

“SUDETEN/SUDETY”, A KIND OF GERMAN-CZECH
PALIMPSEST

Mirek Němec

This contribution deals with the notion behind the word “Sudety” (in German: Sudeten), and its derivations and connotations in Czech. The narrative starts in the middle of the 19th century, when the catchword started its career, and leads up to the present time. The author relates what changes its meaning has undergone in the course of time, reflecting parallel changes in the “conflict community” of Czech and German nationals and their respective discourse about national territory. For a long time, mutually excluding German and Czech notions of “Sudeten/Sudety” represented a dichotomy. Only under the democratic conditions established after 1989 has a degree of reconciliation been possible, with connotations referring to the antagonism between the nations being refuted. In the Czech environment, however, the word “Sudety” has reacquired a naïve or idealistic content in the process.