

SUMMARIES

CHANGE AND TRADITION IN THE GERMAN AND CZECH VIEW OF HISTORY

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The historical consciousness of the Sudeten Germans today is decisively shaped by their personal attitude toward the political situation. Next to this, of special importance is the awareness of the history of the group, which, by and large, arose only in the 20th century. The further development of the Sudeten German group consciousness or its retrogression depends to a large extent on the degree of assimilation of the expellees with their new environment. The levelling trends of modern mass society and defeat in two World Wars at first caused the historical consciousness of the Germans to recede into the background. On the other hand, it is precisely the modern pluralistic society which has offered space for the development of individual components of awareness. The Sudeten Germans, united by a common destiny and characterized by a markedly idealistic political thought, have been able to make a valuable contribution to the German and European view of history. The historical experience of the Sudeten Germans, which is of European-wide significance, is above all an expression of both individuality and social interaction; it reflects their having lived together with other peoples and their encounter with them.

In the 19th and first half of the 20th century, the Czech view of history was focussed primarily on the idea of the national state and of a state-constituting nation. Under the concept of Bohemian *Staatsrecht*, the Germans of the Sudeten lands were also to be integrated. This historically-rooted Czech nationalism had the fortune of achieving its realization in 1918 and 1945. In the period in which Czechs and Germans lived side by side, the national language problem appeared to obscure all others. Only the new Czech generation, which no longer has had any direct experience of the period when Germans and Czechs were living side by side, has appeared capable of viewing its own national life within a larger European framework. The older Czech outlook on history has thereby undergone a realistic broadening of horizons, discarding the ideological ballast of old.

Just as the Sudeten Germans cast aside the narrow regional and national confines of their historical outlook after the expulsion, a similar phenomenon can be observed in the most recent development of the Czech view of history. In the case of both ethnic groups, an objective approach and

common traditions have moved into the foreground. This broader historical consciousness, which has, above all, been developed by the new generation of historians, is creating new foundations for Czechs and Germans to live and act together.