

FIVE LIES ABOUT THE CZECHS

Why Sudetenland Means Bohemia to Hitler

THEODORE DRAPER

There is an impassable racial barrier between the Czechs and the Germans.

PARADOXICALLY, Konrad Henlein, fuhrer of the Sudetendeutsche Partei, Czech outpost of the German Nazi movement, is himself the best living refutation of this favorite Nazi myth.

In Czechoslovakia, I inquired about Henlein's background, and this is what I found. The following facts are taken from Henlein's certificate of matriculation.

Konrad Ernst Henlein was born in Maffersdorf (its Czech name is Vratislavice), a small town near the textile center, Reichenberg (or Liberec) on May 6, 1898.

His father, Konrad Eduard Henlein was born on Dec. 4, 1870 in Reichenau, another Sudeten town, now a Nazi stronghold. Konrad Eduard was the son of Konrad Henlein and Magdalena Bayer. Magdalena, the present Konrad's grandmother, was born in the town of Peslo, Hungary.

His mother, Hedwig Dvořáček, born Aug. 23, 1873 in Maffersdorf, was the daughter of Eduard Dvořáček and Auguste Nohring. Eduard Dvořáček, Henlein's grandfather, was born Aug. 22, 1850 in the town of Horicka, in what is now Czechoslovakia.

Thus, on his mother's side, Henlein is definitely Czech. He probably has Magyar or Hungarian branches in his father's family tree.

He does not differ in this respect from the vast majority of Germans in the Sudetenland. As a matter of fact, at least one-third of the candidates of the SDP in the recent municipal elections bore unmistakable Czech names, testimony of the close relationship between the two nationalities over centuries of living together.

For good reason, Nazi emphasis on race is entirely mystical. In its propaganda-literature, there is no intelligible exposition of the meaning of the term, or why the German "race" is superior to all others. It is enough for the masters of Berlin and Vienna to enforce these claims with the Gestapo and the concentration camp. Scientifically, of course, the very concept "race" is open to question unless it is used within severely circumscribed limits. As for a "pure" race, Boas and others have demonstrated that there is no such thing.

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The Sudetenland is one of Germany's "bleeding frontiers."

NAZI propaganda indiscriminately identifies the German-speaking zones in Czechoslovakia with the Saar and the Polish Corridor as though all formerly belonged to Germany. This is sheer falsification, a whole policy based upon a lie.

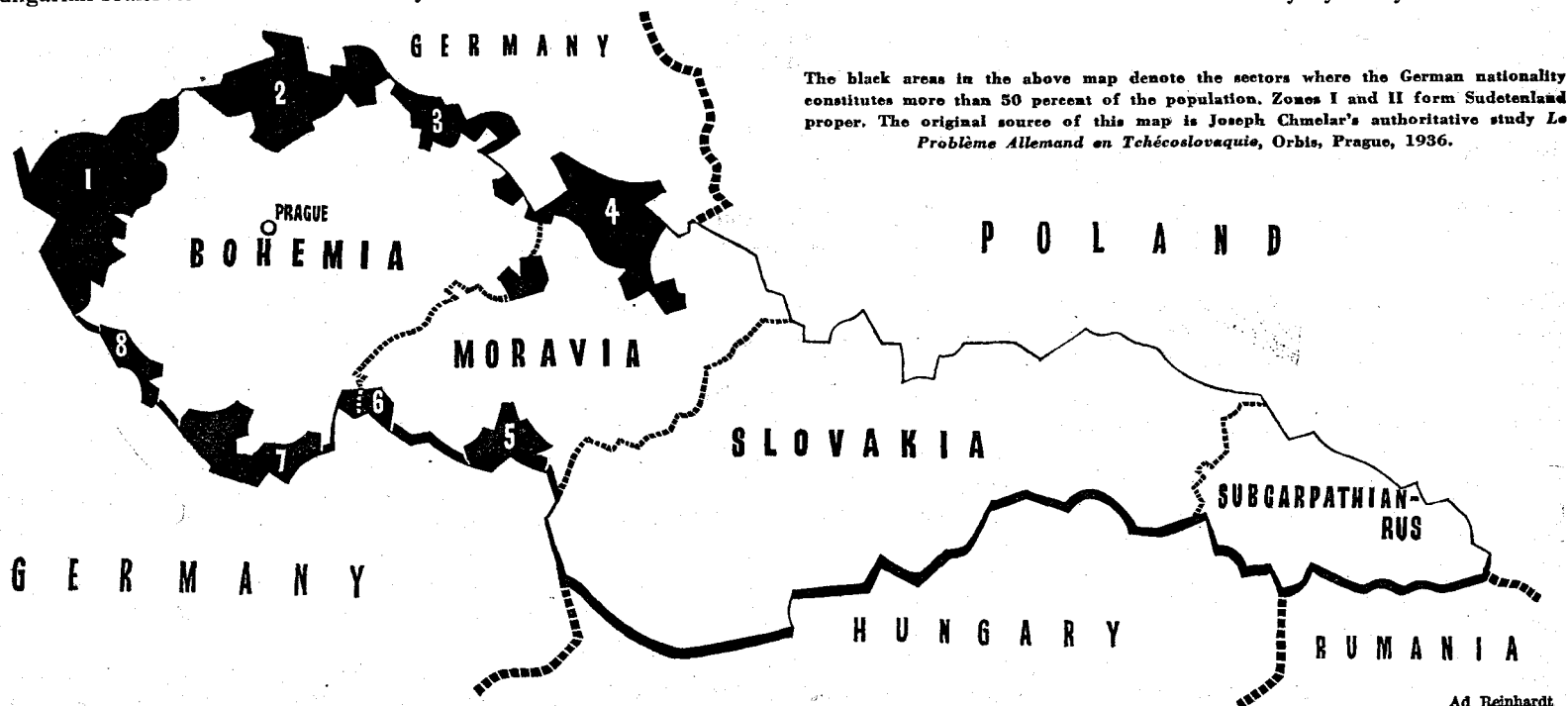
There is still some historical dispute about

the origins of the first Germans in Bohemia (the basic historical unit of what is now Czechoslovakia). One school of historians maintains that the Czechs conquered Germanic tribes when they settled east of the Sudeten mountains in the sixth century. Nobody has ever settled this question because the earliest tribes left few historical traces.

In any event, there were only small colonies of Germans in the Bohemian towns until the twelfth century. The Czech ruler of that period encouraged the Germans to come in, gave them free land and liberal political privileges on the theory that they would raise the native standard of living. The present German zones in Czechoslovakia were roughly determined in the next two hundred years. The immigrants settled down and gained important positions in Bohemia, especially in the church and municipalities. The Czechs tended to resent this German infiltration and succeeded in reversing the trend during the fifteenth century's religious and national conflict inspired by the Czech reformer, John Huss. The Lutheran Reformation, in the next century, brought a new wave of German immigration into Bohemia, throughout these ten centuries an independent kingdom under Czech rule.

Hussite and Lutheran, in effect Czech and German, lived amicably together until the so-called Counter-reformation and the victory by the Hapsburg monarchy over the kingdom of Bohemia at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. The Czechs were a beaten people for the next two centuries; only in 1848, did their national revival begin, but from then until 1918, it was one of the main reasons for the internal crumbling of the Austria-Hungary empire.

There is nothing in the entire development of Czechoslovakia which justifies the "bleeding frontier" propaganda. The present Czechoslovak state has its historical roots in the old kingdom of Bohemia. As a truly national unit, it antedates Germany by many centuries. Its



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national self-consciousness is proved by its astonishing revival after two hundred years of decline and degradation.

The Germans in Czechoslovakia came in as colonists, not as conquerors. For hundreds of years, the two nationalities had to live together; this is the historical explanation for Henlein's Czech mother and German father. As for Prussia, the Germans of Czechoslovakia are quite alien to that culture and history. Their ties are with the Austrians through the old empire. The German and Czech regions always constituted a single political unity. Under the empire the Sudetenland was always an integral part of Bohemia, and this at a time when the Germans, not the Czechs, were the dominating nationality.

Czechoslovakia is not one of Germany's "bleeding frontiers" because it never was part of Germany. It is exactly as though Hitler should demand *Anschluss* with the state of Wisconsin because the United States permitted so many German immigrants to settle there in the eighties and nineties of the last century.

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"Autonomy" for the German-speaking regions is a political possibility.

THE last census, 1930, revealed that there were 3,231,688 Germans in Czechoslovakia. That constitutes 22.5 percent of the total population, except for the Ukrainians in Poland, the largest national minority in Europe.

Assuming its desirability, it would nevertheless be a political impossibility to place the entire German minority into any workable political unit. They never constituted such a unit from the twelfth century to the present for a very simple reason.

In the last seven hundred years, sometimes the Czechs were dominant and pushed the Germans back to the mountains and sometimes the Germans were dominant and spread out toward the interior. This push and pull of both peoples, not necessarily conscious or antagonistic, took place with unequal force at different periods and places. As a result, the German minority is not concentrated in any one place today. *Indeed, it forms eight different areas, each separated from the next by Czech areas.*

Some of the German zones are highly homogeneous; others are mixed with Czechs in varying percentages; no less than 736,025 Germans live in districts with a Czech majority. The largest German area (Area I on the accompanying map) has 841,000 Germans; there is a German island in Subcarpathian Russia with only 13,249 persons (not indicated because of its unimportance). As indicated on the map, each one of these German zones is separated from the next by a Czech zone. In addition, within the German zones themselves, there is a considerable Czech minority. In German Bohemia there are 396,000 Czechs; in German Moravia-Silesia, 116,000 Czechs.

It is not only impossible to unite the Ger-

man regions in any compact unit, but any conceivable solution would only create the same problem for the Czech minority. Unquestionably, the Czechs would have more to complain about.

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"Autonomy" for the German zones is economically desirable.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, despite its many problems, has prospered because of its peculiar economic balance. The Western half is mainly industrial, the Eastern half, agricultural. Czechoslovakia, as is well known, inherited about 75 percent of the industrial capacity of the old Austria-Hungary empire and is one of the most highly developed industrial regions in all Europe. The names of Skoda, for munitions and Bata, for shoes, are known everywhere.

The natural economic market for Czechoslovakia's manufactures is not Germany, which is itself glutted with man-made goods and is desperately trying to find new markets. The Germans need raw materials and markets and that happens to be the need of the Sudetenland also. The agricultural regions of Czechoslovakia are almost entirely Slovak and Czech in nationality.

If the Sudeten regions were united with the Hitler Reich, they would suffer immediate economic decline. They would be cut off from their raw materials and markets, that is, the rest of Czechoslovakia. They would have to compete with German manufactures in the same markets under unequal conditions. A healthy economic unit would be destroyed and another sick colony of the German manufacturing machine created.

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"Autonomy" for the Sudetenland would contribute to European appeasement.

FROM the foregoing, there emerge but two alternatives for the Sudetenland. Either it remains, as at present, part of Bohemia and part of Czechoslovakia, or it is annexed by Germany, *still part of Bohemia*. In any case, Bohemia must remain a single political and economic unit; anything else is myth or lie.

Fortunately, the most responsible leaders of Czechoslovakia understand this fully. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kamil Krofta, in an address at Karlsbad in December 1936, said: "After what I have just said, it is perhaps superfluous expressly to point out that there is one solution that can *a priori* be declared as absolutely impossible. . . . This is the separation of that portion of the territory of Czechoslovakia in which the German population is in excess of the Czech population from the state and its incorporation in one or the other of the two German neighbor states, neither of whom has put forward any demand for such enlargement of its territory." This came before *Anschluss*, but I have reason to believe that this belief is still shared by President Benes and his principal collaborators.

Moreover, the rulers of Germany under-

stand the indivisibility of Bohemia quite as fully. They have no intention of annexing the German-speaking regions alone. The principal Nazi grievance is not the status of the German nationality but the existence of Czechoslovakia as the last barrier to the conversion of Central and Southeastern Europe into a German colony. The removal of that barrier brings the Hitler Reich to the Dardanelles.

Mother Europe never eats up her own children without suffering with them. The Czech nation, which endured the despotism of the Austria-Hungary empire for three hundred years and still outlived the despots, will fight any effort to turn the clock back and will continue that fight no matter what the outcome. For a hundred years, Austria-Hungary condemned Europe to convulsion after convulsion because its subject peoples would not forget their culture, their soil, their past, and their language. A Czechoslovak nation which could outlive Austria-Hungary will outlive Hitlerism, but the cost would be frightful.

Nor does Czechoslovakia have the only "Sudeten" problem in Europe. Let Hitler settle accounts with the Czechs, and he will remember, as he has vowed to remember, the "Sudetenland" of France—Alsace-Lorraine. He will remember the Sudetenland of Poland—the Corridor. And of Denmark—North Schleswig. Lithuania—Memel. Italy—Tyrol. Some come early and some come late in the Nazi scheme of world domination but each prepares the way to the next. And the Czechs come first.

This is no appeasement. This is more blackmail, terror, and eventual war. Czechoslovakia, in its way, is as much an outpost of European peace and democracy as Spain.

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HISTORY REPEATS

JUST how an undemocratic legislative proposal can boomerang against its sponsor should have been seen by State Senator Joseph D. Nunan, a delegate to the New York State Constitutional Convention. Nunan, who was twice defeated on his student loyalty-oath bill, proposed a measure to bar from public office and from voting any person who believes in or advocates the overthrow of the government by force.

Immediately another delegate, Mason F. Sexton, introduced the same measure, except that his proposal included anyone "who has pledged allegiance, either directly or indirectly, to a foreign power or government, or is a member of an association, organization, or group opposed to our form of government." Had Nunan's proposal, with Sexton's amendment, gone through, it could, technically, have been used against Nunan, who is a Catholic.

Had either Nunan or Sexton, in preparation for the Constitutional Convention, read the proceedings of a similar meeting, the Provincial Convention held in 1777, which