

# HITLER'S „*MACHTERGREIFUNG*“ AND THE SUDETEN GERMAN UNIFICATION MOVEMENT

*Ernst Nittner*

The Sudeten German unification can only be correctly assessed against the background of the antecedents of national tensions in the Danube monarchy reaching back into the 19th century, and — for the period after 1918 — of the First Czechoslovak Republic's national-state demarcation ideology. The *grossdeutsch* concept also goes back to 1848.

As a question of self-determination and coresponsibility for the state, the Sudeten German problem is older than National Socialism and Hitler's chancellorship. The leadership of K. Henlein's broad movement was until 1935/36 far removed ideologically from Hitler's National Socialism and loyal to the state. Hitler's orthodox

supporters among the Sudeten Germans were an insignificant minority. Only later did the display of power, the apparent achievements and successes, as well as the propaganda and agitation of the National Socialist state lead to an intellectual reorientation of the party leadership and to the spread of a unity psychosis among the minority.

In the final years before Munich, the appeasement policy of the Western powers, the Austrian „*Anschluss*“, and the lack of a constructive Czech contribution brought about, through political and psychological pressure, a surface unanimity that — even without ideological agreement — could be put in the service of Hitler's aggression.