

THE *DEUTSCHBÖHMEN* REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, 1918–1919

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On October 29, 1918, the greatest area of ethnic German settlement in Bohemia was constituted as *Deutschböhmen* province, and a provincial government was set up which existed for almost eleven months. It tried in vain to prevent *Deutschböhmen* from being included into the territory of the Czechoslovak state. What has hitherto rather been overlooked is the disputes within this regional government for *Deutschböhmen*, and whether its politics were in keeping with what the population of the province wanted. Taking recourse to the proceedings of the provincial government and the reports of the Prague ambassador of the German Reich, consul Baron Fritz von Gebssattel, it is possible to show that the provincial government, especially in the first months of its tenure, could not be sure where the population of *Deutschböhmen* would lean in case of a referendum. There had to be a “nationawakening” first. Although both Conservatives and Social Democrats, who were cooperating for the first time in the framework of the provincial government, fought for the right to self-determination for *Deutschböhmen*, they understood this differently, as is apparent from the propaganda publications examined. This was possible because the formula of a nation’s right to self-determination left a margin for interpretation which could accommodate both popular-nationalistic and democratic views.