

"1945 In Memory": A Survivor's Report

KARL HAUSNER

Almost daily, politicians, the media, and even prominent Christian leaders refer to Nazi crimes and the Holocaust, without even mentioning such crimes against humanity committed by the Bolsheviks before, during, and after World War II and the millions who were tortured and killed in China, Korea, and Indochina. There is also total silence about the Morgenthau Plan, the Allied War against civilians and the starvation camps throughout Europe and Asia during and even after World War II.

It is for this reason that I would like to contribute to the understanding and harmony between nations by presenting to those interested in the whole truth, the experience of my people in the former Sudetenland after World War II.

My Personal Experience After World War II

I was born and raised on a family farm in Schwansdorf (Svatonovice), a village with a prewar population of about 550, near the city of Troppau (Opava), formerly Sudetenschlesien (Sudeten Silesia) and now the Czech Republic. I was fifteen as the last year of the war began. The war was extremely hard on our people with a high number of casualties. The worst came when we were "liberated" by the Soviet troops and Czech partisans.

On May 4, 1945, after weeks of military and refugee movements, the German troops quickly disappeared. At about 10:00 A.M., the village was bombarded by the Soviets with grenades, and later combat soldiers appeared. There was no fighting. The Soviet troops searched every house, primarily for German soldiers and valuables such as watches and jewelry. The combat troops then moved on.

Next the Soviet support troops arrived, removed all the horses from the barns, harnessed them, hitched them to the best wagons available, took some feed, and departed. Every mature male who was located in this process had to go along. At our farm this meant five men taken away: Ernst Krebs, Fritz Krebs, Johann Kuntscher, Emil Kaimer and Franz Rohm. Of the five, only one, Franz Rohm, ever returned, and this would be after two years in a Soviet labor camp.

Other Soviet soldiers started to look for young women they could sexually abuse. Most of the population had fled or were hiding in stone quarries or woods; most who remained did so to take care of their cattle. For example, Mrs. Jahn, a fifty-year-old woman, was approached for rape. She ran out of the house and the Soviet soldiers shot her to death.

Franz Frei, during World War I, was in the Austrian Army and was captured by the Russians. He spent years with and against the Red Army. In 1923, he returned from Russia via China; thus, he had learned to speak Russian. He was in his house when Soviet soldiers entered it. They saw a family picture on the wall with his four daughters. They demanded that he produce these girls. Since he knew some Russian, he explained that they were not there. After a beating, Mr. Frei was forced to kneel down and then he was "executed."

Emma Bischof, our neighbor, about thirty-five years of age, was about to be raped. She took her two children and ran out of her farm as two soldiers ran after her. She jumped with her two children into a water reservoir. The soldiers pulled her and the children out, but her little boy Walter had already drowned. She was raped while her seven year old daughter watched.

At about 3:00 P.M. a group of Soviet soldiers entered the farm house of the Emil Kaimer family. Emil Kaimer had already been captured when they had taken his horses. Mrs. Kaimer, age thirty-eight, her three children, ages ten, six, and two, and her seventy-year-old mother-in-law were in the kitchen. Mrs. Kaimer had to lie on the floor where she was raped by dozens of Soviet soldiers, one

after another. When blood flowed from her vagina, one Soviet soldier, instead of raping her, took his bayonet and stuck it into her vagina, pulled it out, and disappeared. Mrs. Kaimer was still alive for another hour or so, until a Soviet officer shot her in the head. All this was in the presence of her small children and mother-in-law.

Julius Dohmes, age sixty, hanged himself in the hay barn when they took his only horse. He was a small farmer and obviously could not handle the loss and circumstances. Hans Sommer, about fifty-five, had a small farm and Gasthaus (Inn), known as Schles, which was on the road between our village and Bautsch (Budisov). He was found shot to death near his estate. No one knows the circumstances. Most likely he fled and failed to stop and was shot.

During the next few days rape and robbery were committed by the Soviet troops whenever and wherever possible. All of the cows and the other cattle, except one for each family, were removed from the various farms and driven to the Rosmanith farm, where they were milked, awaiting their transportation to Russia. All of the young women who could be found were forced to do the chores for a period of about four weeks, during which time they were raped numerous times, in many cases daily.

At the end of May, the Soviet troops had discovered that some refugees were hiding in a stone quarry, about a mile away from the village surrounded by large wooded areas. The family of our teacher, Karl Wolny, had a hunting lodge nearby where they were hiding. On May 26, 1945, Karl Wolny (who was seventy-four years of age), his wife, his sister-in-law Mrs. Muehr, his son Oskar, with his wife Anna and her sister, were brutally slain. The two young women were raped, even though Anna Wolny was pregnant and close to giving birth. They were thrown into a mass grave without a funeral because our villagers were scared to attend. In September 1998, fifty-three years later, a stone was placed on that mass grave in memory of them.

Within about four weeks, in early June 1945, most of the Soviet troops had disappeared from the villages, and the Czech partisans took over. The situation worsened.

I personally was in hiding with a Polish-speaking family who had been on our farm prior to the end of the war. Since they spoke Polish, they could communicate with the Russians to some extent, and during more critical moments, I was hidden under sacks of feed for the horses, with clothing and the small children on top of the stack. We made our way to their hometown, Weihendorf (Wojnowice) near Ratibor, which had been claimed by the Polish Militia. Finally, at the end of June, I ventured to return to my hometown about forty miles away, naturally on foot, avoiding towns, highways and people in general. Upon my return home, all of us between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five, were to report for work, harvesting and thrashing, whatever was left in the fields. In early September (I was just about sixteen), two young men from our village, I and Ernst Frei (nineteen), who had returned from the military, were sent to the industrial and coal mining region between Ostrau (Ostrava) and Oderberg. The labor camp was built during World War II, where Soviet prisoners of war were housed and had to work in the coal mines. This was a typical labor camp with barracks, primitive sanitary facilities, and a kitchen. The camp was surrounded with barbwire fences and watchtowers for the guards.

Upon our arrival in the camp, our civilian clothing was taken away and we got a prison uniform which included wooden shoes and a helmet for use in the mine. We received shears and had to cut each others' hair as short as possible in order to reduce the habitat for lice and make us more readily detected in case we fled. This was certainly not something new, but a common practice in all labor, concentration, or prison camps.

We were housed in these barracks, sixty to eighty men in one room. In the morning we got a pot of "coffee" (roasted grain and boiled). After the shift we got about a quart of soup without fat or meat and one small loaf of bread for five days. Most of us could eat the bread during one meal; some did, and this quickly led to serious health problems. When we arrived at the camp, between the drive and the walkways there was grass. Within weeks, all of

the grass was pulled out and consumed, including the roots, which further led to digestive problems, severe diarrhea and often death.

In the mine, we worked eight hours daily. Initially, we could handle the work, but within weeks, many lost strength or got injured, while others simply dehydrated due to diarrhea and died.

We were not permitted to have any reading or writing material. Thus, our parents did not know where we were. The camp I was in was within the town of Dombrau (Dombrowa) near Karwin, not far away from Oderberg.

Within weeks, I developed not just diarrhea and other health problems, but also an eye infection. Since there was no medical care and the coal dust aggravated the condition, I got to the point where I could not work in the mine under ground. Shortly after the New Year of 1946, about forty men from this camp were collected, put in a railroad car, and sent away. The train ride ended in Troppau (Opava), our county seat, about twenty miles away from my hometown. From the Troppau railroad station, we walked, naturally under guard, to Graetz (Hradez), where we were put into the castle of the huge Feudal Estate of Prince von Lichnowsky. We were to cut timber for the mine. The forest we were assigned to work in was one of the last battlegrounds between the German and Soviet Army, in late April of 1945. Most of the trees were scratched or even filled with shrapnel and in the bunkers there were still the remains of German soldiers. We cleared these woods and closed the bunkers. The equipment we used was of American manufacture: an International Harvester tractor (Farmal M) and even a few American made power saws.

In this camp things improved for us. It was much smaller and less strictly guarded, and some Czech people would slip us some food, even though it was prohibited.

In March 1946, four of us from the group were asked whether we knew how to handle horses and thus, we were transferred to the farm, where we worked with the horses, hauled wood, and later made hay.

A young Czech, who worked at the dam of the small electric power plant, found a hand grenade and played with it, and it exploded. It tore off his hand and injured him severely. We heard the blast and ran to the area and found him lying in the water. We pulled him out and carried him to the farm, from where he was taken to the hospital.

Since we saved his life, the farm manager and the other Czech people working on the farm, gave us special privileges, such as more food and more freedom. I was there until June 1946, when my family was scheduled for expulsion.

In June 1946 I received word from our guards that we would be released, sent home to our families, and then transferred to the expulsion camp in Wigstadtl (Vitkov), a town about five miles from our Village of Schwansdorf. My parents, my twelve-year-old sister, and I, along with ninety other inhabitants of our village, were to pack up and get ready to be transported to the camp. We were permitted to take with us sixty kilograms (130 lbs.) of used clothing, shoes, bedding, or utensils—no money, no jewelry, and nothing else valuable. All of this stuff was inspected by the guards of the expulsion camp in Wigstadtl. There we stayed for about five days until a complete train of about thirty box cars was assembled. Our "possessions" were loaded in railroad box cars, along with thirty people to one car. The camp was heavily guarded as was the train during the whole trip. We were not told where we were going, but within the first day of transit and waiting, we realized that we were going westwards. We hoped and prayed that this direction would be maintained, because prior to this, many German people were sent into forced labor camps to the Soviet Union.

After about four days of very slow travel and waiting, we arrived at the border crossing of Czechoslovakia and Bavaria at Furth im Walde. During the trip we were permitted, at specified locations, to leave the box car and empty the pail of human waste or use the open latrines. Occasionally, we got food and water. After the train crossed the border, the guards quickly left and we realized that we were in Bavaria, in the American Zone of Occupation.

There the Red Cross and some other voluntary organizations gave us food. Then, we were ordered into barracks, where we were individually deloused by DDT powder. All of this was under the United States Military Command. We still did not know where we were to be sent next. After another day of travel, the whole train was separated into different groups and three box cars, which included us, ended up in Landshut, Bavaria. There, the railroad station had been totally destroyed by bombs, and only a small barrack housed the railroad office. All of our possessions were unloaded and put on trucks for further transportation to an unknown destination.

After about a one hour truck ride, we arrived in a remote village of about a dozen farmers. In Huettenkofen, the truck was unloaded beneath a shade tree, and that was our final destination. Within an hour, the appointed Mayor, Mr. Stelzenberger, walked with each family to another farm and told the farmer that he had to clear one room for those of us who had been expelled. The farmer gave us an ox cart, with which we transported our "valuables" to the farm and our new "home." Our new home was a twelve-foot by twelve-foot room for four persons.

The following gives an idea of the local dimensions of the expulsion in our area:¹

May 23, 1946—First transport, 1204 persons to Goeppingen (Schwaben).

June 10, 1946—Second transport, 1204 persons to Munich (Bavaria). (This was our transport, from which three box cars were removed from the train at Landshut.)

June 26, 1946—Third transport, 1108 persons to Dachau (Bavaria).

July 4, 1946—Fourth transport, 1155 persons to Augsburg (Bavaria).

July 18, 1946—Fifth transport, 1204 persons to Regensburg (Bavaria).

August 14, 1946—Sixth transport, 1203 persons to Wuerzburg (Bavaria), another major part from our Village of Schwansdorf.

¹ Expulsion data from Wigstahl comes from the *Troppauer Heimat-Chronik*, January 1996.

August 23, 1946—Seventh transport, 934 persons to Wuerzburg (Bavaria).

October 21, 1946—Eighth transport, 298 persons to Kitzingen (Bavaria). With this transport, almost every German from our district, about ten villages, and the town of Wigstahl, had been expelled.

While the end of World War II brought great relief for millions, for many other millions, hell broke loose. The crimes and the brutalities against millions of East Europeans have been kept secret and even today, very few know, or even want to know about it. Justice in the world cannot be promoted, if justice is not provided to all. A crime is a crime, whether committed by the Nazis, the Communists, or the Allies.

Other Atrocities

By comparison, my experience after World War II at the hands of the Soviet Army and the Czech Partisans, was fairly pleasant—even though, it eventually resulted in the loss of my eyesight.

What happened on May 17, 1945 in Landskron—the hometown of my wife, Hermine (Schwab)—Ober-Johnsdorf, and Kreis Landskron, is reported vividly in her account elsewhere in this volume and even more dramatically in the collection entitled *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans*, published in Germany in 1953.² During this massacre, her father, her uncle, a great number of local Germans, and a few German soldiers were tortured to death.

In the collection mentioned above, many other atrocities are described, such as the Death March in early May of 1945 from Bruenn (Brno) to the Austrian border, whereby, about 6,000 persons were tortured to death or shot and thrown into mass graves.

The torture and beastly killing of over 150 Germans and a few Czech "collaborators" in the Hanke Lager in Ostrau (Ostrava), was

² Wilhelm Karl Turnwald, *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans* (Munich, 1953). See especially Julius Friedel, "Landskron: Massacre on May 17th, 1945," 31-36.

initially investigated in 1947 by the Czech Government, but the report was never released until after the collapse of the Communist Regime in 1990. Dr. Stanek, a journalist and historian, published the complete file in the Czech language in an Ostrava paper and has now made his research available to a broader audience.³

Mr. Franz Jenschke, who was born and raised near Grulich (Kraliki), finally made it to West Germany after the war, lived for decades in Bremen, and now resides in Berlin, reported as follows:

A few days later, (May 20, 1945) a "trial," similar to the one in Landskron, was held in Grulich and neighboring towns including Zoellnei and Wichstadt, towns about twenty miles from there. After the beating, torturing and killing, the previous Mayor, Mr. Grund of Zoellnei, was singled out. He was hung by his feet until he was unconscious, then he was dropped to the ground and cold water was poured over his head, until he regained consciousness. This torture was repeated a number of times and then he had to crawl on his knees and hands to the cemetery. During this "trip," Mr. Grund was beaten, kicked in his testes and forced to salute "Heil Hitler," while the survivors had to follow and watch. At the outside wall of the cemetery he had to dig a shallow grave, crawl into it, raise his right hand and say "Heil Hitler," while some of the survivors had to shovel dirt on him, until he was silent, his hand still extending out of the dirt. His grave is still there and a simple cross was recently put up.

Franz Jenschke, a devoted Christian, decided in 1988, when he visited his hometown Grulich, to restore the almost totally destroyed monastery, especially the chapels and the *Pilgerhaus*. Between 1988 and 2000, he collected over DM 2.6 million and almost finished the restoration of the *Muttergottesberg* (Hill of the Blessed Mother of God) shrine and monastery.

The brutal assassination of the *Karpaten-Deutsche* (refugees from the Carpathian region) and the blood bath in Prague (Praha) are well documented in various books (see references).

³ Tomáš Staněk, *Perzekuce 1945: Perzekuce tzv. státně nespolehlivého obyvatelstva v českých zemích (mimo tábory a věznice) v květnu – srpnu 1945* [Persecution 1945: The Persecution of the So-called Officially Unreliable Population in the Bohemian Lands (Outside Camps and Prisons) Between May and August 1945] (Prague, 1996). This important work has been translated into German as *Verfolgung 1945: Die Stellung der Deutschen in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien (außerhalb der Lager und Gefängnisse)*, trans. Otfried Pustejovsky and Walter Reichel (Böhlau, 2002)

Historical Commentary⁴

In 1948, the Beneš Government, which had ordered the expulsion immediately after the war (Churchill, Roosevelt, Truman and Stalin agreed to it in Yalta and Potsdam), was overthrown by the Communists.

We expelled Sudeten-Germans had put down new roots in Germany, and many, like me, were now in foreign countries. The Czech people were tortured by their own leaders. The property was confiscated, the clergy was thrown into concentration camps, and our homeland became a land of destruction. The majority of the buildings collapsed, the land eroded, and the nation fell into poverty and atheism.

After forty years of a Communist paradise, the Marxist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed, due to a misconceived, atheistic philosophy, bureaucracy and corruption.

Although the Czech Republic has now a democratically elected government, no attempt has been made to rectify the crimes committed after World War II and return the property and the land to us Sudeten-Germans. The Beneš Decrees of 1945/46, which permitted the killing, without trial, of Sudeten-Germans and "collaborators," the torture of virtually millions, the confiscation of all private property, and the "law" enabling expulsion of all Sudeten-Germans and even some Hungarians, remains in effect until now, the end of 2000. Even though the Czech Government has filed application to join the European Union and NATO, these unthinkable laws have not been removed or demanded by the Allies as a condition to join the European Union and NATO, except for Resolution No. 562 of October 13, 1998 by the U.S. House of Representatives.

At this time, over 120,000 churches, chapels and monasteries are in desperate need of repair, not even to mention restoration. Thousands of such structures have been purposely destroyed or

⁴ The following material was prepared for the video documentary, *Brothers in the Storm* (see references below).

simply fell in decay beyond repair. Practically all of the farm buildings, small factory structures, and hundreds of thousands of homes in the former Sudetenland are gone or beyond repair.

Prior to the annexation of the Sudetenland to Germany in 1938, over 60 percent of the tax income for the whole Czechoslovak Republic, with a total population of fifteen million, came from the 3.5 million Sudeten-Germans. Money alone cannot and will not bring prosperity to these depressed regions. They will need people with high standards and a work ethic.

The expelled Sudeten-Germans, who came to West Germany, now (2000), own 1.5 homes per family, while the Czech Nation has a home ownership of 0.5 homes per family. The State of Bavaria honored the Sudeten-Germans by designating them as the fourth tribe in the state besides the Bavarians, Frankens and Schwabens.

Let us hope that the Czech people will find a just solution.

The Conspiracy of Silence

As pointed out before, the world knows all about the crimes committed by the Nazi Regime. Many Nazi leaders were justly punished. The German people are reminded daily about these atrocities by the media worldwide.

Where were the Western journalists when our women were raped and our people were tortured to death? While the Nazis committed their crimes behind heavily guarded concentration camp fences, the Soviet troops and the Czech Partisans committed even greater brutalities publicly in every village. Today, over fifty years later, not one of these criminals has been brought to trial, due to the Beneš Decrees.

When Tito, who also slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people in Yugoslavia, came to visit the United States, he was celebrated as a hero, and so it was when the Soviet leaders came.

The Western World and the United States will have to submit to the truth and discontinue the double standards. The Soviet Union was allied with the Western Powers and thus, the Western Powers

of Britain, France, and the United States must share the responsibility for what happened in Eastern Europe after World War II.

The purpose of these memories and this commentary is not to cultivate hate, but to contribute to the understanding between nations, because truth is the foundation of all relations. Let us pray that God may bring wisdom to our leaders, so that they will return to the principles of the Constitution of the United States of America and the almost two millennia of Biblical teaching.

Documentation and References

- Association for the Protection of the Sudeten German Interests. *Sudetendeutscher Atlas*. Munich, 1954.
- Gauglitz, Franz J. C. *Landskroner Not und Tod*. Wiesentheid, 1997.
- Hausner, Karl. *Brothers in the Storm: Sudetenland Documentary* (Video). Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri, 2000.
- _____. *Heimat Zwischen Oder und Mohra*. Hinsdale, Ill., 1998.
- Heimatkreis Mies-Pilsen e.V. (Dinkelsbuehl). *Miroeschau/ Mirošov oestlich von Pilsen — ein tschechisches Todeslager nach dem Krieg*, n. d.
- Nawratil, Heinz. *Schwarzbuch der Vertreibung: Das letzte Kapitel unbewältigter Vergangenheit*. Fourth ed., Munich, 1999.
- Sustek, F. *Hvězda pod Rosuticí*. Morowský Beroun, 1997.
- Staněk, Tomáš. *Perzekuce 1945: Perzekuce tzv. státně nespolehlivého obyvatelstva v českých zemích (mimo tábory a věznice) v květnu — srpnu 1945* [Persecution 1945: The Persecution of the So-called Officially Unreliable Population in the Bohemian Lands (Outside Camps and Prisons) Between May and August 1945]. Prague, 1996. Recently translated into German as *Verfolgung 1945: Die Stellung der Deutschen in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien (außerhalb der Lager und Gefängnisse)*. Trans. Otfried Pustejovsky and Walter Reichel. Böhlau, 2002.
- Turnwald, Wilhelm Karl. *Dokumente zur Austreibung der Sudetendeutschen*. Munich, 1951.
- _____. *Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans*, Munich, 1953.
- Sudeten German Council. *The Sudeten Question, Brief Exposition and Documentation*. Munich, 1984.

Sudetendeutscher Rat e.V. *Dokumente zur Vertreibung der Sudetendeutschen*. Munich, 1992.

Kuhn, Ekkehard, and Ludek Pachmann. *Tschechen und Deutsche—Böhmen und Mähren im Herzen Europas* (Video). ZDF, 1997 (aired, Südwestfunk).

United States House of Representatives. Resolutions No. 557 (October 9, 1998) and Resolution No. 562 (October 13, 1998).

Zayas, Alfred de. *Anmerkungen zur Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten*. Stuttgart, 1986.

Zway, Inglande. *The Crime of being German*. Lewes, UK, 1998.