

GERMAN VICTIMS OF WAR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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This contribution deals with German victims of war in the First Czechoslovak republic. It examines the influence injuries and losses inflicted by the war exerted on national interpretational patterns adopted by the German minority, in particular those connected to the lost war. The analysis draws attention to injuries, social and national losses all contributing to bring about a depressive overall mood determining, among other things, the attitude of the German war victims' organisation, "Association of victims of wartime injuries, widows and orphans in the Czechoslovak republic": In the first few years, the "Association" did clamour for welfare payments from state coffers, albeit not without demonstrating widely divergent attitudes towards the new order. The national administration reacted by making tempting offers and stressing, at the same time, its intention to be the governing force. Beginning with the mid-1930s, with the Sudeten German Party becoming stronger and stronger, the respective positions of the "Association" and "Prague" grew somewhat closer. From that point onwards, pacifism and safeguarding democratic government became common goals of the German war victims, who suddenly found their interests threatened, and Czechoslovak politicians. Not before 1938 did the "Association" yield to the pressure and adopt the Sudeten German position, a position of which the Sudeten German party claimed to be the sole representative. It was possible, in this process of bringing everyone into line, to make good use of customary patterns of reasoning, some of them of considerable vintage, by adapting them to a view placing national descent above everything else.