

THE POST-WAR EXPULSION OF GERMANS ACCORDING TO CZECH THEOLOGIANS OF THAT TIME

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This contribution deals with moral theological observations by Bedřich Vašek (1882-1959), Alexander Heidler (1916-1980), and Josef Zvěřina (1913-1990) on the post-World-War-II expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia. While Vašek worked as a scholar, Heidler as a publicist and Zvěřina as a preacher, all three were Roman Catholic priests and theologians. Their analysis of early post-war expulsions was influenced by their own experience during the war. Whereas they did defend the principles of collective guilt and collective punishment, their arguments differed in several aspects. Moreover, all three of them differentiated between collective guilt as a principle and its practical application. They demanded that the basic human rights of those undergoing punishment be respected, and warned against possible consequences for the Czech nation in case the rights of “children of God” were violated. With time passing, the opinion of the three theologians gradually changed – they began to entertain doubts regarding the principle of collective guilt. Many years later, Zvěřina called the consequences of the injustice committed during the expulsion of the Germans “a pathology of hatred”. He did not, however, contest the expulsion in itself.