

# **The strange Czech-German complex. Why a thousand-year coexistence ended by a dramatic divorce.**

5HD280 From Kafka to Havel  
Lecture 4



EVROPSKÁ UNIE  
Evropské strukturální a investiční fondy  
Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání

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# **Short summary of the past**

- Germans were always present in Czech lands since 9th century, at least among the nobility
- In 12th and 13th century big wave of German colonization of the Czech borderlands
- Germans had higher social status
  - Especially in royal cities

# Reforms of the Joseph II.

- Centralization of the state
- Germany as a state language
- But
  - Relieving of feudal ties
  - Abolition of serfdom
  - Religious freedom
  - Searching for the new ties → nation



# National revival

- Not only Czech but German were concerned
- Different conditions in Germany and Austria
- Napoleonic wars
  - Bigger impact in Germany
  - Freedom and equality
  - Idea of united Germany
  - Change in power between Prussia and Austria

# National revival



- Czech national revival as a mirror of the German one
- Herder
  - Focus on language
  - Inspiration as for Germans as for Czechs
- Germans
  - Idea of unification of all Germans
- Czechs
  - Emancipation from a second-rate position



# Letter to Frankfurt

- Key moment in Czech-German relations
- František Palacký
  - 11.4.1848 against the opinion that Czech lands are part of the Great Germany
- Reaction of the Czech and Moravian Germans
  - Fear of the Czech domination

# Letter to Frankfurt

- Contradiction
  - Acknowledgement of Czech claims → the end of German unification in a sense of Great Germany
  - Enforcement of German ideas → Germanization of Czech territory



# 1848–1914

- Gradual Czech dominance in the Czech land
- Conflicts became more and more intense
- Czech orientation towards Austria
- Czech statehood within Austria
- Up to 1915



# **Dualization in 1867**

- Czech disappointment
- Efforts of subdualism with Cisleithania
- Breadcrump policy
- Effort to penetrate into high position in state administration in Vienna and Prague
- Josef Kaizl

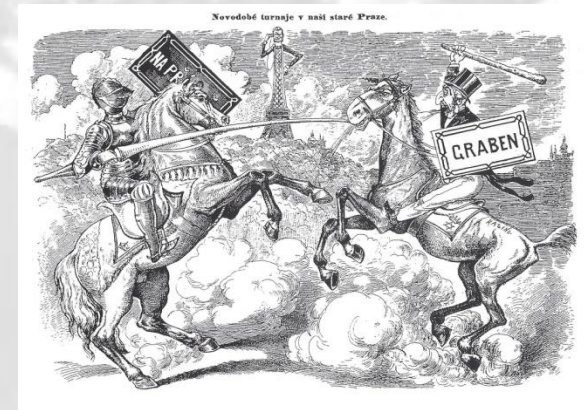
# Relations between Czech and Germans

- Better and calmer times
- 1905–1908
- Democratic expectations
- Universal suffrage (but only for men)



# Relations between Czech and Germans

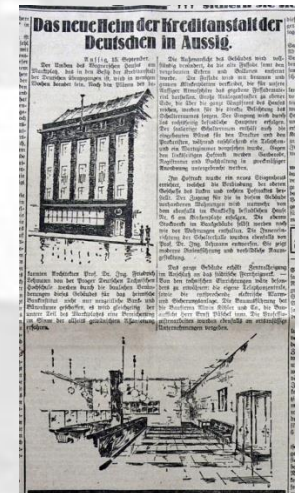
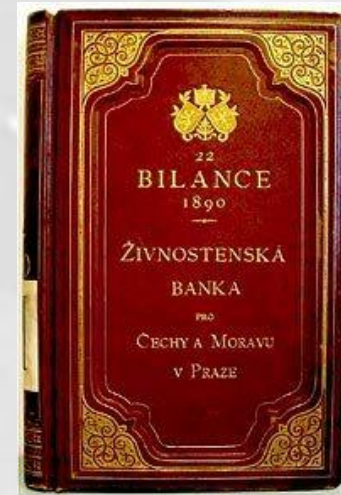
- Conflict Times
- 1890s
  - Punctuations
    - Attempt to divide Czech lands according ethnic principle
    - Refused by Young Czechs
- Language measures of premier Badeni (1897)
- 1908–1914



# Relations between Czech and Germans

## Economic nationalism

- Since late 1880s
- Connected with economic development and strengthening of Czech business
- Battlefield: banks
  - Živnostenská banka
  - Kreditanstalt der Deutschen





# Relations between Czech and Germans

## Several proposals:

- 1848 Ludwig Löchner: establishing of autonomous german regions within Czech lands
- 1888 Julius Grégr: lowering of number of Germans in Czech lands by cession of border parts to Germany
- 1890s and 1900s
  - transfer of the Czechs (for example to Bosnia)
  - Transfer of the Germans



# Relations between Czech and Germans

- Establishing of national defense associations
- Middle class formations
- About 20 on each side
  - Národní jednota severočeská (National unity of the North Bohemia) 1885
  - Bund der Deutschen in Böhmen (Union of Germans in Bohemia) 1884



# World War I

- Radicalization of Germans and Czechs
- Attempts to Germanize Cisleithania
- Military and police regime during the war aimed mostly on Slavic nations (mainly on Czechs)
- Czech reaction → claim of independent state (since 1915)

# World War I

- Masaryk, Beneš and Štefánik in exile
- Support of expat associations
- Support of independence among domestic politicians since 1917
- 18.10.1918 Wilson's support for the independence of Austria-Hungary nations
- 21.10.1918 Austrian German left Austria-Hungary
- 28.10. Czecho-slovak independence

# Czechoslovakia

- Multinational state

	Czech lands		Czechoslovakia	
	1921	1930	1921	1930
Czechoslovak.	67,71	69,02	64,79	66,24
<b>Germans</b>	<b>30,6</b>	<b>29,58</b>	<b>23,63</b>	<b>22,53</b>
Hungarians	0,07	0,11	5,8	4,89
Jews	0,36	0,35	1,4	1,39
Polish	1,03	0,87	0,81	0,68
Russians	0,33	0,21	3,51	3,85

# Czechoslovakia



**1918**

- Establishing 4 German provinces with centres in Opava, Liberec, Znojmo and Prachatice
  - Goal: to become part of newly established Austria
- Military action against them



# Czechoslovakia



## 1919–1920

- National and social protests resulting in a dozens of deads
- German representation refused to participate in establishing new state
- Monetary and land reforms
  - caused losses to Germans and Hungarians

# Czechoslovakia

- Protection of minorities
- Constitution guaranteed basic rights
- International law
  - Protection was a part of Versailles treaties
  - Possibility to address petitions to the League of Nations
    - Germans use it very frequently

# Reform of administration

- Attempt to create autonomous counties during the 1920s
  - Support from T. G. Masaryk
  - Resistance of the Czech nationalists
  - Valid in Slovakia only

# Language laws

- State language: Czech and Slovak
- 1927 restrictions
- Germans never reached the German language to have equal position as Czech and Slovak
- Reason:
  - Resistance of the Czech nationalists

# **Germans in the Government**

- 1926: Coalition of the right and centre-right parties
- German participation on government lasted up to 1938 but
  - Since the outbreak of the Great Depression the political map changed



# Great depression

- Impact mostly on border regions with German settlement
- Rise of nationalism
- 1933 Henlein – Sudetendeutsche Heimatsfront
- In 1935 renamed to Sudetendeutsche partei
  - Close to Hitler's National socialists
  - In 1935 election the strongest party in Czechoslovakia

# ***A Way to Munich 1938***

- Hitler's goal to expand to central Europe
- Henlein's party closely cooperated with Hitler →
- Escalation of national conflict in Czechoslovakia since mid 1930s
- Czechoslovak political representation was not prepared for that

# ***A way to Munich 1938***

- Up to the summer 1938 efforts to solve the problem within the existing state borders
- Henlein's party escalated the requirements
- Since the August 1938
  - Solution in a form of territory cession became dominant

# Conference in Munich

- 29. 9.1938 four European powers decided that the Czechoslovak territory inhabited mostly by Germans had to be ceded (given in) to Germany
- The big Czech trauma that influenced all subsequent steps of Czechoslovak political representation







# Protectorate

- Since March 15th 1939 the rest of Czech territory was occupied by Germans
- Independent Slovak state was established
- Effort to germanize economy and society
- Persecution of the Jews and Czech cultural and intellectual elite

# Protectorate



# Protectorate

## Resistance:

- The conditions worsened with arrival of R. Heydrich in September 1941
- May 1942 assassination of Heydrich by soldiers sent by Czechoslovak exile Government from London
- Nazi's revenge: Lidice and Ležáky and strengthening of prosecution towards the Czechs



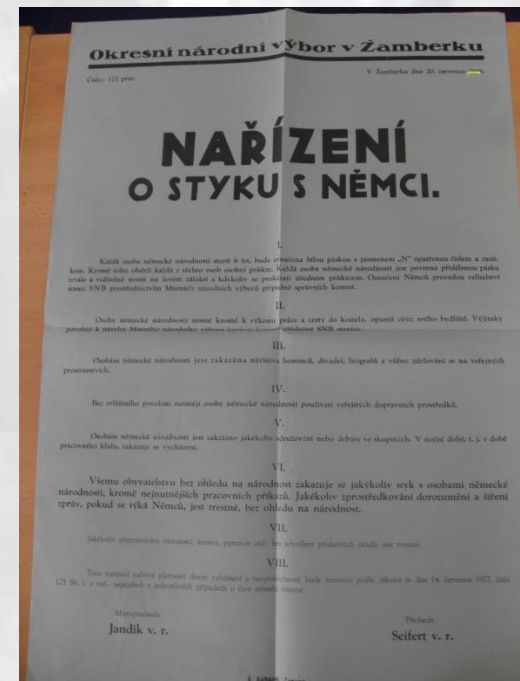
# Germans and Czechs in exile

- Beneš slowly decided to exclude Czech anti-nazist Germans from the decision of future form of Czechoslovakia
- The idea of the transfer gradually became dominant
  - But more at home than in exile



# Liberation and the Transfer

- Permission from great powers during the war
- Real agreement: Potsdam conference in August 1945
- Two phases
  - Wild and violent expulsion
    - Since May 1945 to August 1945
  - Organized transfer
    - Since August 1945 to October 1946





# Liberation and the Transfer



# Beneš' Decrees

- Total number of 143 was released in 1940–1945
- Those concerning transferred Germans
  - Dec. No. 33/1945 Coll. From Aug 2nd on state citizenship
  - Dec. No. 5/1945 Coll. From May 19th on nullity of some property transfers during the war
  - Dec. No. 12/1945 Coll. On confiscation and distribution of land
  - Dec. Nos. 100–103/1945 Coll. from Oct. 24th Nationalization decrees
  - Dec. No. 108/1945 on confiscation of other property

# Communist Era



- Two Germanys
- German Democratic republic
  - Peaceful and friendly Germany
- Federal Republic of Germany
  - Revisionists and imperialists



# Communist Era



- Politics of détente
- West Germany's Ostpolitik →
- 1973 Agreement between Czechoslovakia and West Germany
  - Growing but still small cooperation in economy and culture

# From 1990 up today

- Big resentment towards Germans as a result of previous development
- Big disputes over new agreement with Germany in mid 1990s
- Czech–German declaration
- Creating of the Fund of reconciliation
  - Supporting of common projects
  - Exchanges educational stays of young people





# From 1990 up today

- Germany as an opportunity to make profits
  - In early 1990 mostly in Borderlands
- New economic cooperation
- Influx of German capital
  - Example Volkswagen bought Skoda

# From 1990 up today



# From 1990 up today

- After joining EU Czech-German relations improved further
- But some resentments still exists within Czech population
  - Topic of the expulsion of Germans after World war II still resonates in public but views is more differentiated and alternative voices have stronger position



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