

## THE CZECH-GERMAN QUESTION WITH HINDSIGHT

*Josef Polišenský*

Examining his own biography and those of several members of his family, Josef Polišenský makes it plain that national utraquism and bilingualism were no exception in the Bohemian lands and in Moravia even as late as the interwar period. And when individuals did profess affiliation to one of the two national groups, this was often accidental, resulting from biographic coincidence, and not always was it bound to last a lifetime. The dictatorships under which the Czech society lived from 1938/39 onwards installed national socialism as an instrument of power, the result being a forced separation of Czechs and Germans. In private and in small groups,

among historians for instance, national tolerance survived and contacts between the two peoples could be maintained. In very personal reminiscences of these contacts, Polišenský advocates a return to the traditional Czech-German fellowship – devoid of political calculation – which was frequently found in the Bohemian lands before the “national age”.