

# GERMAN PROPERTY AND THE REBUILDING OF EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER 1945

## The Czechoslovak Case

*Kornelia Kończal*

The dispossession of up to twelve million Germans in the eastern parts of Europe around 1945 represents one of the largest transfers of wealth in modern European history. In Czechoslovakia and Poland, the takeover of German property eased – or perhaps even enabled – a profound reorganisation of the socioeconomic system: It facilitated land reform, the nationalisation of industry, and the restriction of the private sector, thereby exerting a significant influence on the process of postwar reconstruction. A more detailed examination of the policies and practices of the confiscation in Czechoslovakia shows how complex the transfer of German property was, however: The limited success of the confiscation was owed in part to so-called cobra effects, meaning that measures taken to resolve certain problems ended up exacerbating them in reality. At the same time, the huge bureaucratic effort applied by the Czechoslovak authorities to registering and managing German property is very beneficial for research into the history of German-Czech entanglement: In no other Eastern European country is the postwar history of German property as well-documented as in Czechia.