

Carpatho-Ukraine gave national activists from outside the region a chance to stoke ethnic resentments against Jews, who were seen by many as Czechoslovak loyalists. Months later, Hungary won control of the region and began to remake local society again, imposing ethnic Hungarian hegemony and violently marginalizing Jews, Roma, and other Carpatho-Ruthenians. When German and Hungarian authorities, acting jointly, began to deport the region's Jews to Auschwitz, the vast majority of their neighbors did nothing. Some even applauded. Three successive attempts to remake the region's society divided its peoples along ethnic lines and destroyed a shared culture. Genocide in the Carpathians was the result of a much longer process of ethno-nationalist state-building. Segal argues that this history demonstrates the need to interpret the Holocaust in Hungary in a wider conceptual and chronological context.

Both books raise important questions. Diana Dumitru's claims about the long-term impact of Soviet policy and propaganda on ethnic relations are provocative, but they also beg for a systematic comparison of local responses to the mass murder of Jews in other parts of the occupied Soviet Union. (Dumitru addresses this in a short section in chapter 5.) Similarly, Raz Segal is certainly correct to say that the history of the Holocaust in Hungary is only properly understood within a longer and more comprehensive history of Hungarian ethnonationalist policy. Even so, local responses to the deportations in provinces elsewhere in wartime Hungary were not significantly different from those that Segal sees in the region that he studies, leaving the reader wanting to hear more about how this case should reshape our understanding of the Holocaust in Hungary more generally.

These observations take nothing away from the important contributions that these two books make to our understanding of the Holocaust in eastern Europe. In particular, Dumitru and Segal show that state-builders in the region shaped attitudes towards minorities like Jews with laws and regulations, creating and stoking resentments or promoting solidarity in lasting and consequential ways. Their books show that a timeless notion of antisemitism is useless as a tool of analysis. Both also demonstrate the overwhelming importance of interwar ethnic politics for understanding the messy social reality of how and why the Holocaust unfolded as it did in specific locations across eastern Europe. Making sense of the variations requires careful attention to the history of local social relations. Future scholars would do well to take these two books as models of how to proceed.

PAUL HANEBRINK

*Rutgers University, New Brunswick*

***Czechs and Germans 1848–2004: The Sudeten Question and the Transformation of Central Europe.*** By Václav Houžvicka. Trans. Anna Clare Bryson-Gustová.

Prague: Karolinum Press, 2015. 648 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$25.00, paper.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.206

Václav Houžvicka sheds light on topics associated with central European transitional historical periods and developments too often shrouded in convoluted controversy. His focus on “Mitteleuropa” as a geographical region encompassing contradictory political agendas and territories offers readers a coherent perspective about the Sudeten people cast as perpetual others in a landscape dominated by empires, nations, and singular or enfranchised factions. The book makes an immense contribution to the

fields of continental History, Slavic Studies, and Political Science, whose readership should certainly consult it.

Notably the book stands as the most recent and thorough source of information on the Czech-German people, known as “the Sudeten” (Timothy Burcher 1996, Radomir Luža 1964). Houžvicka produced this work through fifteen years of research, involving multiple research endeavors, communications with colleagues, and direct observation (10). The author maintains the historical scope and tone of past work focusing on the Sudeten and includes unique insights into the Sudeten experience during the Cold War. Other contributions made include analytical delineation distinguishing the Pan-German political orientation, as represented by the modern German nation-state, from the multi-ethnic orientation represented by the Habsburg dynasty. Houžvicka makes a contribution with the conceptual framework, bearing theoretical significance and explanatory potential in conjunction with his disciplinary contribution to history.

The book contributes to the discourse on the Sudeten ethnic experience, including reflections on the transition from dictatorships to democratic processes and the moral weight of the quadruple cataclysms of Nazism, World Wars, communism, and the Holocaust. The author challenges any smug attempt to gloss over real historical facts, asking, “. . . are efforts to ‘get over’ history really having the expected positive and purgative effect for current cooperation between Germans and Czechs and Poles?” (11) The author reminds us in this way that forgetting the past will endanger the public to reemerging conflict and disaster.

Endemic to the perspective presented in the work lays the idea that emancipation from political domination by elites necessitates ethnic consciousness among the Sudeten and an ironic flirtation with Germanization among them (22). This described irony likewise emerges from Houžvicka’s account of Austrian authoritarianism, increasingly association with centralization, contained in the nonetheless multi-ethnic history of decentralized Habsburg Austria (24). Rooted in an authentic and detailed understanding of historical developments, Houžvicka explains: “The growing ethnic tension between Czechs and Germans involved revolt against the liberal Austrian state and turned against the Jews, the most conspicuous and vulnerable of the groups that had been benefiting from liberal Constitutionalism” (19). The author further explicates the seemingly perplexing intricacies about Sudeten exceptionalism: “In this context we can see the position of the Sudeten German as one in which their own frame of history became the place where the Austrian and Pan-German frames of history overlapped and interlocked, and where action and attitudes in each of these frames was automatically influenced and affected by action and attitudes in the others” (84).

Despite evident strengths, *Czech and Germans 1848–2004* remains verbose and so detail-laden that only the most seriously sworn scholars and students of history will choose to read it without any reservation. For this reason, the book’s notes, appendices, maps, graphs, and illustrations help any reader navigate its overwhelming quantity of information. Despite the way it might seem off-putting to the majority of readers, however, it ultimately contributes to an understanding of Sudeten identity, the history of central Europe, and world history in a profound way.

Because the author aligns Czech revivalist thought with Enlightenment thought originating from the French Revolution, the book is a dialectically sound, optimistic, and theoretically engaged text. Despite this philosophical rigor, *Czech and Germans 1848–2004* does not capitulate into redundancy or rhetoric. Rather, this work delivers substantive historical material about the Sudeten in their ethnic, geographic, and political contexts. The responsibility the work has in the advancement of ethnic exceptionalism as an explanatory framework remains a question for scholars and

students of all said disciplines, as well as for those in any related area of cultural studies or anthropology.

JEANINE PFAHLERT  
*Oakland Community College*

***Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society.*** By Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xi, 251 pp. Notes. Appendixes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$34.95, hard bound.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.207

Not everyone who experienced state socialism in the Eastern Bloc remembers only oppression, fear, and misery. In *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society*, Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke draw evidence from roughly 300 oral-history interviews conducted from 2006 to 2013 with “ordinary people” (1), including teachers, factory workers, farmers, a fire-fighter, and others outside dissident circles and Communist Party centers of power. Most were born between 1935 and 1955, and their diverse memories and opinions primarily treat the normalization period after the 1968 Prague Spring and the post-socialist era following “the crack,” more formally known as the Velvet Revolution (166). Throughout the volume, its authors consistently refer to the interviewees as “narrators,” a label connoting agency and the view that even under Communist Party rule, ordinary people had some power to shape the course of history and its outcomes.

In their introduction, Vaněk and Mücke quote and agree with Václav Havel’s 1990 contention that “We are all . . . responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery; no one is merely its victim; we are all also its co-creators” (3). Selections from the interviews provide some evidence for this argument about the mutually constituted nature of state socialism, showing a society in which people at times consciously worked to steer clear of public life, withdrawing into the private realm of family and home. In Chapter 1, “I Want to be Free! Civil and Political Rights,” the authors bring up strategies for survival before 1989, including avoidance of politics. A narrator recalled: “So you tried not to get involved in public life, keep away from activism of any kind, and if they forced you, you tried to wiggle out of it” (20). Chapter 2, “Transforming the Family in Socialism,” presents parents’ efforts to teach children to recognize and maintain lines between private and public spheres. One narrator related how she discussed Tomáš Masaryk with her children at home, but warned them “not to talk about it anywhere” (59); another described “a double life: that you must say one thing at home and something else in public” (60).

Chapter 3, “Friends and Others: How Czechs Evaluate Foreigners and Foreign Countries,” analyzes Czech evaluations of the west and the east during the Cold War. It reveals narrators’ appreciation for differences between propaganda about life outside Czechoslovakia and reality, pragmatic avoidance of politics for the sake of travel and work opportunities, and a blinkered conclusion that life in Czechoslovakia “was not as bad as in other places” (79). Chapter 4, “Education—Gateway to Success,” contains evidence of the great importance many Czechs attached to schooling, showing a variety of narrators’ educational experiences, including fun times, regrets about not working harder, and restricted study opportunities for young people whose families were not in the Party’s good graces.

Throughout the book, Vaněk and Mücke compare narrators’ memories of the socialist period to their evaluations of politics and everyday life since the Velvet Revolution, with the socialist past often viewed more favorably than the era of