

THE PROBLEM OF THE GERMAN MINORITY IN BOHEMIA
IN THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE YEARS
1918—19

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The article begins with an appraisal of the most significant declarations made by President Wilson in the course of the First World War. The author shows that the ideological content of his policy cannot be traced back to the sole principle of self-determination, as the Sudeten Germans believed at the time; it had broader scope, and its roots may be found in the spirit of American democracy. In Wilson's declarations the principle of self-determination applied above all to the small nations. In fact, he seemed even willing to limit its applicability where this furthered these countries' aspirations. For various reasons, the Sudeten Germans could never expect to gain special attention from Wilson, though it was precisely on this that they placed all their hopes, narrowing his political ideology down solely to the assertion of the right of self-determination.

The Entente powers and the USA were convinced of the need for a federalistic restructuring of the Danube monarchy. Nevertheless they long held to the idea of the inviolability of the Empire, changing their position ever more rapidly only from the spring of 1918 on.

The Sudeten Germans had entrusted their fate to the peace negotiations in the hope that their own demands would be fulfilled. They thus looked for something which the negotiations simply could not yield. The delegates of the Weimar Republic and of German Austria who were summoned to Paris had no choice but to recognize the power-political facts of the situation.