countryside received the majority of the expellees. The refugees formed 38.2 percent of the population of Schleswig-Holstein, 30.5 percent of lower Saxony and 23.6 percent of Bavaria and 4.6 percent in the French Zone. ² The population in these towns and villages doubled and the presence of the refugees placed enormous pressure on local governments. In the countryside, there


² Ibid, 192.
was little to no industry so helping on the farms was the main source of employment. In the more populated industrial towns, Sudeten Germans had to compete with the natives for the few jobs available. In the countryside, many were forced into government housing, camps or barracks. In the city if housing was not available, families were force to live with natives. By 1950 due to the housing shortage and the job situation, it was not uncommon for workers to travel 25 miles by bike to their jobs everyday. At that same time there was still a housing shortage of 5 million.\(^3\)

By 1968, there had been significant improvement in the lives of Sudeten Germans. They proved to be a powerful impetus to the German economic miracle.\(^4\) They brought their skills, workmanship and ethics to the workforce. In some cases, they brought entire thriving industries. Neugablonz became the home of the ancient and famous Sudeten German glassware and ornaments. The product is exported all over the world.\(^5\)

The Sudeten Germans soon became politically active in Germany and generated their own political clout.

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\(^3\) Carey, *Political Organization of the Refugees and Expellees in West Germany*, 193.

\(^4\) App, *The Sudeten-German Tragedy*, 75.

\(^5\) Ibid.
While, the refugees were supposed be to given citizenship rights immediately upon their arrival into Germany, this too took time. State residency requirements made it so refugees could not vote or run for state legislature until 1948. 6

There were three main groups who formed organizations. The Catholic Ackermann-Gemeinde organized in 1946 united the Christian Democrats which largely focused its attention on grievances toward the Czechoslovakian government for their post war revenge. In 1951, the Social Democratic Seliger-Gemeinde was but one of the various elements of the Sudeten German social democrats. The Witiko Bund was made up of a number of organizations, including members of the Kameradschaftsbund, which was an organization founded in Czechoslovakia in 1920s and served as a meeting ground for Sudeten German intellectuals who met primarily to prepare for leadership roles in a possible future independent Sudetenland. The Witiko Bund was also made up of the Aufbruch Circle, which was Nazi leaning that wished for Sudetenland to be annexed by Germany and the predominantly social organization known as the Bereitschaft Group. Most of the former members of the Heinlein party became members of the Witiko Bund. 7

The best known organization for recognizing the plight of the Sudeten Germans and aiding them in reparations and renewed ties with their former homeland is the Sudeten German Landsmannschaft.

6 Carey, Political Organization of the Refugees and Expellees in West Germany, 196.
This became and still is the chief organization for justice and self determination of the Sudeten Germans living all over the world. Each region has local chapters with the same common goals. In the years immediately following the expulsion, the group sought to help the refugees assimilate as quickly as possible helping them to find housing or jobs. In later years, the Landmannschaft, through peaceful means, helped Sudeten Germans seek reparations through the return of property, money or valuables lost during the expulsion. The group also organizes rallies each year for the Sudeten Germans to gather and share common experiences or reunite with friends from their homeland, in addition to planning trips back to the original Sudetenland for visits.  

There still remains resentment for what happened to the Sudeten Germans at the hands of the Czechoslovaks and Russians. In an effort to seek reconciliation, a historical commission was set up at the end of the Cold War by Germany and Czechoslovakia. The Commission issued a report that was originally supposed to resolve the conflict over historical differences between German and Czechs. Among the conclusions by the Commission was that the Sudeten Germans’ claim of 250,000 dead among the expellees was wrong, and the Czech claim of 30,000 was more accurate according to a report summoned by the Commission. The commission concluded by calling for more education and understanding of this difficult time in German and Czech history.  

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8 Carey, *Political Organization of the Refugees and Expellees in West Germany*, 194.

9 Ibid., 195.
In 2002, when Czechoslovakia was on the verge of being admitted to the European Union, old tensions over this unrecognized part of history once again were brought forward; Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman, described the Sudeten expellees as Hitler's "fifth column."

"According to Czech laws," Zeman said, "many Sudeten Germans committed treason, a crime which at that time was punishable by death. If they were expelled or transferred, it was more moderate than the death penalty."\(^{10}\)

German politicians were outraged by this comment and used it to mount a last minute effort block the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union.

Edmund Stoiber, a conservative candidate for German Chancellor in the 2002 September elections voiced strong disapproval. Stoiber is from Bavaria, which has a large number of Sudeten Germans and his wife is from a Sudeten family forced to leave their homeland during the expulsion. In response to Zeman, Stoiber said,\(^{11}\)

"The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans cannot be justified under any circumstances."\(^{12}\)

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\(^{10}\) Elazar Barkan, "Historical Reconciliation:Redress, Rights and Politics," *Journal of International Affairs* 60 (Fall 2006): 16.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
Comments from neighboring governments were just as swift. Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schussel called on the Czech government to voluntarily compensate the Sudeten Germans. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban also took personal offense since tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians had also been expelled from what is now Slovakia.\(^\text{13}\)

"This was another shameful event in the 20th century where Hungarians were on the painful, losing side."\(^\text{14}\)

The statement reignited a call to repeal the controversial Beneš decrees which formed the legal framework for the expulsion. The effort was backed by Jörg Haider, the governor of Austria’s Carinthia province who was part of Austria’s ruling coalition. "The Beneš Decrees should no longer exist," Haider said. The head of Germany’s Association of Displaced Persons agreed with Haider,\(^\text{15}\)

"Who in the year 2002 cannot distance himself from a political event that contradicts all norms of international law and questions the E.U. suitability of his country?"\(^\text{16}\)

German Chancellor Schroder urged the EU to call on the Czech government to abandon the Beneš decrees as a requirement for entry into the international body.

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\(^{13}\) Barkan, *Historical Reconciliation*, 16.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Charles Wallace, "Putting the Past to Rest," *Time Europe*, 18 March 2002, 44.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
Zeman responded by saying that the Czechs would not consider removing the laws, the concern being that such an action would open the floodgates for restitution by those forced to leave the country after World War II. Jan Kavan, Czech Foreign Minister at the time further explained.\textsuperscript{17}

"Why should we single out the Beneš Decrees? They belong to the past and should stay in the past. Many current members of the E.U. had similar laws."\textsuperscript{18}

The decrees remain to this day part of history. Czechoslovakia was admitted to the EU, but the statement certainly reignited the debate that would not be resolved in 2002. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder summed it up by saying,\textsuperscript{19}

"in this heated debate, a rational discussion of such questions is much more difficult,"\textsuperscript{20}

He went to say he doubted there would be any long-term damage to German-Czech relations. The issue recently was brought up again as the European Union accepted the Lisbon Treaty on reorganization and expansion of the EU’s role as an international player. Member state Czechoslovakia and its President Vaclav Klaus initially opposed to signing the treaty arguing it will strip countries of sovereignty.

\textsuperscript{17} Wallace, \textit{Putting the Past to Rest}, 44.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
Klaus agreed once an opt-out clause was put into place which would shield the Czech Republic from property claims from ethnic Germans expelled from the country after World War II. Klaus finally agreed to sign the document after the country’s Constitutional Court ruled that it was compatible with the Czech Constitution.  

This development, decades after the expulsion reveals that there is a great deal of sensitivity and deep-seated animosity over what happened to the Sudeten Germans during and after World War II. While some Sudeten Germans have brought successful cases for land and financial reparations, this issue of a crime against humanity or war crimes has largely gone unnoticed by the international community and even among German leaders and the Sudeten Germans themselves. There have been calls for an apology, recognition of events or repeal of the Beneš decrees but not an effort to have the expulsions or forced migrations labeled a crime against humanity or war crime has not been pursued legally.

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CONCLUSION

The lessons learned from this tragic and often overlooked part of history are many. Through my research I have learned that the Sudeten Germans’ ties to the region that would later known as Sudetenland is one that dates back to well before World War I. By many historical accounts, their history can be noted as early as B.C. For the people, this region represents an integral part of their identity. This was their homeland through wars and changes in leadership. The Sudeten Germans managed to survive the storm and continue living in a place through the centuries they have fought to defend.

The most troubling part of this research has involved the stories, press accounts and historical documents revealing the brutal and heinous nature in which the Sudeten Germans were treated following the war. My personal case studies revealed a part of family history otherwise unknown to myself or those interviewed until now. Many, at first, did not want to speak openly about what happened during that time. And for all those involved it was the first time they had spoke in depth about what they experienced and witnessed. It was time in history that they were told never to talk to about publicly because of the harm that could come to them. Many felt a sense of guilt for complaining or even sharing the most brutal and painful of stories for fear it would be interpreted as somehow being less than empathetic for the atrocities suffered by millions of Jews. I found a raw sensitivity and even embarrassment for what had happened to them at the hands of the occupying forces. The prevailing concern and
sentiment was “it needs to stay in the past.”¹

Another key element explored in this research was determining whether the expulsions constituted a crime against humanity and if they did, why they were never prosecuted as such. By all accounts based on the incidents that occurred these expulsions could and should have been prosecuted as a crime against humanity as punishable under international law by the Nuremberg Principles. But due to the delicate nature of the parties involved and the perception it would give, these crimes were never prosecuted as such.

Many lessons can be learned from this tragic time in history. Namely, it reveals how these past events still stir strong emotions for those involved. One such example is Czechoslovakia’s acceptance into the European Union. This action in 2002 reopened many wounds and encouraged dialogue but also revealed that this part of history is one that many international leaders do not wish to revisit. So while the crimes committed against the Sudeten Germans may never be recognized as such, there are many lessons that can be learned from it. Among them, that ethnic tensions and feelings of nationalism are very powerful and can be held onto for centuries. These feelings can also lead normal people to do very irrational things.

¹ Interview with author, written notes, Louisville, Kentucky. 2 September 2009.
Such was the case for the Czechoslovak people who for centuries lived alongside the Sudeten Germans and shared their territory. Following both World War I and II, tensions began to reach to a breaking point. There was resentment over the fact that Germans continued to live in Czechoslovakian territory which turned into distrust once many Sudeten Germans began to align themselves with pro-Nazi parties. These emotions gave way and displayed itself in the most heinous way with regards to how the Czechs retaliated against the Germans following World War II.

It does raise a number of questions as to the complexities of bringing these crimes to light at the time they occurred. As I have pointed out, much attention following World War II was focused both on the Nuremberg trials, the rebuilding of Germany and the developing Cold War. This atrocity was simply lost in the shuffle of world events. It also presents a diplomatic nightmare for any country who speaks up. If a leader of a country were to speak up then at the time the expulsions occurred, then they risked drawing attention away from the prosecution of those responsible for the war crimes against the Jews. It would appear that a particular leader who would raise those concerns was being sympathetic to the Nazis rather than focusing attention on the atrocities suffered by the Jews. In addition, if a leader were to bring up concerns today, I believe the same questions might be levied by the international community. This was clearly a matter that happened in the past. It is shameful that it was not prosecuted or at the very least addressed. But by reopening this matter, a leader would risk appearing less than sensitive to the plight of the Jews and potentially damage relationships with
Czechoslovakia and Russia.

Is it possible that by calling for war crime trials to take place now, decades later, might diminish the atrocities that took place against the Jews? Many historians still argue that the Sudeten Germans were a willing part of Nazi Germany. As discussed in previous chapters, large numbers of Sudeten Germans expressed a willingness to be a part of geographical Germany as well as supported the ideals of the Nazis. There was enormous support among Sudeten Germans for the Nazi leaning party led by Henlein in the mid to late 1930’s.

Should countries call for an apology, would they then seem unapologetic for possibly one of the worst crimes in history against the Jews? There is a key question of who could be held responsible? President Edvard Beneš established the decrees which led to the expulsions but how can it be argued that he ordered the extreme methods used to carry them out? By most reports, the majority of the violent actions happened at the hands of Czech and Russian officials and military forces occupying the country at the time. It would be difficult to determine which officials did what and who the ring leader was. By all accounts it was a collaborative yet out of control mob-like event that happened in 1945. In 1946, when the expulsions were more orderly, it could be argued that the Allied forces were to blame for the poor handling of the forced transfer.

While this particular part of history may never be reconciled, it may have taught the world a valuable lesson when in comes to mass expulsions. The atrocities, and ethnic cleansing that happened during the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbian
province of Kosovo in the 1990s and 2001 resulted in Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milošević being charged in International Criminal Tribunal with alleged crimes against humanity, violating the laws or customs of war, grave breaches of the Geneva Convention and alleged genocide. Since World War II and the Sudeten German expulsion, there have been several international organizations and tribunals created, which can be used to make countries accountable for their actions.

The international community learned a valuable lesson that may save millions from a similar fate in the future. Furthermore, we should ask ourselves how to properly deal with the memory of these atrocities and how to place them into context in order to promote reconciliation rather than further conflict. One of the most important lessons learned from this period was that the international community must speak out and take action against human rights violations.
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