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Andreas Wiedemann. *"Komm mit uns das Grenzland aufbauen!": Ansiedlung und neue Strukturen in den ehemaligen Sudetengebieten 1945-1952.* Essen: Klartext, 2007. 482 pp. EUR 34.90, cloth, ISBN 978-3-89861-734-5.

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The return of Bohemia's borderlands to Czechoslovakia in 1945 unleashed the largest migration in the region's history. As Andreas Wiedemann argues in his new monograph, Czechoslovakia's expulsion of German-speakers was only one of two intertwined postwar migrations that, collectively, involved some five million people. The second was an influx of Czech and Slovak settlers to the borderlands, drawn by promises of property, social advancement, and national renewal from the Czechoslovak interior and European diaspora communities. By the early 1950s, new settlers made up more than two-thirds of the frontier population, transforming the borderlands' economic, social, and political landscapes. Wiedemann offers a rich descriptive account of the Czech resettlements that is a welcome addition to the literature.

In 1945, Czechoslovak leaders across the political spectrum agreed that the German-speaking population posed an unacceptable threat to the stability of the postwar state, and that the borderlands should be "returned" to Slavic control. As Wiedemann shows, Czechoslovaks understood the borderlands in ethnic rather than strictly geographic terms--as those frontier territories with majority German-speaking populations. These areas overlapped largely, but not completely, with the territory Nazi Germany had occupied as the "Reichsgau Sudetenland" between 1938 and 1945. Government officials and national committees urged Czechs and Slovaks to settle in the borderlands, and hundreds of thousands of people heeded the call. The first settlers arrived from adjacent areas under their own steam, but Wiedemann demonstrates that this migration was not simply a "spontaneous" popular phenomenon. By the fall of 1945, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Agriculture and the newly created settlement commission began steering the migration. Czechoslovak Communists led both agencies, and proved a critical means for the Communist Party to extend its regional influence, shape wider Czechoslovak policy, and begin laying the ground for a socialist system in frontier areas long before the 1948 takeover.

For the postwar Czechoslovak government, resettlement was essential to making the borderlands unambiguously Slavic territory, securing essential industrial and agricultural capacity for the Czechoslovak economy, relieving overpopulation in rural central Bohemia, and creating a zone of loyal citizens as a buffer against external threats. These goals meant not only moving people to frontier areas, but also securing their support for state goals and integrating them into postwar Czechoslovak politics and society. For Communists, it also meant winning support for Communist Party leadership.

The Czechs and Slovaks who arrived in frontier areas in the late 1940s included former borderland residents who had fled the Nazi occupation, agricultural and industrial workers from inland areas, and ethnic Czechs and Slovaks from abroad, who despite being called "re-emigrants," typically had no previous ties to Czechoslovakia. These settlers joined Czech-speakers already in the region and were supposed to include only the most trustworthy elements of Czechoslovak society. Yet, as Wiedemann shows, from the very beginning, the state struggled with the fact that settlers often failed to behave in accordance with official settlement plans. "Gold diggers" snatched up property for personal gain, and as early as 1946, thousands of agricultural settlers began leaving frontier regions as they discovered that the land they had been given was poor, the demands of cultivating it overwhelming, and local infrastructure inadequate. Borderland industries and agriculture faced chronic labor shortages when settlers proved reluctant to replace German-speaking wage labor. Further, different groups of settlers were often at odds with one another and with established Czech-speaking populations.

One of the issues dividing established residents and new settlers was the treatment of German-speakers, most of whom were still in the frontier areas when settlers arrived. Long-term frontier residents, including many who had fled the National Socialist occupation, were accustomed to living with German-speakers, likely to distinguish between Nazi supporters and German-speaking anti-fascists, and interested in keeping regional industries going with skilled labor, even when those workers were German-speakers. Further, they often disparaged settlers as unskilled and undisciplined. Settlers, on the other hand, proved a catalyst for the removal of German-speakers to solve housing shortages and protested government policies for retaining German-speaking skilled labor in industry. Settlers from the Czechoslovak interior treated established frontier residents and re-emigrants from Germany, Austria, and Hungary with suspicion because of their long association with German-speakers, and they declared that the influx of re-emigrants was once again populating frontier areas with "non-Czechs."

These tensions and settlers' anti-German rhetoric eased by the early 1950s with the end of settlement and property distribution and with the rise of a Cold War politics that emphasized divisions between capitalism and communism more than those between Slavs and Germans. But for all that the postwar period of settlement and nationalist politics was relatively short-lived, it left the borderlands greatly changed, with a smaller population than before the war, a majority of people recently arrived from outside the region, a shrunken industrial sector, and a strong Communist political base. Yet, Wiedemann notes that despite such profound changes the Czechoslovak government, unlike Poland, failed to get rid of the "borderland" category as part of its integration project, and the regional designation based on a past German-speaking population remained part of official and popular understandings of Bohemian geography.

Wiedemann's book is part of a rapidly growing literature on Bohemia's transition from a dismembered and occupied territory during World War II to an integral part of a much more ethni-

cally homogeneous communist state during the Cold War. Its focus on resettlement is a welcome corrective to a literature that has focused largely on the expulsions in its treatment of Bohemian frontier areas. The book would be even stronger if the text were a bit less repetitive, and if it were to engage with some of the important new English-language literature dealing with traditions of national indifference in the Bohemian language frontiers,[1] and with debates about national cleansing in postwar Czechoslovakia.[2] But these are minor criticisms of a work that adds important insights into the connections between Nazi occupation, the rise of communism, and the persistence of borderland identities in Czechoslovakia.

Notes

[1]. Pieter Judson, ***Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jeremy King, ***Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948*** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Tara Zahra, ***Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[2]. Benjamin Fromme, ***National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia*** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

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