

## THE EGERLAND IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK CONTEXT

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Among the regions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Republic with a significant German population, Eger (Cheb) was the one where for decades hope for unification with nearby Germany was always present. For this potentially irredentist attitude neither the closeness of the frontier nor the insensitive approach of the Czechoslovak administration, the worldwide economic crisis or the rise of Hitler do offer sufficient explanations. Historic events, handed down for ages and conceived as a continuous chain of actions, might, however, have created and passed on to subsequent generations a collective identity which took effect in the guise of political action. That the *Egerland*, with the Imperial City of Eger at its centre, was mortgaged in the Middle Ages, with independence from the Bohemian Crown being laid down in the charter, represents an identity-shaping factor which serves, to this very day, as collective perception of history for a community professing traditional affiliation to the *Egerland*. When a collective, "Sudeten German" identity developed, this "mortgage theory", in explicit juxtaposition to the conflicting Czech "constitutional law" concept, was supplemented by further strands of tradition.