

DEBTS WITHOUT DEBTORS: THE PHANTOM PRESENCE
OF GERMAN-SPEAKING INHABITANTS OF CZECHO-
SLOVAKIA AFTER 1945

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In her article, the author deals with the phantom presence of German-speaking inhabitants of Czechoslovakia after 1945. She bases her analysis on the documents of České zemské ústředí obcí, měst a okresů (Czech Central Union of Municipalities, cities and counties in Bohemia and Moravia – ZÚO), stored in the Czech National Archive in Prague. The author chooses two instances of correspondence between ZÚO and local institutions – the case of a hospital in Jičín and of a local administrative committee in Jablonec. Based on these two examples, the author looks into issues that came up in the wake of the resettlement of the German-speaking inhabitants of Czechoslovakia. It appears that these former inhabitants did not simply vanish from the public space. Using methods developed by the researchers into public bureaucracies, the author looks into the ways in which the presence of expelled Czech Germans remained visible in the public space and into how the Czechs dealt with that visibility. Furthermore, she gives an account of how the game of

presence and non-presence of the displaced Germans is revealed in the sources. The central focus of her analysis is on interpretation of the material nature of the sources used. The author uses the term “phantom” to describe this multilayered (non-)presence of Czech Germans at the time.