

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES? THE TREATIES BETWEEN
BONN AND PRAGUE IN THE VIEW
OF THE SUDETEN GERMANS

K. Erik Franzen

This contribution, based on a master's dissertation submitted at Cologne university, assesses the reaction of politically organized Sudeten Germans to the Prague Treaty of 1973 and the Treaty on neighbourly relations of February 27, 1992, between the Federal Republic of Germany and Czechoslovakia. Appraisals and statements by the political leadership of the ethnic group, the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* and the *Sudetendeutscher Rat*, are placed in relation to those proffered by organizations of a more cultural and idealistic nature (*Ackermann-Gemeinde*, *Seliger-Gemeinde*, *Witkobund*). Taking into account detailed objections to the treaties, in relations to the important question of how the Sudeten Germans see themselves and their own role in history, the present analysis reaches the conclusion that especially the "ethnic leadership" has not yet managed to take a critical look at its own position. With a conception of history that is oriented exclusively into the past and not entirely unencumbered by nationalist sentiment, the historical role of the Sudeten Germans is seen almost exclusively as that of a group collectively victimized; the complexities of one's own active role, of possible personal guilt, tending to be overlooked. In the difficult process of reaching mutual understanding between Germans, Sudeten Germans, and Czechs, only the *Ackermann-Gemeinde* and the *Seliger-Gemeinde* seem able to look forward, by placing reconciliation in the forefront of their activities.